

Climate Change and Gender - Paving the Road to Equality through Volunteers



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India – the Diversity of Challenges

- 14 distinct physio-geographic zones;
- Wide inter-geographic zones and inter-annual difference in climate;
- Large area vulnerable to climate change: Himalayas in the north; Western Indian arid and desert lands; Central Indian dry lands; Coastal areas.. etc.
- Poorest and most socially excluded people inhabit these zones;
- Every aspect of climate change affects nature-dependent communities;

a majority of these are women!



Women and Natural Resources



Women and Natural Resources

Forgotten facts

- Women as most diligent protectors of forests;
- Women as highest users and handlers of land, water and forests;
- More women engaged in subsistence agriculture and nature dependent occupations than men, except fishing;
- A majority of tribal women are NTFP gatherers;
- More women engaged in unpaid labour and hence their economic contributions are not accounted for and audited;
- Property rights for women are not universal;

**Invasion of natural resources is an invasion of women's space!
Stand and say 'STOP' to external forces like MNCs maiming and
killing forests & impoverishing their inhabitants!**

Women and Natural Resources

Yet,

- lack of ownership of natural resources keeps women out of political decisions around these;
- excluded from climate change mitigation dialogues;
- excluded from local self governance mechanisms that control forests;
- least represented in mechanisms/structures/institutions involving ownership, control and management of natural resources;
- treated more as consumers than as owners & producers;
- positioned lowest in the value chain involving farm and forest produce;

**In short, women are either outside or at best in the periphery of the economic chain in the context of natural resources!!
Climate change and destruction of natural resources aggravates the gender disparities.**

Setting the Clock Back for Gender Equality??

- Deforestation deprives female headed households of ownership and customary rights; conflict on ownership;
- puts greater burden on women managing subsistence agriculture; reduced land & access;
- decreases access to water resources ,fodder, fuel wood;
- compromises personal safety and security;
- serious displacement, coerced migration and trafficking;
- more pronounced feminization of poverty;
- more women killed in natural disasters – droughts, floods;
- more women and children facing added health hazards and risk from pollutants during child birth;
- girl children with congenital deformities bearing more brunt aided by historical gender discrimination;

Pushes more women and girl children every year into economic and sexual slavery!

Climate Change Mitigation & Gender Equality

“Women are unlikely to benefit from climate change mitigation mechanisms where they do not own their lands, if there is no principle of gender-focused, free, prior and informed consent, and if their identities are not recognized or if they have no space to participate in policy-making processes & governance.”

We firmly believe that Volunteering is at the Heart of Social Change

and that Volunteers can play a critical and highly focused role in making systemic changes by influencing both local and global thinking and actions on issues like climate change and lobbying to bring women centrestage in formulating mitigation strategies..

How do Skillshare engage volunteers in social change?

Walking the talk

Volunteers engage in addressing gender equality, equitable distribution of resources, social and environmental justice by mainstreaming gender, human rights and conflict sensitivity; **build skills** to enhance women's position in value chains/markets;

Development Awareness

Volunteers engage in development awareness & education on impact of climate change on nature-dependent women/men;

Building client capacity to mitigate impact

Volunteers provide technical skills - revival of traditional water harvesting and farming systems; low cost and eco friendly farming; conservation & regeneration of forests; **promote** traditional practices; **make women more tech-savvy**; use of ICT;

Influencing public policy and legal framework

Volunteers advocate for women's ownership; women's equal participation in policy/governance; **build** partner and client community capacity for advocacy;

Climate Change and Gender Equality

Time for us to take a pledge!!

Engage Volunteers to

- Help social audits which specifically examine impact of international approaches and policies on disadvantaged women;
- Influence public opinion on accountability of 'big players' engaged in indiscriminate industrialization and deforestation in developing countries; mere CSR wont do! women wish to be listened to;
- Influence State and global economic actors for designing inclusive mitigation policies and approaches for communities esp. women;
- Lobby the State to reject policies that exclude women through silence; excluded women still require that extra edge! women should not be relegated to just 'footnotes and margin scribbles';
- Create awareness - Mitigation of climate change requires substantial resources; financing for development needs rethinking; invest at the right place for the right purpose! No bartering of food security, health, biodiversity & farmlands for biofuel & uranium please!! When food security lowers women starve more.
- Lobby the UN to walk the talk – where are the disadvantaged women in climate change dialogues??

Feel the pulse of the women affected??

Speak out!

Women for Women

- A woman volunteer is much more acceptable to local women;
- Explore new ways of volunteering – engage on-line with civil society groups that work with affected women;
- Build specific skills that will help women maximize land and forest outputs; bring skills, control & ownership at par with those of men;
- Write human interest stories – only a woman can feel the heart of another woman! Tell the world how women displaced from land and forests can be pushed into physical and sexual slavery for life; how tribal women compromise safety & health by going deeper & walking longer for food, fuel wood, fodder & water; less the land the more violence women face; there is not enough for everyone!
- Use social media sites like facebook & twitter to form support groups – for organizing & mobilizing women impacted by climate change, land alienation, food insecurity & coerced migration;
- Reach out to women of influence & power with stories from the margins; they can do a lot provided they get connected;

There is much more that privileged women globally can volunteer to do :

THANK YOU!!