



Climate Justice Briefs: Rural Women's Adaptation Strategies

Indonesia

Recognising the role of North Jakarta fisherwomen in small-scale fisheries and creating gender-specific adaptation policy and programs

Impact of climate change on fisherwomen

Coastal areas are dependent on climate conditions for survival. The majority of women make a living shelling mussels or brining fish. Climate change exacerbates existing gender inequality in this community by further marginalising women and adding to the fisherwomen's existing multi-layered burdens.

Women report that extreme and unpredictable weather alters fishing practices and yields lower harvest. Existing low literacy rates among women are worsened by climate change's impact on household incomes and school costs, which lower school participation particularly among girls.

Women report existing poor levels of health, nutrition, hygiene, and sanitation are exacerbated by extreme weather and deepening poverty. Economic stress has also been tied to domestic violence.

Traditionally, the burden of economic survival falls on women, and

long work hours limit opportunities for community involvement, further marginalising women who are already excluded from community and political affairs.

Gender, discrimination, and barriers to adaptation

Faced with increased economic stress, fisherwomen have adopted numerous coping strategies. However, the fisherwomen's lack of control over resources inhibits their ability to adopt measures beyond those necessary for survival.

Fisherwomen increase income by collecting garbage, selling belongings, and borrowing money – all while continuing to shell mussels and brine fish. Few income generation projects provide women an opportunity to earn extra income by converting plastic waste into handicrafts.

Other coping strategies include stretching income by changing family menus to cheaper, albeit less nutritious options.



About the project

This 2011 participatory action research was conducted to document the impact of climate change in our communities, discuss how climate change exacerbates gender inequalities, and present our policy demands to promote meaningful change for women in our community. The research participants were fisherwomen living in two locations in Cilincing, North Jakarta.

West season: a woman's burden

Indonesian fishing communities largely characterise climate by two seasons, the "west" - "east" seasons.

The west season is characterised by inclement weather, virtually grounding area fishing and processing.

Area men reportedly remain idle in the home and financial survival falls on women, whose income is also drastically reduced due to lower yields. Women must work longer hours and find additional employment to ensure the family's survival.

Extreme weather and seasonal variability associated with climate change exacerbates this disproportionate burden on women.



APWLD Climate Justice Briefs: Indonesia

Regional effects of climate change

"We dry the fish in the morning, then it rains in the afternoon. We have to cover the fish, which are not fully dry yet. Sometimes, to cover the loss, we have to sell the fish at a very low price..."
– Ibu Subekti

Indonesia is an archipelago country, with 80,000 km of coastline. Over 9,000 coastal villages are categorised as vulnerable to climate change, notably to sea level rise, variable seasons, and extreme weather events such as floods and storms. In coastal areas, extreme and unpredictable weather undermine economic stability.

Fisherwomen report that barriers to adaptation include low levels of education and literacy, exclusion from community engagement, lack of access to resources, poverty, lack of understanding about climate change, and exclusion from decision-making.

The limited aid that reaches this community is almost exclusively in the form of direct aid, economic growth projects, and environmental projects. There are no local programs focused on rights-based empowerment, and no local women's organisations that promote women's involvement in climate change adaptation or women's empowerment more broadly.

Impact on community and gender relations

There is a growing movement among women to learn about climate change, and an increasing understanding of how climate change impacts their lives. This greater awareness is expected to encourage women to undertake collective action and sustainable adaptation.

Policy recommendations

Policymakers must recognise women as unique stakeholders to climate change, acknowledge the importance of adaptation for community survival,



and implement programs that support sustainable community-based adaptation. Research indicates a strong favour towards mitigation at the national-level, with scant attention paid to adaptation. The lack of focus on adaptation is apparent in fisheries policy, which emphasises increasing fish production, improving fisheries management, and building infrastructure.

In general, gender-specific programs are nonexistent. The Ministry of Women Empowerment and Children Protection is excluded from the National Board of Climate Change, the national coordinating body for the Indonesian response to climate change, indicating lack of appreciation for the unique burdens placed on women as a result of climate change. Though women face different vulnerabilities to climate change, current policy does not recognise or accommodate these differences.

Current government projects fail to take into account the wisdom and experience of women, and instead focus on strengthening infrastructure. Further, the government must ensure that forecasts of extreme weather reach women in fishing communities in a timely manner, and through means that anticipate and overcome barriers to information.

Lawmakers should ensure that women gain full access to means of income and benefits from adaptation. In particular, given the loss of their traditional income, support is needed to explore alternatives and build women's capacity to secure alternative income.

