

Gender-Responsive Climate Change Mitigation in Asia and Beyond: Creating a Marketplace for Change Agents, Policy Makers and Funders

REMARKS by Bridget Burns, Co-Director, Women's Environment and Development Organization

Thank you, colleagues, it is an honor to join you here today. WEDO's main work as a global advocacy organization, in relation to our work on climate change, has been articulating the linkages between gender & climate change; providing this capacity building / awareness to decision-makers [example: via the Global Gender & Climate Alliance]; facilitating spaces in international processes for women's groups, gender experts and practitioners to directly engage in the policy process [example: Women and Gender Constituency]; as well as to translate policy mandates at national and local levels.

For WEDO, we simply cannot achieve effective climate change mitigation or adaptation if we do not take gender equality and women's rights into account. And, as has been articulated in the rationale for this gathering, we have seen progress in international policy processes and financing mechanisms on climate change to recognize and account for the critical role of gender.

I think we are all aware of the limitations of any policy moving from words to action; but many feel emboldened post-Paris that now is the opportunity to focus on implementation. This includes a strong emphasis on action, on solutions—particularly to mitigate climate change and reduce emissions. Climate actions / projects come to fruition not just as commitments in NDCs, but in Global Climate Action Agendas, bi-lateral partnerships and summits of non-state actors including local governments.

But WEDO and many women's groups have found that these 'solutions' or 'projects' are often not representative of what solutions for people and communities looked like from our experience and perspective.

Setting some principles and guidance for gender-responsive mitigation is an increasingly critical task, when recognizing the scale of what Parties agreed to in Paris, to pursue efforts to keep warming under 1.5 degrees, and the huge gaps in terms of national commitments and finance which still present a significant barrier to achieving them.

For the WEDO and its partners; it was critical to build the capacity of women's groups already implementing climate actions to make these visible at an international level and most importantly to highlight the underlying values of these sustainable solutions, namely—that they provide equal access to women and men in the value chain; that they promote equal participation in all areas of decision-making; that they do not produce additional burdens to women's livelihoods; that they ensure environmental integrity and a low input of resources; that they provide a multiplicity of benefits including reduced work-load, food security, improved health;—that the results can be shared, replicated and upscaled—and that they are decentralized, safe and affordable.

Women's groups at local, national and international level are building case studies, piloting initiatives and focusing on scale in order to highlight the kinds of climate change projects which both reduce GHG

emissions and improve livelihoods. For example, in this recently published report by the Women and Gender Constituency, there are 30 examples of projects; defined as Technical, non-Technical and Transformational—they include projects such as training programmes for young indigenous women on solar installation in India, sustainable consumption and production projects in Taiwan; and capacity building on seed conservation and agroecology.

To create change and influence project design to best reflect the needs of communities, WEDO and partners have focused on working with women's groups to build capacity in understanding national climate commitments, how financing mechanisms are translating at the national level, and how they can showcase climate actions to their Governments which are both inclusive and gender responsive. Similarly, it is working with Governments to create spaces for dialogue and capacity building on how these local solutions can be scaled for real transformational change. The new extension of the Lima Work Programme on Gender includes recommendations for enhancing gender expertise in technical expert meetings – a good example of breaking open spaces to allow greater capacity and understanding for how projects can be gender-responsive.

We have seen already that this enhanced visibility is creating new types of project design. For example, our partners in Georgia, with active participation in the UNFCCC, were able to showcase a local grassroots women empowerment project- building women's leadership, economic and technical skills in the area of improving household access to safe water, sanitation and energy- which had received some funding to do a serious monitoring and evaluation. This program was presented as a case study in side events during COP21, and there, discussed with the representatives of the Georgian Government, who accepted to support the development of a large-scale replication plan, in the form of a NAMA. The project has now been submitted to the 4th round of the NAMA Facility, requesting 12 million Euro to provide half of the rural population access to decentralized renewable energy and energy efficiency systems- and it has a very good chance of receiving this funding. It represents one of the first 'gender-responsive' NAMAs for its focus on gender equality throughout the value chain, and many countries are interested in replicating this model.

In closing I want to remind us all that when thinking about scaling change, we should feel optimistic that our challenge is not that the solutions do not exist, but that we have a role to change the way we think about project design, about climate mitigation and technology, and the pure common sense that comes with viewing this through a gender lens. However, we cannot let our focus become too narrow to the individual project design and implementations. We also must continue to grapple with the broader implications of transitioning to low carbon economies in a just way, including in regards to re-thinking the current sexual division of labour, promoting decent work for women in under-valued fields such as care work; the (social) service sector; sustainable, locally-focused agriculture and fisheries; as well as locally governed renewable energies with women participating equally as shareholders, owners and fairly-remunerated workers. We must also tackle issues of land rights, inheritance and access to credit. In such contexts, just and equitable transitions need to be gender-responsive and transformative.