

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction – Laws, Policies and Practices in Vietnam

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Abstract: While Viet Nam has been successful in achieving economic growth, poverty reduction and gender equality, the country cannot avoid exposure to a variety of disasters due to climate change, as it is among the most prone regions to disasters in the world. This paper will show that climate change and its impacts are not gender neutral and nor are its policies and actions. Because of prevailing gender inequalities, women are likely to be more affected than men. Sensitivity to climate change varies and is particularly strong amongst poorer, rural women, including those from ethnic minorities, who tend to rely on natural resources and climate-sensitive livelihood activities. Due to their gender-defined roles in society and traditional patterns of marginalization, women are amongst those that are likely to carry the heaviest burdens from these changes and benefit less the policies and programmes that address these, though they play a crucial role in Viet Nam. Not only do they comprise almost half of its population, but they also play important roles at the household level, in the rural and urban economies and in society as a whole. The paper also shows that women should not be seen as 'victims'. They are also crucial actors in climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR), and their needs and knowledge should be used to inform the design, implementation, and monitoring of climate change and CCA/DRR policies.

Key words: Gender; Equality; Climate change; Adaptation; Disaster; Risk Reduction.

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1. Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

In Southeast Asia, Vietnam has had a strong history of gender equity, partly resulting from ancient matriarchal traditions. The introduction of Buddhism to Vietnam over 2,000 years ago provided a basis for gender equity. As a result, women have always played an important role in Vietnamese society and traditionally enjoyed a relatively privileged position in family and society, and especially the country has made good progress in improving gender equality, and stands out for its success in closing gender gaps in the last decades. At the same time, Vietnam is signatory to numerous international instruments addressing gender equality, women's rights, and women's empowerment, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Vietnam also adopted the Beijing Platform for Action⁽¹⁾, as well as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)⁽²⁾ and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)⁽³⁾ (UN Vietnam, 2016).

Vietnam has a solid legislative basis with regard to gender equality which is enshrined in its 2013 Constitution⁽⁴⁾, and the country has successfully enacted policies and laws for the protection and promotion of women's rights. According to the 2013 Constitution (Article 26), "Male and female citizens have equal rights in all fields. The State shall adopt policies to guarantee the right to and opportunities for gender equality". More detailed measures to ensure the promotion of gender equality are set out under the 2006 Law on Gender Equality, which mandates government agencies and sectors to full their responsibilities on gender equality and to ensure that violations are addressed. Subsequent guidance documents and implementing decrees delineate the responsibilities of each agency in organizing the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality. This includes targeted policies and measures such as the National Strategy for 2011-2020 and the Plan of Action on Gender Equality for 2016-2020, as well as the introduction and/or revision of other legislation of vital importance to the promotion of gender equality and the protection of women's rights. The Law on Gender Equality and the National Strategy on Gender Equality for 2011-2020 oblige all sectors and ministries to mainstream gender in their work. Government ministries and local authorities are responsible for building and issuing action plans on gender

equality to implement the strategy. To date, all provinces and many government ministries have adopted such action plans (MOLISA, 2014).

Although Vietnam's commitment to gender equality is expressed in a number of laws, policies, and strategies, there is a lack of effective coordination and clear division of responsibility in ensuring gender equality and rights of women within State institutions. Within each institution, from central to local level, human, technical and financial resources and authority are still not adequately allocated to promote gender equality and women's empowerment despite over two decades of international technical support. Overall, the institutional mandates of the different ministries and agencies, and the coordination of agencies working for gender equality need to be reviewed to reduce fragmentation as well as overlap, and continue to strengthen the national institutional mechanism for gender equality in the country (UN Vietnam, 2016).

The revised Marriage and Family Law was adopted in June 2014, highlighting equality among family members and women's legitimate rights and removing the prohibition on same-sex marriage. The law also recognized family care as an income-generating work in the context of separation of property. However, it does not fully comply with international norms of women's human rights, nor is it compatible with other domestic legislation (UN Vietnam, 2016). Many people, both men and women, hold strong beliefs regarding appropriate behaviour for women who are often required to put their families first, even at the expense of their own health or aspirations. Women are often expected to defer to male authority. As a result, women may not be aware of or do not exercise the rights accorded to them by law and policy. At the same time, Vietnam is a country in which gender roles are in transition. Gender stereotypes and gender values in the country have changed little from earlier decades or centuries, although what women do as part of their daily tasks has changed dramatically in recent years. The two laws - the Law on Gender Equality in 2006 and the Law on Preventing and Combating Domestic Violence in 2007 are expected to address all these issues. However, effective implementation of national laws and policies, as well as international gender equality commitments, remains the greatest challenge to promote gender equality, and the country is still struggling with many gender inequalities common to other developing countries in the region. While Vietnam has made strong normative progress towards achieving gender

equality on many levels, significant disparities remain, especially at a sub-national level and in rural and remote areas, especially for ethnic minority women and their children (GOV, 2013).

While Vietnam's laws emphasize gender equality regarding access to and use of property and land, in practice women's rights to land are weaker than men's access. For example, although the law requires that land use rights certificates (LURC) list the names of both spouses for property that has been allocated to married people, women are underrepresented on LURCs. Such certificates, which are mandated by law, are necessary for formal state recognition of land-use rights, secure tenure, formal land transactions, and access to formal credit and legal protection of land-use rights. In addition, although women make up the majority of agricultural land users in Vietnam, there is very little knowledge about the gender-related impacts of the country's land laws and related policies – both existing and proposed - including such issues as the loss of use of agricultural and availability of alternative livelihood options for women as different from men (World Bank, 2011).

2. Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

While Vietnam has been successful in achieving economic growth, poverty reduction, and gender equality, the country cannot avoid exposing to a variety of disasters due to climate change⁽⁵⁾ which is no longer an imminent threat, as it is among the most prone regions to disasters⁽⁶⁾ in the world. These include flooding, unpredictable rainfall, typhoons, extended droughts, heat waves and cold fronts, sea level rise, and saline water intrusion. The country is at a critical juncture where policy choices on infrastructure, energy, urbanization, production and consumption patterns will shape the success of its transition towards green, low-emission and climate-resilient development. The economy is heavily dependent on fossil fuels. Without changes to its carbon-intensive growth trajectory, Vietnam will become a major regional greenhouse gas emitter, with a projected fourfold increase in net emissions between 2010 and 2030 (GOV, 2014). Insufficient access to climate finance and cleaner technology, coupled with weak integration of climate resilience and green growth into development planning, also threaten to undermine the country's socio-economic progress. Over-exploitation and unsustainable use of natural capital

contribute to the continued depletion of natural resources, including forestry and biodiversity. Loss of biodiversity and depletion of natural capital, high levels of pollution and climate change all present major risks to Vietnam's continuing and sustainable development.

Vietnam is also one of the most biodiverse countries in the world. However, its economy is very reliant on the exploitation of natural resources and biodiversity loss continues unabated, exacerbated by habitat destruction and conversion, pollution, overexploitation and the illegal capture and trafficking of endangered species. Environmental degradation, pollution, and decline in the quality and quantity of natural resources continue to impact livelihood opportunities, food security and people's health, and undermine the country's socio-economic progress (World Bank, 2011).

While the country has lifted itself out of poverty over the past three decades, rapid industrialization, urbanization and agricultural intensification have led to poorly planned development in some instances, resulting in pollution, resource depletion and environmental degradation, which are already leading to economic and societal conflicts, problems that are now being exacerbated by climate change. Accelerated urbanization and industrial expansion are taking place on land which is optimal for high-value agricultural production. For instance, between 2001 and 2005, Vietnam lost 73,300 hectares of cultivated land on an annual basis due to urbanization, affecting the lives and income of 2.5 million farmers. In recent years and especially since the global financial crisis, the threat of falling into poverty and a series of other vulnerabilities have become major concerns for ordinary people. Workers in the informal sector (which provides 60-70 per cent of employment in Vietnam) are exposed and have been forced to find a series of coping strategies as better paying jobs have dried up and living costs have increased. Such basic insecurities have many sources, and their emergence was somewhat hidden during the country's rapid growth in the early part of the decade. But, the level of risk has been compounded by the failure of social protection measures to keep pace with socio-economic change, and heightened risks driven by climate change and globalization (UN Vietnam, 2015).

The poorest people in Vietnam tend to be: (i) members of ethnic minorities, whose livelihoods depend on both subsistence agriculture and forest resources; (ii) people living in remote, often upland, areas with increasingly

degraded natural resources; (iii) people living in coastal areas, which are more prone to extreme climatic events; (iv) households headed by women or with disabled members; and (v) migrants or landless people without resources, and those who are vulnerable to climate change effects include those living in the coastal belt (where sea level rise is exacerbating flood risks and saline water intrusion); people living in Viet Nam's river deltas (who are seeing enhanced risks of river floods); communities along the central coast (at risk from more severe typhoons and droughts) and people in mountainous areas (who are subject to increasingly heavy rain, landslides, and droughts). Among the most vulnerable groups are women, children and the elderly. Ethnic minorities, because they are relatively poor, are also very vulnerable to the effects of climate change, as are many migrants. Poorer urban dwellers are vulnerable because they often live and work in low lying neighbourhoods with bad drainage and little access to clean water (World Bank and MPI, 2016).

Vietnam is no exception as it is a major threat to achieving the MDGs earlier and the SDGs later, affecting women and men, boys and girls, communities, sectors, and growth. The financial cost of responding to climate change is high and likely to absorb significant sources of Official Development Assistance (ODA). Over the past last decade, Vietnam has experienced rapid economic growth and has risen to the status of an emerging economy. Meanwhile increased pollution and unsustainable use of natural resources are important growing concerns for the country, intensified in the face of climate change. From the global perspective, Vietnam is among 56 the five most vulnerable countries to climate change, and at the highest risk of facing flooding, sea level rise and food crisis (ADB, 2013). The country's large population centers and key agricultural sectors are exposed to rising sea levels, and increased storm risks in low-lying deltas and on its long coastline. It is an emerging challenge that Vietnam faces is its vulnerability to the adverse effects of climate change as it is a disaster-prone country, with more frequent typhoons, storms, floods, droughts, mudslides, forest fires and salt-water intrusion presenting recurring risks, especially for children, women, and the elderly, and more generally the poorest in society who are also the most vulnerable. Natural and climatic stresses are increasing, and the country is facing a rapid increase in energy demand, greenhouse gas emissions, and associated pollution and costs. Logging and slash-and-burn agricultural practices have

contributed to soil degradation and deforestation. Other environmental issues include water pollution, overfishing, contaminated potable water supplies, and urbanization. More than one million people require emergency relief each year. Immediate consequences as a result of global warming are apparent due to changes in rainfall, temperatures and the availability of water. As a result of regular flooding, particularly in the central region, Vietnam has experienced great losses in productivity for food staples and thwarting efforts to cut rural poverty. Increasing temperature and worsening droughts and floods threaten food security, livelihoods, and lives. Climate change models predict that the situation will deteriorate and impact on the livelihoods of the poor, while rising sea levels will affect the country's rice producing deltas, affecting food security. Unexpected disasters may push families who escaped poverty back into it. And then children's health and education are jeopardized, which can have life-long developmental consequences. There is a real risk that the effects of climate change will slow down SDG progress in Vietnam. Although necessary, adaptation and mitigation measures will be costly and could mean there is less available financing for overall SDG progress (UN Women, 2013).

Although conclusive data is not available in Vietnam, global research demonstrates that women and children are 14 times more likely to die or be injured in a natural disaster than men, and that where gender inequalities are highest, women are more likely than men to experience the negative effects of environmental hazards. Climate change and its impacts are not gender-neutral and nor are its policies and actions. Women and girls in particular, because of widespread gender inequality and discrimination, are on the whole likely to be more affected by the negative impacts of climate change and disasters than men. They also face greater barriers in influencing, participating in and benefiting from disaster risk reduction and recovery, and climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts. The variability of climate change impacts can also undermine the effectiveness of traditional historical knowledge on climate and crop patterns, eroding a key knowledge asset of rural populations, including women (ADB, 2015).

Vietnam has demonstrated strong political commitment and determination to protect its natural resources and environment, developing a strong legal framework on sustainable development and green growth. However, key challenges remain as the country is unlikely to achieve all targets under

SDGs on environmental sustainability. The 2014 Global Environmental Performance Index ranked Vietnam 136th out of 178 countries across 20 indicators looking at ecosystems and human health, with declining trends in fisheries, forests, and air quality. Meanwhile, industrial pollution and non-strategic exploitation of mineral resources have blighted the lives and livelihoods of people and sparked public concern about environmental damage. This environmental pollution and degradation, compounded by climate change and natural hazards, present numerous challenges and have negatively impacted on vulnerable members of society, especially women and children. The situation has been further exacerbated by weak enforcement of environmental regulation and the need to strengthen public participation in environmental dialogues and socialization of environmental protection activities. In addition, emerging issues such as climate change and green growth require integration into environmental protection management (UN Vietnam, 2015).

3. Realising International Commitments on CCA and DRR and their Implementation

Human beings depend on the environment for survival, but it was not till recently that people realized their treatment of the environment, and their pollution, could have a permanent and devastating impact. Vietnam ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)⁽⁷⁾ in 1994, the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC⁽⁸⁾ in 2002 respectively. Vietnam also signed the Sendai Framework for Action⁽⁹⁾ in 2015.

Gender equality and women's empowerment was recognised as the key to achieving the UNFCCC's objectives. During the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21 or CMP 11)⁽¹⁰⁾, held in Paris, France, from 30 November to 12 December 2015, participating countries promised that they would “respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity” when taking action to address climate change”. A gender-responsive approach to climate change is also emphasized in Article 7 and Article 11 of the Paris Agreement that came out of COP21.

As an active participating country, Vietnam has taken important follow-up steps towards improving its national legal and policy framework for environmentally sustainable development and the last decade has seen the

passing of a series of key laws and policy documents in the country related to climate change and disaster risk management. Below are some key documents:

- The 2004 Strategic Orientation for Sustainable Development (Vietnam Agenda 21);
- The Communist Party Political Bureau Resolution No. 41-NQ-TW of 15-11-2004 on Environmental Protection in the Period of Intensive Modernization and Industrialization;
- The 2007 National Strategy for Natural Disaster Prevention, Response, and Mitigation to 2020;
- The 2014 Law on Environmental Protection;
- The 2011 National Strategy on Climate Change; and
- The 2012 National Action Plan on Climate Change for the period 2011-2020.

Among those laws and policies, the 2007 National Strategy for Natural Disaster Prevention, Response and Mitigation to 2020 notes that natural disasters cause negative impacts on vulnerable groups such as the elderly, people with disabilities, women, and children, although it lacks details on how gender is to be integrated. Later, the 2013 Law on Natural Disaster Prevention and Control states explicitly that “Humanity, fairness, transparency and gender equity must be guaranteed in natural disaster prevention and control” and charges the Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs (MOLISA) with the responsibility to “guide the integration of gender issues in natural disaster prevention and control”. Later, this Law has paved the way for DRR at national and community levels, with a strong emphasis on Government and civil society partnerships to promote inclusive and participatory approaches. The Law recognizes the roles and rights of communities and CSOs in environmental protection and also assures children’s rights and gender equality as underlying principles of environmental protection action. A chapter on responding to climate change is another notable enhancement of this law, which strengthens the national climate policy and green growth strategy, consistent with the UNFCCC. Taking a step further, the 2011 National Strategy on Climate Change has gender equality as one of its specific objectives. This strategy, as well as its plan of action, reflects a clear shift from ex-post disaster relief and response to ex-ante risk reduction through preparedness and resilience.

The establishment of a national programme to support community-based disaster risk mitigation is another illustration of strong political commitment to the resilience agenda. The 2014 Law on Environmental Protection includes a new climate change and green growth chapter. In fact, those laws and policies have progressively incorporated more specific directives regarding the mainstreaming of gender concerns and requirements for the full participation of women and women's organizations (UN Vietnam, 2016).

However, much remains to be done to implement those laws and policies, in order to ensure that fast economic growth will not lead to environmental degradation, greater health risks or rapid depletion of biodiversity and other natural resources. There is still limited capacity in adopting and spreading “win-win solutions” to environmental issues that contribute to poverty reduction. For example, rural sanitation is yet to improve for the majority of people in many parts of the country. There is much to be done to reduce vulnerabilities and minimize adverse impacts of natural disasters. Major CCA and DRR are possible and can bring many opportunities for further development. Along with environmental protection, CCA and DRR require a concerted, cross-sectoral response, involving many different actors and agencies. Furthermore, increases in financial and technology transfer are also very much required. Adaptation and disaster risk reduction measures will be central to Vietnam's economic growth progress. Global climate change is thus increasing environmental stresses on Vietnam. The country will need to continue to play an active part in international efforts to limit greenhouse gas emissions and to combat climate change effects. As climate change is a development challenge, the climate change response will require action on different fronts, across many sectors and localities. Enhanced global and regional cooperation, together with international finance will be critical to support Vietnam to address the climate change challenge. At the same time, they also offer opportunities for economic, social and environmentally sustainable development. Vietnam has recently shown its preparedness and strong leadership which have both been key to minimizing the impact and number of lives lost. Continuous and participatory efforts are needed to ensure the country is prepared for the impacts of climate change. Implementation of the Climate Change Strategy and disaster risk management policies including the Law on Disaster Risk Management will be key in this regard, while the establishment of a

modern social protection system can help strengthen the resilience of vulnerable groups to climate-related shocks.

4. Women's Participation in CCA and DRR

Vietnam is paying increasing attention not only to women's greater vulnerabilities but also to their crucial role in adaptation and risk reduction. Earlier, the 2008 National Target Programme to Respond to Climate Change includes gender equality as a guiding principle. It stresses the need for government ministries and the Vietnam Women's Union (VWU) to be responsible for conducting vulnerability assessments at the sectoral, regional and community levels, and raising awareness on the role of women and gender issues through activities to respond to climate change. Since then, the VWU and its local chapters have played an important role in this process as members of the Central Committee for Flood and Storm Control (CCFSC) and such provincial committees. Another significant positive development is that the 2013 Law on Natural Disaster Prevention and Control embraced the principle of gender equality and established the VWU as a member of the new Central Committee for Natural Disaster Prevention and Control (CNDPC) and corresponding provincial, district and commune-level committees. CNDPC is responsible for risk assessment, planning and implementation of disaster risk management actions at local levels, and VWU's presence in it is expected to bring a gender perspective into the work of the Committee. This is in large part due to the combined effort of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD), UN agencies, and international NGOs to increase the role of local women in disaster risk reduction and management activities through policy change on composition of the CNDPC and improvement of women's knowledge and skills to effectively participate in disaster risk reduction and management activities. In addition, Vietnam's Community-based Disaster Risk Management (CBDRM) model directs communities to maintain a minimum number of female representatives on committees. Major climate action is possible and can bring many opportunities for further development. Along with environmental protection, climate change and disaster risk reduction require a concerted, cross-sectoral response, involving many different actors and agencies. However, there are still challenges in involving women as active members and ensuring gender issues are rejected in planning for disasters. They are

not well represented in national and local planning and decision-making related to climate change responses. While rural women are particularly active in agriculture many women do not have legal rights to land and therefore cannot always access larger scale credit or retain land in case of divorce or death of husbands, and agricultural extension services are still male-dominated (UN Vietnam, 2016). These barriers to women's participation need to be addressed as climate change creates new stresses on resources and livelihoods.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Despite a favourable policy environment, discrimination against women and girls still persists across the country. The sex ratio at birth continues to worsen. Female foetuses are selectively aborted due to entrenched male child preference and women and girls are subject to discrimination throughout the rest of their life. Like in many other countries, Vietnamese women and girls also still bear the disproportionate burden of unpaid care and domestic work.

As a lower middle-income country, Vietnam is also facing new challenges, including slowing economic growth, macroeconomic instability, new forms of poverty and vulnerabilities and increased inequality. Viet Nam also faces new challenges, with a complex burden of disease and the evolving impacts of development, climate change and globalization.

Natural and climatic stresses are increasing, and the country is facing a rapid increase in energy demand, greenhouse gas emissions, and associated pollution and costs. Sustainable development and effective response to climate change require efforts to reduce environmental degradation, together with scaled-up green production and promotion of energy efficient, sustainable business models. Effective enforcement of environmental protection laws, together with disaster risk management and reduction efforts that build resilience to environmental stresses and hazards, are also required.

Broader and deeper international and regional economic integration and rising threats of climate change and natural disaster risks impact on different groups of women and men in different ways, presenting new challenges to gender equality and women's empowerment in Viet Nam. This will require a holistic approach and more concerted effort to remove barriers that impede women's development and unleash their potentials.

Institutional reform and further investments are needed to address all forms of inequality, including gender inequality.

Climate change and disasters affect women and men, girls and boys differently, with many women experiencing disproportionate risks and impacts from disasters and climate change. Situations of crisis exacerbate pre-existing gender inequalities and also compound intersecting forms of discrimination that affect some women to a different degree or in different ways than men or other women.

Discriminatory barriers that limit many women's equal access to education and information, capital, property, land and productive resources, civil and political rights, legal and justice systems, health care, adequate housing, employment and social protection, increase their exposure to the negative effects of climate change and disasters. These same obstacles also prevent women from being able to actively contribute to decision-making and the development of activities related to climate change mitigation, disaster prevention, and reconstruction efforts.

Women from different social groups bring specific knowledge and experiences to discussions and decision-making on climate change and action for reducing disaster risk. Too often, however, women have not been provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the conceptualization, development, implementation and monitoring of local, national, regional and international policies, strategies and programmes on climate change and disaster risk reduction. The equal and active participation of women and men in CCA and DRR will make it possible to achieve the overarching goals of the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

National laws, strategies and programmes to cope with climate change and disaster preparedness and mitigation in Vietnam, in fact, are not rights-based and gender-sensitive. Therefore, a comprehensive review is quite necessary and considerable efforts need to be undertaken to ensure that all relevant national documents are rights-based and gender-sensitive. The review would provide an indispensable basis for climate policy going forward, helping us see in detail how climate change threatens our ability to enjoy our human rights, and also how the exercise of human rights and gender mainstreaming can inform and guide climate policies. A human

rights perspective on climate change not only provides a stark warning of what is at stake - it also gives us a beacon of hope that we can solve this problem together. Particularly, we will summarize different approaches towards effective coping laws, strategies, and programmes, and regional cooperation for achieving all the SDGs by 2030, with references and contexts of other Asian countries and regions in the world. There are valuable lessons to learn from experiences and practices at the local level, which need to be shared and communicated at national and sub-national levels, and with other countries facing similar challenges.

All stakeholders, including government agencies, should ensure that laws, policies, budgets, programmes, and measures relevant to DRR and CCA are rights-based and gender responsive. Women's right to participate at all levels of decision-making must be guaranteed in relevant policies and programmes. Public participation is vital in policy and decision-making processes to ensure people-centred development. There is an urgent need to expand grassroots participation in governance, including for women and vulnerable and marginalized groups such as children, migrants and ethnic, gender and sexual minorities.

While women are often seen as victims of climate change, their positive roles as agents of change and contributors to livelihood strategies are often overlooked. For climate change strategies and projects to be successful, gender concerns need to be mainstreamed at local and national levels and women need to be included in technological developments. Their gender-defined roles, concerns, and contributions in households, communities and the workplace should be recognized and reflected in related policies and actions. There is an urgent need for awareness raising and capacity building on gender equality and women's empowerment aspects of CCA and DRR in the country so that they would be dynamic actors in CCA and DRR. This awareness should be translated into political commitment and financing for suitable actions that ensure gender-sensitive CCA and DRR. Policy and programme planning, financing, implementation, and monitoring procedures should allow for the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment principles in DRR and CCA across sectors and at all levels. A multi-stakeholder approach that involves gender expertise, women and men, other groups often marginalized, as well as representatives from government, civil society, the private sector, and the broader development community is essential. ■

Endnotes

⁽¹⁾ *The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA)* is an agenda for women's empowerment agreed and adopted at the World Fourth Conference on Women in Beijing, China in 1995. It calls for the removal of obstacles to women's active participation in all spheres of public and private life through a full and equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making. It also advocates for a transformed partnership based on equality between women and men as a condition for people-centred sustainable development.

As the outcome document of the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, the BPfA commits in its Strategic Objective K on 'Women and Environment' to securing the active involvement of women in environmental decision-making; integrating gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development; and strengthening or establishing mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women. (<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/>)

⁽²⁾ *The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)* were adopted by world leaders in 2000 and provide concrete, numerical benchmarks for tackling extreme poverty by 2015. Important elements for women's rights include MDG 3, with its commitment to gender equality and empowering women, while MDG 7 pledges a responsibility to ensure environmental responsibility and is, therefore, relevant for climate change responses. Although the MDGs are often still operationalized separately, together they establish a platform of fundamental interrelated values on gender, poverty and environment. (<https://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/>)

⁽³⁾ *The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)* were adopted by all UN Member States as an integral part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. With 17 goals and 169 targets, the SDG framework balances the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. The SDGs emphasize the importance of mainstreaming gender equality for the realization of human rights, sustainable development and disaster reduction. In particular, SDG 5 focuses specifically on gender equality, and SDG 13 urges States to take immediate action to combat climate change and its impacts.

(<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/>)

⁽⁴⁾ National Assembly. *Constitution of Vietnam (2013/QH13 dated 28 November 2013)*. Hanoi.

(http://constitutionnet.org/sites/default/files/tranlation_of_vietnams_new_constitution_enuk_2.pdf)

⁽⁵⁾ *Climate change*: "a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods" (ADB, 2015).

⁽⁶⁾ A *disaster* is an occurrence such as a hurricane, tornado, flood, earthquake, explosion, hazardous materials accident, war, transportation accident, mass shooting, fire, famine, or epidemic that causes human suffering or creates human need that the victim cannot alleviate without assistance. Disasters are categorized in two ways: “natural” disasters, a term that traditionally refers to earthquakes, cyclones, volcanic eruptions, floods, landslides, and “man-made” disasters, which include wars, riots, industrial and biological accidents, droughts, famines, and epidemics (UNDP, 2012).

⁽⁷⁾ *The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)* is an international environmental treaty adopted on May 9, 1992 and entered into force on 21 March 1994. Today, it has near-universal membership. The UNFCCC has 197 parties as of December 2015, and all the countries that have ratified the Convention are called Parties to the Convention. The Convention enjoys broad legitimacy, largely due to its nearly universal membership. Its objective is to “stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system”. The framework sets no binding limits on greenhouse gas emissions for individual countries and contains no enforcement mechanisms. Instead, the framework outlines how specific international treaties (called “protocols” or “Agreements”) may be negotiated to specify further action towards the objective of the UNFCCC.

([https://www.google.com/search?q=The+United+Nations+Framework+Convention+on+Climate+Change+\(UNFCCC\)&oq=The+United+Nations+Framework+Convention+on+Climate+Change+\(UNFCCC\)&aqs=chrome..69i57j0j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=The+United+Nations+Framework+Convention+on+Climate+Change+(UNFCCC)&oq=The+United+Nations+Framework+Convention+on+Climate+Change+(UNFCCC)&aqs=chrome..69i57j0j4&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8))

The UNFCCC is a “Rio Convention”, one of three adopted at the “Rio Earth Summit” in 1992. Its sister Rio Conventions are the UN Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification. The three are intrinsically linked. It is in this context that the Joint Liaison Group was set up to boost cooperation among the three Conventions, with the ultimate aim of developing synergies in their activities on issues of mutual concern. It now also incorporates the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. Preventing “dangerous” human interference with the climate system is the ultimate aim of the UNFCCC.

<https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-convention/what-is-the-united-nations-framework-convention-on-climate-change>

⁽⁸⁾ *The Kyoto Protocol* is an international treaty which extends the UNFCCC that commits State Parties to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, based on the scientific consensus that (a) global warming is occurring and (b) it is extremely likely that human-made CO₂ emissions have predominantly caused it. The Kyoto Protocol was adopted in Kyoto, Japan, on 11 December 1997 and entered into force on February 16, 2005. Currently, there are 192 Parties (191 States and 1 regional economic integration organization) to the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC.

(<https://www.google.com/search?q=The+Kyoto+Protocol&oq=The+Kyoto+Protocol&aqs=chrome..69i57j0l7.1698j0j9&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>)

⁽⁹⁾ *The Sendai Framework for Action (2015-2030)* was adopted at the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Japan in March 2015. Its guiding principle states that “a gender, age, disability and cultural perspective should be integrated in all policies and practices, and women and youth leadership should be promoted”. Almost two years after the adoption of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, all countries in the Asia and Pacific region have been developing national action plans to implement the Sendai Framework. The Sendai Framework charts the global course over the next 15 years as the first of the world's post-2015 development agreements.

([https://www.google.com/search?q=The+Sendai+Framework+for+Action+\(2015-2030\)&oq=The+Sendai+Framework+for+Action+\(2015-2030\)&aqs=chrome..69i57j0j9&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8](https://www.google.com/search?q=The+Sendai+Framework+for+Action+(2015-2030)&oq=The+Sendai+Framework+for+Action+(2015-2030)&aqs=chrome..69i57j0j9&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8))

⁽¹⁰⁾ Agenda 21, the outcome document of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, offers a roadmap towards sustainable development. It is not a legally binding document, but Agenda 21 has inspired many national and local initiatives worldwide in the area of environment and sustainable development. Its Chapter 24 Global Action for Women towards Sustainable Development, calls upon governments to eliminate all obstacles to women's full involvement in sustainable development and to secure gender equality in all aspects of society. (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf>)

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