

WECF's Work



Sabine Bock, WECF Energy and Climate Coordinator.

■ Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF) fosters the participation of women and men from the EECCA region in its delegations attending international meetings on climate change as the whole region is underrepresented. WECF particularly aims at increasing the participation of women from all over the

world in climate change negotiations as women's views and visions are not yet sufficiently taken into account. At local level WECF guarantees gender sensitive project implementation in relation to energy issues and the development of adaptation and mitigation strategies. Furthermore, WECF calls for the improvement of the accessibility of household and community level projects within the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). This will increase access for women to global climate funding mechanisms. This can furthermore reconcile the needs of reducing poverty whilst mitigating climate change and contribute to real sustainable development as required by the Kyoto Protocol. To fulfil this goal WECF calls for social and environmental criteria as defined in the gold standard, which requires certain criteria for CDM projects to be called "real sustainable", and the need for the collection and evaluation of gender sensitive data when implementing these projects.

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Women in Kyrgyzstan are building a solar warm water heater
Picture source: WECF partner BIOM, Kyrgyzstan

Why women



■ During the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992 women were defined as a "major group" in sustainable development and environmental policy. But despite this fact, women are still not equally involved in policy processes. The huge potential of women as agents of change and as important stakeholders by using resources often more sustainable and giving their perspective to the processes of implementing environmental policies and of accomplishing the Millennium Development Goals is still neglected. The reason for this is that the gender divide, due to different roles and tasks of women and men, is still huge and that discrimination against women has not yet been overcome. WECF wants to pave the way for increased public participation in general, and women's participation in particular, in environmental and health policy-making. Women have specific responsibilities for future generations and therefore see different priorities and are often more engaged in sustainability, specifically on issues related to health and livelihood.

About WECF

WECF is an international network of over 100 women's and environmental organisations in 40 countries, implementing projects and advocating globally for a healthy environment for all. WECF's sustainable energy demonstration projects are implemented in the EECCA region (Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia).

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Gender and Climate Change



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Climate Change and its Implications for Men and Women



■ The current changes in the climate will directly impact on, inter alia, ecosystems, food, water, health and society as such. Climate change is a global challenge and threat, but the poor are affected disproportionately as they are particularly dependent on environmental conditions and natural resources and their ability to adapt to change is limited due to their restricted assets (social and financial resources).



Women are generally responsible for securing the survival of their families

The consequences of climate change impact differently on women and men which is largely due to the fact that almost 70% of the 1.3 billion people living in extreme poverty are women. These and other social inequalities between men and women (gender inequalities), such as economic and legal gender divides, can even be exacerbated by climate change.

On the one hand, women are hit harder by climate change impacts than men,

because women are generally responsible for securing the survival of their families by providing them with such resources, as water and fuel, which are becoming more scarce. Furthermore, women often face a higher workload, unequal chances of survival (difference in the capacity to move and constraints in their mobility) and a lack of participation in decision-making. On the other hand, women contribute less to climate change than men and offer other perspectives and solutions for a transformation to a low-carbon green and just economy.

And as the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon put it “women are the major agents for progress in climate change”. Their knowledge and capacities are crucial for mitigation and adaptation measures since women have specific skills in making sustainable use of resources and in coping with crisis situation.



Women have specific skills in making sustainable use of resources and in coping with crisis situations

Situation in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA)



■ Being one of the global regions with a high proportion of the population living in poverty, the EECCA region inhabitants are expected to suffer significantly from increased water scarcity, and reduced water quality, increased deforestation and lack

of fuel, among other changes. These effects will impact on women and men differently. However, in rural areas of the EECCA region, men often face a similar bad economic situation as women. For men the loss of income security caused by climate change can lead to loss of self-esteem and increased domestic violence affecting women and children. These as well as other gender inequalities in the EECCA region risk being intensified by impacts of climate change.



Central Asian women and men at community meetings

International Legal Instruments

■ International legal mechanisms, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979), and principles underpin the necessity to include gender issues when addressing the causes and impacts of climate change. During the negotiations on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) States Parties pointed out how important gender-specific vulnerability assessments are in order to find solutions



*Community meeting in Kommuna village, Kyrgyzstan
Picture source: WECF partner UNISON, Kyrgyzstan*

to tackle the effects of climate change, e.g. by mitigation and adaptation strategies. The equal involvement of women and men in this work is crucial as they have different perspectives and approaches. However, gender disaggregated data are still lacking in most areas. The women and gender organisations and allies managed to raise awareness and to integrate gender issues more comprehensively into the negotiated documents, including the recommendations to increase gender balance in the board of the financial mechanisms. This shows how crucial it is to guarantee full participation of women in any kind of decision-making processes. In the second half of 2009 the women and gender caucus was recognised as an official UNFCCC constituency (women and gender constituency).