



**C**LIMATE CHANGE is not gender-neutral. It represents an enormous challenge to the well-being of women. As the majority of the world's poor, women are extremely vulnerable to the abrupt environmental changes that climate change causes, among them drought and deforestation; rising temperatures; declining rainfall totals and variability; rising sea levels and high incidences of weather extremes and disasters. Yet women also are keen observers of those changes and their valuable first-hand knowledge, too often overlooked by policy makers, can be utilized to find ways to lessen the hardship of climate change and in the long term, contribute to the halting and reversing of this phenomenon.

The measured impact of climate change on women and men must be understood as both an environmental and a socio-economic phenomenon. **It is the product of the susceptibility of an environment to climatic shifts and the adaptive capacity of the population to respond to these changes.** Thus the impact of climate change varies across age, gender, class, geographical location, etc. — and historically marginalized populations (in which women are disproportionately represented) must contend with factors such as limited access to decision making and economic assets - which impact their ability to proactively engage with and effectively respond to the effects of climate change.

Ultimately, a gendered analysis of climate change provides a holistic approach to an issue that disproportionately impacts women but also relies upon them, as agents of change, to propose and implement innovative solutions that will help to mitigate its impacts.

#### CASE STUDY: Ghana

► **IN GHANA**, where an estimated 35 percent of the land is prone to desertification and where the desert is increasing by 20,000 hectares a year, women are demanding that their voices be heard on these critical issues. **UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality, which promotes the political and economic empowerment of women all over the world, has underwritten a two-year, \$500,000 programme in Ghana to help women address the impact of climate change.** The programme, with an equal amount matched by the government, increases the ability of women to advocate for gender-sensitive policies in national and international forums and workshops, and to conduct face-to-face meetings with government officials as the nation shapes its climate change policies.

► **IN GHANA**, agriculture and livestock are central to the country's economy, with 70 percent of the population depending directly or indirectly on agriculture, including fisheries, crop and animal farming. In this context, women, who form the mainstay of the agricultural workforce, devote much of their lives to working the land and as such, are disproportionately reliant on access to local natural resources (including water, energy sources, etc.). Throughout Ghana, droughts are a major problem for the northern and coastal savannahs, whereas variability of rainfall has most significantly impacted transition and forest zones. **As climate change makes land increasingly arid, women lose the means to grow food to provide for their families, making food insecurity more likely.** At the same time, women must travel farther and farther to gather fuel and water. Furthermore, as more extreme weather makes flooding in the country's coastal areas more frequent, it increases the occurrence of migration and the incidence of urban vulnerability and displacement — with northern regions of the country and parts of Volta region seeing substantial numbers of their population moving to the wetter south and urban areas.

► **IN GHANA**, women have insisted that the government take into account the gender differentiated impact of climate change when shaping national plans for climate change. The co-leads of the Fund's grant, ABANTU for Development and the Gender Action on Climate Change for Equality and Sustainability (GACCES), have teamed up to advocate for the inclusion of women candidates on the National Climate Change Committee and nominated women to serve in this capacity. Due to these and other efforts, women make up about 30 percent of the membership of this critical committee. In addition, the grantees have obtained commitments of support from government ministries who have pledged to incorporate a gender-sensitive perspective in their climate-change related operations and policy formulation processes. They have conducted ongoing workshops on the need to take into account the impact of climate change on women and have trained 158 lawmakers and 78 members of the media on this issue. They have conducted research in selected areas of Ghana with high climate variability. They have spoken out internationally, at the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. They have brought together women and policy makers. And they have helped implement local sustainability projects with women affected by climate change in the upper west region of Ghana.

Supporting women's political and economic empowerment is a critical step in the advancement of gender equality. In 2009, UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality was launched to strengthen women's engagement in both areas. In the two short years of the Fund's existence, spurred on by generous donations of \$65 million from the government of Spain, \$3 million from the government of Norway, and \$800,000 from the government of Mexico, the Fund has underwritten 40 grants in 35 countries.

The programmes that the grants help underwrite vary from country to country. But they share characteristics in common: They are run by local and national organizations, government agencies and partnerships among and between these sectors; they emphasize best practices and impact-oriented efforts, and they achieve tangible results for women and girls.

In this way and in so many others, **the Fund has made important headway, but the work is far from done. That is why support for the Fund is so critical — now and in the future.** UN Women invites governments, the private sector, and individuals to support UN Women's Fund for Gender Equality in providing efficient and impact oriented grants to organizations achieving progress on gender equality and women's rights. To donate to the FGE please contact the FGE Secretariat:

**Ana Maria Enriquez**

Chief, Fund for Gender Equality

866 UN Plaza, Suite 540

New York, NY 10017

(917) 484 - 8064

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