

Module 2f: Inclusion and climate Frequently asked questions

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Frequently asked questions

Introduction

The Frequently Asked Questions section below is designed to provide answers to some of the common questions related to gender specific issues of climate change and the role that Red Cross/Red Crescent can play.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What are some links between gender and climate change?

One important factor to note is that women and men are disproportionately impacted by natural disasters. More often than not, mortality rates are higher for women after disasters such as floods. Men's mortality in times of disaster is highest during an event whereas women's mortality is higher in the response and recovery stages. Disasters such as floods will be more frequent and severe due to climate change, exacerbating existing vulnerabilities.

Another important link between climate change and gender is how gender can impact one's access to resources, education, legal protection and decision-making power, which greatly influence vulnerability and adaptive capacity. Understanding how gender shapes women's and men's lives and livelihoods is an important component of understanding the impacts of climate risks, and effectively addressing these risks.

2. Why is it important to include gender issues when addressing climate change?

Unless we meaningfully take gender into account, we may be failing to address particular vulnerabilities, missing an opportunity to build on women and girls' existing capacity or even exacerbating an existing vulnerability. Therefore, as it is evident that women and girls will be put at more risk in the wake of climate disasters, it is important to understand and address the specific vulnerabilities and needs of women and girls.

Additionally, women can be viewed as powerful agents of change. By including the concept of gender, one can realize the active role women can play in mitigation and adaptation efforts.

As climate change may increase women's work loads, girls rather than boys may be withdrawn from school in order to carry out extra household tasks in times of stress. A lack of education can further intensify their long-term vulnerability. At the same time, social, cultural, but also legal and institutionalized barriers for women to exercise their rights, such as access to land and natural resources, leaves them vulnerable in their multiple roles as food producers and providers, as guardians of health, and as caregiver. Hazards such as drought and erratic rainfall, as well as increasing pressure and degradation on natural resources can further burden women.

3. Why is it important for women and girls to be included in addressing climate change?

As for any of the areas of work within the Red Cross Red Crescent, it is important to ensure gender and diversity sensitive approaches are mainstreamed throughout our programmes, promoting the equal participation of women and men and marginalised groups in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes, as well as in policy making, assessments, strategy and tool development.

It is important to emphasize the transformational role women can have in their communities in supporting adaptation and mitigation measures. Women play critical roles in the community and in their family. The experiences of women and girls can be harnessed in disaster management and response efforts. Climate change also offers opportunities to tap into women's traditional roles as care takers of natural resources and link them with paid employment. Hence, including women in mitigation and adaptation can in turn benefit women who face financial and occupational hardships. Additionally, the participation of women and girls can ensure that efforts do not ignore the specific needs and interests on women and girls.

Cultural practices in some places can mean that women have limited mobility or are not taught life-saving skills like how to swim. This can leave women more vulnerable during a flood as these survival skills are traditionally only taught to men. More flooding events and ecosystem degradation may mean even higher fatalities of women and girls unless this gender sensitive vulnerability is addressed.

4. What role can women play in preparing and responding to climate change?

The skills, experience, and capacities of women need to be harnessed alongside those of men by those implementing 'climate smart' disaster risk reduction programmes. For example, the knowledge of women who work with natural resources has proven to be essential for survival.

Women play important roles in mobilizing communities to prepare and respond to disasters. They have shown themselves essential in mobilizing communities to prepare for and to respond to disaster. Women can also be strong promoters for preparedness measures at the community level and have knowledge and capacity to add in climate change measures.

As stated before, women can also be agents of change that promote new strategies. Women change their strategies in response to new information. Because of the high uncertainties involved, reducing vulnerability requires adaptive management: experimenting with new strategies, and learning from success and failure. People who are willing to change their strategies in response to new information will be more successful than those who try preserve with their habitual behaviour. Therefore, women can play active roles in implementing and promoting adaptive and mitigation measures.

5. How can we facilitate learning about gender specific issues about climate change and what role can the Red Cross Red Crescent play?

Red Cross Red Crescent National Societies can play a role in warranting that gender specific climate impacts are considered in disaster risk reduction. Men and women require different forms of assistance to prepare and respond and facilitators must be familiar with key issues in order to address the circumstances effectively. Therefore, gender and climate change issues need to be addressed in national development and response measures. Through its work with communities Red Cross Red Crescent can initiate discussion about the concept of gender and climate change and help communities deal with its diverse impacts.

We need to consistently broaden our networks with gender and diversity focused organisations. It is key to harness the capacity of women: support and promote them to be leaders in their communities and champions of Health. This requires the systematic collection and use of sex and age disaggregated data in all Health programmes. Collect qualitative and quantitative data to allow for rigorous monitoring and evaluation and a more in depth understanding of gender and diversity impacts. Lastly, it is important that risk assessment and health teams have equal representation of men and women and a proportional representation of other groups within the community, e.g. people with disabilities.

6. How do games help in addressing gender and climate change?

Throughout the Climate Training Kit we have made an effort to guide facilitators to try games and practical exercises in training sessions. Experience has shown the effectiveness of transmitting information about climate change risks through games and exercises based on participation, role-playing and decision making. Two games in particular, *Ready!* And the *gender and climate change* game highlight how social and economic disparities between men and women can impact adaptive capacity.

By designing activities such as games, facilitators can encourage the participation of women in decision making processes and highlight differential impacts.

Being directly engaged in an exercise or a game that encourage participants reflect upon key issue and to make informed decisions is an effective way to absorb possibly complex messages. Games are fun but have been used by Red Cross Red Crescent societies to speed up dialogue and action on climate change risks. Games have been carried out in more than 40 countries. Different games are suited to different issues. For more on gender and climate games visit: <http://www.climatecentre.org/resources-games/games/9/gender-and-climate-game>