



IN BRIEF

# GENDER, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT



Photo Credit: Laura Cleary

## What's the Issue?

Climate change is a real and growing threat to livelihoods, cultures, ecosystems and lives in the Pacific region. Gender and climate change are closely linked issues. Women, girls, boys, and men have different roles and responsibilities within their families and communities. As a result, each of these groups is differently affected by, and has different abilities to adapt to, the effects of climate change; and has different skills and knowledge to contribute. Overlooking gender can seriously weaken the outcomes of climate change and disaster risk management initiatives.

Climate change is one of the most urgent issues affecting Pacific Island Countries. Effects are likely to include an increase in the number and severity of extreme weather events and disasters, rising sea levels and coastal erosion, water salinization, coral bleaching and ocean warming, reduced fish stocks, and reduction in crop yields. Impacts include reduced food security, loss of lives and livelihoods, reduced access to arable land, reduced availability of clean water, and increased disease.

Adequately addressing climate change and disasters requires assessing and responding to the different needs of various groups within societies and communities. Women are particularly vulnerable to these effects for a range of reasons, including unequal access to resources and power, restricted rights and ability to move freely and without fear, and limited ability to influence the ways their communities are managed.

Women's distinct roles also provide skills and knowledge which, if utilized effectively, can be a key resource for positive adaptation and response. Women are not victims, and their contributions will be fundamental to effectively adapting to the effects of climate change and building resilience to disasters.

## Our Solutions

Women are systematically excluded from decision making relating to adaptation and mitigation of climate change, and management of disaster risk. UN Women works in partnership with a range of other organisations, including UN and CROP agencies, to: empower women to use their knowledge and skills; provide technical advice and training to practitioners; and compile and conduct research into the gendered impacts of climate change and disasters.

We work directly in communities to empower women and provide access to sustainable energy sources, as well as providing training on disaster risk reduction and response. We support these women to engage in policy development and debate at the National level. We also provide training, support and resources to climate change and disaster management professionals, to better conduct gender analyses, to disaggregate data by age and gender, and to take into account the different needs of men and women in their work. We work to compile evidence and research on gender, climate change, and disasters in the Pacific; to better understand impacts on men and women.

UN Women are developing a long term program, which will aim to focus in the three target areas of research, community programming, and technical assistance and advocacy. This strategy will be delivered in collaboration with a range of partners.



Solar Panels in Kadavu Village. Photo Credit Laura Cleary

## How We Make a Difference in the Pacific

### Community Programming

- UN Women work in partnership with UNDP GEF-SGP and Barefoot College of India, as well as local Government and NGO partners.
- Women from 6 Pacific Island Countries – Kiribati, Fiji Nauru, Samoa, Solomon Islands, and Vanuatu – have been trained as solar engineers.
- The engineers construct, and provide ongoing maintenance for, solar panels for each household in their community.
- The women selected are from remote and rural communities, and are illiterate or semi-literate. In this way the program targets women directly to utilize their skills and ensure their involvement in energy management.
- Selected communities are not connected to the National power grid, and rely on costly and polluting forms of electricity such as diesel generators and kerosene lamps.
- Recipients of the training are supported as advocates for gender equity in climate change mitigation projects.
- 28 engineers have been trained to support 1,288 households in 6 countries.
- Planned future programming in target communities includes:
  - Support for sustainable livelihood activities in collaboration with UN Women's Economic Empowerment Program.
  - Support for target communities to be prepared for disasters, and undertake activities to mitigate disaster impacts.

### Quality Technical Assistance:

UN Women is establishing our portfolio in the intersecting areas of gender, climate change, and disaster risk management. UN Women works in partnership with a range of programs and organisations from across the Pacific. Examples of initiatives that UN Women is contributing to include:

- Developing **gender and climate change toolkits** in partnership with SPREP, UNDP, SPC and GIZ. These toolkits will support practitioners in technical climate

change areas, such as sustainable energy and clean water, to better mainstream gender in their programs.

- Conducted with support from OHCHR, UNDP, UNOCHA, and UNFPA a **review of gender sensitivity in disaster management** in relation to tropical cyclone Evan which hit Samoa and Fiji in 2012, looking specifically at gender and protection issues in disaster response.
- Through the inter-agency work of UN Women, UNOCHA, UNFPA, UNHCR, and UNDP, GenCap advisors conducted **gender assessments of the response** to the 2009 tsunami in Samoa, and tropical cyclones Vania (2010) and Atu (2011) in Vanuatu.
- Developing an **annotated bibliography** of data, research, and publications which provide an evidence base for the gendered impact of climate change and disasters in the Pacific.
- Provided in partnership with other UN agencies, such as UNDP, **training for climate change and disaster management practitioners** in gender mainstreaming and data analysis.
- UN Women is the lead advising agency for gender as a cross-cutting issue across clusters in the Pacific Humanitarian Team.
- Provided inputs into **Evacuation Centre Guidelines** for Fiji to ensure that protection is adequately covered in Evacuation Centre Management
- Inputs into the establishment and development of terms of reference for the Vanuatu protection and gender working group for humanitarian response
- Provided **sex and age disaggregated data training** for the Fiji NDMO and National Planning Office responsible for Early Recovery for Disasters in Fiji

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