



Climate Justice Briefs: Rural Women's Adaptation Strategies 2011

Philippines

Land tenure insecurity and the need for empowerment programmes for rural women in Rizal province

Impact of climate change on rural women

Women in the three research communities report a salient impact of climate change on income. Further, they report numerous ways in which climate change impacts the traditional gender roles in the communities.

Families in these mainly agricultural communities have suffered low yields and loss of income due to drought, insect infestations, diseased crops, typhoon, and soil erosion. Unseasonably hot temperatures and drought have reduced working hours on farms. Reduced harvest and income have affected the capacity of women to feed their children, and lack of resources has forced some families to remove their children from school. Many women report turning to menial, physically difficult jobs when faced with shrinkage of their traditional income. Alternate sources of income include collecting stones and sand, scavenging garbage, and working outside the community as laundry workers and dishwashers.

Drought disproportionately impacts women due to traditional gender roles.

Women are responsible for gathering water, and during drought they must dig ponds in low-lying areas and along riverbanks. Women and children are also burdened with the physical toll of traveling further distances to gather water.

The impact of climate change is also visible in family health. Access to clean water is a key concern for families. Women note increased incidences of water-related illness. Women also report that economic stress has increased domestic violence.

Adaptation practices

Faced with more economic stress due to extreme weather, women have made numerous adaptations. Home gardening – a common practice – has taken on an increasingly central role in women's lives and is reportedly a key aspect of family survival. Women also report adapting various farming practices, including adjusting crop variety and methods to combat pests. Efforts to improve the environmental situation include techniques to combat soil erosion.

Further, the communities continue to practice traditional land use and resource management techniques

About the project

This 2011 participatory action research was conducted to document the impact of climate change in our communities, discuss how climate change exacerbates gender inequalities, and present our policy demands to promote meaningful changes for women in our community.

Research was done through women from three villages in Rizal province.

that promote biodiversity, and forest and river sustainability. Women's farming knowledge, especially for production of food for home consumption and preservation, along with skills in keeping seeds, are likewise important tools of adaptation.



Women as first-responders: Extreme weather & natural disasters

It is common for local men to leave the community for jobs, particularly in the farming off-seasons. When the region was devastated by a typhoon in 2009, most of the men were working outside the community and women were responsible for their family's safety. Women report having lost most of their belongings due to their husbands' absence. During the disaster, women brought their children to safety before attempting to save their belongings. By the time they returned, their homes had already been washed away in the floodwaters.



Climate Justice Briefs: Philippines

Weather events & local effects of climate change

This area experienced a severe drought in 2010, with respondents reporting high temperatures and lack of rainfall during a nine-month period. This drought followed a devastating typhoon in 2009 which washed away homes, caused landslides, destroyed crops, and led to massive soil erosion in two of the three communities.

Additional community-level adaptations have been made in response to the growing risk of extreme weather events.

In particular, Dumagat indigenous women employ farming practices that promote soil restoration and biodiversity. Dumagat communities lack access to electricity and use traditional methods to predict storms and respond in ways that protect the community as a whole. They also use age-old practices to take care of rivers, streams and forests as vital sources for their needs and are careful not to overtax capacity.

Building women's adaptive capacity: Obstacles and potential

Gender roles still conform to local tradition. Though the rigidity of these roles vary among communities, in general men's roles are defined by farm work and women's by household chores and childcare. Traditionally, women are more involved in community affairs than men because they spend more time in the home. However, when women must take on additional labour, this opportunity to connect with their community is limited.

In spite of this, with women already participating in community affairs and the community's acceptance of their involvement, there is potential for building adaptive capacity.



Pangangatsa fishing by Dumagat women

Further, women's traditional knowledge of farming is valued, increasing ways for women to get involved in adaptation programs.

Policy implications

The most important tool for adaptation is control of land. There is an urgent need for government action to strengthen insecure land tenure in the region, especially for women.

There is currently a lack of empowerment programs for women, and efforts should be made to scale up opportunities for women's community-level involvement in adaptation strategies. There is a general mismatch of policy outcomes and identified climate-related vulnerabilities. Climate-sensitive sectors and vulnerable groups, such as women and children, are most likely to be affected; yet there isn't a clear action plan to protect these at-risk sectors and populations.

Research indicates there are a disproportionate number of mitigation strategies at the national level, with scant attention paid to adaptation. Most efforts are focused on physical infrastructure such as flood barriers, and there is little support for rural farmers as they adapt to the altered climate.

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