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**OUTCOMES OF THE AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT FORUM (VII) ON  
CLIMATE CHANGE, GENDER AND YOUTH: THE WAY FORWARD**  
*Acting On Climate Change For Sustainable Development  
In Africa*

BY

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## **Introduction:**

The African Development Forum on Climate Change (ADF VII) was held to raise awareness and mobilize effective commitment from all stakeholders and partners at all levels to ensure that climate change concerns are effectively mainstreamed into development policies, strategies, programmes and practices in Africa.

ADF VII was one way that in which Africa's participation in international climate change negotiations could be strengthened with a view of ensuring that adequate reflection of the continent's concerns and priorities in a post-2012 international climate change regime.

## **The issues – why a pre-Africa Development Forum (ADF) on climate change and vulnerability?**

Africa's fast growing, youthful and increasingly urbanized population places immense pressures on development and the environment.

The continent's population is growing at an annual rate of more than two percent on average—mainly due to high birth rates. The continent is also expected to sustain the highest rates of urbanization in the coming decades.

This implies that there will be an impact on human activities because of decreased natural resources, agricultural yields, higher food prices and increases in per capita energy consumption.

The rural poor will become poorer, vector borne diseases e.g. dengue fever and malaria of both women and young people will increase, women will face even more challenges in accessing resources, more people will migrate in search for resources and individual livelihoods of young people who are already socially excluded will continue to be affected.

Unless effectively dealt with, climate change will have a dramatic impact on the environment and on economic and social development reversing gains of both social and sustainable development indicators including the Millennium Development goals.

## **Climate change and vulnerability scenario**

Vulnerability opens up the possibility of examining the role of social factors and social vulnerability to climate change is differentiated at the local level, to differential entitlements to resources. Likewise, the capacity to cope with, or adapt to, climate change depends on differential entitlements with social phenomena such as class, race and gender (even within the same gender, there is more differentiation based on social class and race). The impact of climate change is not gender neutral.

Both climate change and the differential impacts of climate change such as health, increase women's vulnerability that is already driven by several causes: entitlements to resources, inadequacy of land tenure, inequality in the productive sphere, access to education, limited mobility, and limited access to decision-making.

In Africa, where state interventions are variable in frequency and effectiveness, young people, women and children continue to be vulnerable to weather-related hazards and climate extremes.

As demographic forces continue to cause direct and indirect exposure to climate hazards, countries with youthful population structures are already feeling the pressure and are exacerbating national developmental challenges such as the ability to provide safe water and sanitation, food security, and access to infrastructure for education and health services.

In 2006, the World Health Organization reported that more than a quarter of the world's youth live in countries where at least two thirds of the population do not have access to improved sanitation facilities. An estimated 20 to 50 percent of youth in most African countries do not have access to improved sanitation facilities. The effects of climate change compounded with these conditions can pose serious health problems for young people.

Climate change affects food supply and young women are seriously affected by dwindling food supply and increased food insecurity. Research shows that girls have more nutritional deficit than boys during times when food is scarce or food prices are high. Increased droughts and rainfall shortages will therefore have a stronger impact on younger women.

Children under the age of five are more susceptible to infection of vector-borne diseases, such as malaria, whose prevalence will increase with climate changes. Children born during droughts are also more likely to be malnourished or have their growth stunted. According to the UNDP Human Development Report (2007), Ethiopian and Kenyan children below five years of age respectively, were 36 and 50 percent more likely to be malnourished and in Niger children below two years were 72 percent more likely to be stunted if born during a drought

Climate change will also affect youth employment in Africa. Currently, unemployment rates of young people are high, because of the various barriers in securing decent work. The majority of African youth are highly dependent on natural resources and agriculture hence will be affected by climate change. Fortunately, while climate change poses a challenge on livelihoods, there are also opportunities presented through the green economy. However, many young Africans and women lack the necessary information and skills, only a small proportion of them will be able to take advantage of the opportunities presented.

Women constitute the majority of the poor in communities that are highly dependent on local natural resources for their livelihood. Despite being the major producers of food, women tend to own less than 10 percent of agricultural land. Moreover, the lands owned by women are often overused and less fertile since they are usually acquired through patriarchal inheritance.

Women's limited access to the resources of production, including land technology and credit as well as limited involvement in decision-making processes makes them disproportionately vulnerable to the impact of climate change. For instance, an increase in desertification and drought or other slow-onset changes in the climate could impinge on subsistence production, implying loss of revenue for women further diminishing their comparatively low income.

Women in rural areas in Africa are also largely responsible for household water supply and energy for cooking and heating, as well as for food security.<sup>1</sup>In instances where climate change causes heavy rains and increases the frequency of floods, the women's workload also increases as they have to devote more time to collecting and cleaning excess flood water, cleaning and safeguarding the house after flooding. Deforestation, which is already occurring in areas of the Sahel, Sudan and Guinean vegetation zones, is another critical threat to African women. Women use forest resources for nutritional, health, commercial and cultural activities and thus the loss of biodiversity has serious implications for both women and the entire community.

Increased migration is already being experienced as an adaptation mechanism and research studies indicate that climate change induced migrants often move with no dependents implying that women and children are often left behind.

Other gender and climate change related effects that have been observed include:

- Increased dropout rates of school age girls in times of water stress;
- Increased early marriages so that parents can raise resources to meet family needs e.g. in pastoralist communities;
- Increased sexual violence in emergency camps

### **Way forward on the general African Development Forum (ADF) Outcomes**

The ADF outcomes were used in relevant international previous processes like Cancun and Rio+20 and will still be used to further inform Africa's common negotiating position on climate change in other fora like the Conference Of Parties (COP) 17 since Africa's concerns reflected would adequately meet a post 2012 international climate change regime.

They also form the basis for the preparation of an Action Plan on Climate Change that will be jointly prepared and implemented by AUC, ECA and AfDB, with UNEP as a strategic partner, and in collaboration with all stakeholders and other partners at regional, sub-regional, national and local levels.

**ADF Call for Action - *What steps are being taken / could be taken to reduce the vulnerability of women and youth?***

Although climate change affects everyone regardless of race, caste, ethnicity, sex and level of income, its impacts are more heavily felt by poorer nations and communities, and

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<sup>1</sup>*Changing the Climate: Why Women's Perspectives Matter.* Women's Environment and Development Organization Information Sheet 2007, p2.

climate change magnifies existing inequalities. In the large number of weak and crisis-prone nation states, climate change will increase chronic instability, hence the need for action now which stipulates that:

All stakeholders should ensure the effective implementation of all global and sector-specific actions contained in the outcome document i.e. consensus statement.

- Support to the ClimDev-Africa Programme by Africa's development partners should be upscaled
- Allocation of climate change funds in to Africa should be channeled through the Africa Green Fund This will ensure that funds are channeled in a timely manner and in a way responsive to Africa's specificities
- Climate change concerns should be mainstreamed into development policies, strategies, programmes and activities on the continent. This will be spearheaded by the, joint annual meeting of the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development.
- The development and implementation of climate change adaptation and mitigation programmes should have a gender and child-centered, ecosystem-based approach.
- The joint secretariat I.e. UNECA, AfDB, AUC, should be strengthened to support Africa's participation in International negotiations and enhance capacity

### **Some Progress and Actions taken thus far**

Some continental climate-change programmes and initiatives have been endorsed by the African Union Summit such as: the Climate for Development in Africa (ClimDev-Africa) Programme, the Great Green Wall of the Sahel and Sahara and the African Monitoring of the Environment for Sustainable Development (AMESD) Programme;

- During ADFVII, the Clim-Dev Africa Programme to be implemented by AUC, ECA and AfDB was launched. The Programme will guide the effective integration of climate information and services into development planning and to ensure the mainstreaming of climate considerations into policies and programmes is directed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and sustainable development in Africa. ClimDev-Africa will, in particular, build the capacities of relevant African institutions for enhanced information generation and analysis and policy-making
- The Africa Climate Policy Centre (ACPC), and the Climate Change and Desertification Unit has been established to support effective implementation of Clim-Dev Africa Programme.  
Currently UNECA is conducting on-going studies to document the impact of climate change in Africa, in order to inform national strategies for adaptation.
- Establishment of the Africa Green Fund hosted by the African Development Banks to receive and manage Africa's allocation of climate change resources as pledged in the Copenhagen Accord and requested by Africa's leadership at COP 15 in Copenhagen, Denmark;

*What are the major achievements and gaps and challenges in ensuring adequate attention to gender perspectives in climate change efforts?*

### **Challenges encountered in the implementation of the outcomes**

- Economic challenges
  - Climate change also poses serious threats to rural livelihoods. This underscores the need to strike a balance between efforts on climate action and meeting immediate development imperatives.
  
- Financing climate change
  - Allocating new, additional, adequate, predictable, accessible and reliable resources to Africa to enable it undertake adequate climate change adaptation and nationally appropriate mitigation actions remains a challenge. Furthermore, the little funding available is not well-targeted.
  - There is also a need to devise innovative financing mechanisms, including appropriate carbon pricing in order to enhance resource mobilization. Financing mechanisms must also be flexible enough to reflect women's priorities and needs. The active participation of women in the development of funding criteria and allocation of resources for climate change initiatives is vital, particularly at local levels. Gender analysis of all budget lines and financial instruments for climate change is needed to ensure gender-sensitive investments in programmes for adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer and capacity building.
  - Africa has not benefited that much from the existing Carbon trading market. Even those countries that have accessed the resources may not be addressing the gendered and youth dimensions of climate change including ensuring that the green economy takes into consideration the vulnerable groups.

*What are the critical issues for youth and women in financing or addressing financing of climate change at national and local levels?*

- Governance and leadership:
  - Including promotion of women's leadership in climate change negotiations, policies, budgeting etc
  - The role of governments in financing science and technology research is critical. If Africa had to address climate change, who would be funding the research in Africa?
  
- Participation: Representation of parliamentarians, the private sector, and marginalized groups such as women, indigenous peoples, and local communities in the ongoing climate change negotiations is inadequate. In recent years youth have been recognized as a constituency at the annual sessions of the Conference of the Parties. However the status they occupy is a provisional/probationary status.

*What steps are being taken / could be taken to increase the participation of youth and women in decision-making on climate change at different levels? What good practice examples can be provided?*

- Peace and Security: Most African conflicts, including climate-related ones are aggravated by heavy dependence on natural resources (forest, mineral, agro-pastoral and water resources). – Darfur conflict is said to be exacerbated by environmental degradation.

### **What should we continue doing? Some concrete recommendations**

- Accelerate Implementation of existing instruments- Africa Youth Charter, Beijing Plan of Action, ICPD etc.
  - Enabling policy environments that will encourage private sector and stakeholders to address climate change challenges through innovation.
  - Gender and climate justice campaign at all levels of decision making
- Main stream social and human development considerations to ensure that most vulnerable are prioritized.
  - Mainstream gender perspectives in national development processes
  - Promote youth led adaptation and mitigation in climate change – especially through participation and leadership of young women in climate change negotiations.

*What steps are being taken / could be taken to mainstream gender perspectives? What good practice examples can be provided?*

- Strengthen population dynamics and programming in climate change responses
  - Policies to reduce population growth to influence population distribution must also be linked to actions to reduce green house gas emissions.
- Research and Capacity Building
  - More research is needed to promote a better understanding of climate change and other linkages e.g. population dynamics, the environment and climatic change; Document evidence of how climate change has affected women and men as well as best practices adopted by governments / CSOs etc to inform policy formulation. The African Centre for Gender and Social Development at UNECA, has commissioned a continental study on Gendered Dimensions of Food Security and Climate Change (in progress) and another on Climate change induced migration.
  - Strengthen capacity of vulnerable groups especially young women, and youth to participate in negotiations, adapt to impact of climate change and mitigation.
  - South- south cooperation.
  - Improve early warning mechanisms and public awareness

**Consider the opportunities that are presented by climate change**

- Innovation in various sectors e.g. Agriculture- fertilizers, genetic engineering, dri-water, hydroponics.

*What are the critical issues for youth and women in relation to technology and innovation in addressing climate change at national and local levels?*

- Green economy- green jobs to reduce youth unemployment  
To date, Africa's participation in the Clean Development Mechanism has been quite limited. In fact, according to documented sources, only 32 out of approximately 2,200 project activities registered since 2005 have occurred in Africa, primarily because of limited awareness of such opportunities and a substantial lack of skills to operate such complex projects.  
Green jobs are now perceived as offering an opportunity to address unemployment and underemployment. For example, in India, an initiative to replace inefficient biomass cooking stoves in 9 million households with more advanced ones could create 150,000 jobs (Green Jobs Initiative, 2008). Viable options for Africa currently include forestry and renewable energy, because of the assumption that forestry projects will continue to attract investment despite the limited spread of training in tree-planting techniques.
- Carbon credit trading are all ways of innovative financing at the lowest level for climate change mitigation.
- Opportunity to reform education systems
- Solving Africa's energy problems: Addressing the climate change challenge provides an opportunity for African countries to adopt energy efficient and clean energy development paths, while solving the continent's lingering energy deficits. This includes ensuring that the region is effectively integrated into the existing Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and voluntary carbon markets.
- International cooperation: Climate change provides an opportunity for improving international cooperation among African countries, and between them and other regions of the world, to help steer the continent towards the path of sustainable development.
- Policy Integration- as a way of efficient resource mobilization and utilization.

