

BRIEFING NOTE: EMPOWERMENT FOR INCLUSIVE ACTION AND DECISION-MAKING: 15 NOVEMBER 2017

This event convened on 15 November 2017, in Bonn, Germany, on the sidelines of the 23rd session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 23) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Organized by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and the Government of Grenada, this event aimed to advance women's leadership and decision-making as a crucial step towards successful responses to the challenges of climate change. The event consisted of two panels, where panelists explored themes, such as women's empowerment, inclusive and gender-sensitive policies, and innovative practices to advance gender-responsive climate mitigation and adaptation.

FIRST PANEL

Anne Hammill, Director, Resilience, IISD, and National Adaptation Plan (NAP) Global Network, moderated the first panel, which discussed women's leadership and their active participation in decision-making, innovative practices and policies enabling effective gender equality.

During introductory remarks, Kerricia Hobson, Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Grenada, highlighted the need to "aggressively" tackle climate change. She spoke on gender and youth equality and stressed

the need to add gender and youth voices at the decision-making table. She described efforts in her government to address these issues, giving the example of Grenada's NAP, which included active participation of women in its development.

Julie Dekens, Senior Researcher, Resilience, IISD, said parties have agreed to take responsive measures on climate change, explaining that this means adding gender equality as a key component. She also highlighted that community involvement must be a priority, with three key elements: recognition of gender differences in needs, opportunities and capacities related to climate change; equitable participation and influence by women and men in climate-related decision-making processes; and gender-equitable access to financial resources and other benefits resulting from investments in climate action.

Peter Wooders, Group Director, Energy, IISD, and IISD's Global Subsidies Initiative, spoke on the relationship between gender equality and fossil fuel subsidy reforms. He stressed that cutting fossil fuel subsidies could reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 10%. He said that subsidies are very inefficient at targeting the poor and this affects women significantly. He then presented data on Bangladesh, India, Nigeria and Indonesia to inform energy subsidy policy. Wooders emphasized that context is vital for policy success. He said the relationship within countries matter, and that policy reforms should not be gender neutral. He noted that fossil fuel subsidies are expensive for governments, exemplifying Indonesia's US\$1.9 billion costs in 2016.



L-R: **Anne Hammill**, Director, Resilience, IISD and NAP Global Network; **Kerricia Hobson**, Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Fisheries and the Environment, Grenada; **Julie Dekens**, Senior Researcher, Resilience, IISD; **Peter Wooders**, Director, Energy, IISD/Global Subsidies Initiative; and **Angie Dazé**, Associate, Resilience, IISD/NAP Global Network



L-R: **Blane Harvey**, McGill University; **Kerricia Hobson**, Ministry of Agriculture, Lands, Fisheries and the Environment, Grenada; **Sheila Oparaocha**, ENERGIA International; **Daniel Morchain**, Oxfam; **Winnie Lichuma**, National Gender and Equality Commission, Kenya

Angie Dazé, IISD and NAP Global Network, spoke about a tool to identify to what extent gender consideration has been integrated into selected UNFCCC NAPs. Noting the need for more research, she identified common themes and shared key findings, including: most countries are trying to include gender sensitivity as a priority; most women are positioned as a vulnerable group, not as agents of change; and more consistent and deeper integration is needed. She stated that an effective climate change narrative must be broadened and look at the underlined inequalities, usually linked to social norms. She said that analysis on social interactions between men and women deserves addressing. On next steps for the NAP process, she suggested targeted gender analysis, and gender-balanced participation in adaptation decision-making.

In the ensuing discussion, participants raised issues on: methodologies used to address gender equality; instruments to assess subsidies in Indonesia; women's agency; and excessive focus on women's weaknesses.

SECOND PANEL

Blane Harvey, McGill University, moderated this session. Winnie Lichuma, National Gender and Equality Commission, Kenya, noting that implementation of the Paris Agreement can only happen at the country level, stressed the need for national measures to mainstream climate and gender-sensitive policies. She stressed capacity building as central, and lamented the excess use of external professionals working on the formulation of strategies in developing countries, which usually miss the point of local sensitivities. She said country-level mechanisms are essential for gender responses and called for men and women to work together. On climate negotiations, she called for quicker acknowledgement of gender opportunities to enhance parties' collaboration and declared: "Siting at the table does not necessarily transform societies. We need to build capacity for women."

Hobson emphasized that in Grenada, 33% of the cabinet is composed of women and said that almost 45% of candidates in future elections are also women, which indicates improvement in gender representation. She gave the examples of sectors that

women are usually absent from, such as fisheries and agriculture, which are currently receiving increased participation of women through projects that enhance climate adaptation measures.

Sheila Oparaocha, ENERGIA International, spoke on the work of her organization highlighting energy access and synergies with gender issues. She emphasized poverty reduction that empowers women. She added that the most vulnerable groups are usually forgotten and recalled the need to "leave no one behind," and to improve energy access to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably SDG 7 (affordable and clean energy). She recommended enhancing conditions for women's entrepreneurship, so that they can improve the livelihoods of their families. She noted that women are responsible for 80% of the work in the informal sector, and called for better enabling environments to take functional initiatives to scale.

Daniel Morchain, Oxfam, considered implementation as the most vital area when addressing women's empowerment. He stressed the need to create avenues for women's knowledge-sharing and claimed that certain issues cannot remain "under the carpet," recalling the fact that men also face burdens due to social traditions, which hinders effective gender policies. He noted the importance of organizations working on human rights to complement gender-related work.

CLOSING

During final discussions, participants stressed, *inter alia*: women and girls are often agents of change with an important role to play in advancing progress on mitigation and adaptation; the need for disaggregated data on gender discrepancies; how gender inclusivity impacts the effectiveness of climate action; and challenges to measure progress.

Hammill closed the session thanking panelists and recalling key themes of the discussion, including the need to: leverage the capacity of women to transform energy value chains; implement new modes of allocating resources; enhance capacities to achieve real impact; ensure better data and research; and improve the participation of men in this agenda by changing perspectives and social norms.