



Women and Climate Justice Hearings 2011

(Strengthening Voices, Search for Solutions)



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1.0 Introduction

Women continue to be the hardest hit with climate change in Ghana. They spend a lot of time and energy venturing further to secure water, food and firewood as streams go dry, groundwater dwindles, and forests and other vegetation fall sway to drought or severe storms that bring floods and mudslides.

Drought, heat, floods, and the resulting dislocation interrupt harvest cycles deny women of secured livelihoods. Given their central role in food production, this puts household, community, and national food security at risk. And yet it is also women who pick up the pieces, improvise solutions and provide effective responses to the challenges imposed by climate change. This includes sustainable/organic farming, water harvesting, afforestation and forest protection, the creation of grain banks and the preservation of flood resistant and drought resistant seeds, the construction of earthen dams to store water for agriculture and the development of new skills and sources of work. Despite this, women's voices are still not being heard in debates around climate change at the local, regional, national or international level.

It is for this reason that the climate justice hearing was organized for women to be provided with the platform for them to share their challenges and recommendation on climate change.

2.0 Objectives

- To collate testimonies of the impact of climate change on women
- To provide the platform for interaction among various stakeholders
- To influence negotiations and plans of action on climate change at the national as well as the international level during COP17 and Rio+ 20
- To echo the voices of those most affected by climate at the local level - women and traditionally excluded groups

3.0 Opening Statement by Dr. Leticia E. Obeng .The first and the only scientist to be recruited into the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), the first Ghanaian woman to establish a new research institute, Institute of Aquatic Biology for the Ghana Academy of Sciences in 1964. The first Ghanaian female to obtain a PhD in Simuliidae . UNEP Director regional office for Africa from 1974 to 1985 . A few Ghanaian women to receive the National Award of the "Star of Ghana' in 2006 and she was unanimously appointed as the first female President of the Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences. At the age of 87 years, she does her own things. She enjoys gardening; sewing; cooking; reading and is currently working on her autobiography, which will soon be out

As human beings with responsibility for this beautiful planet of ours, we are fortunate that we have the capability to appreciate the advantage of putting our thoughts together through consultation when we are confronted with a common problem. I fully appreciate it that the GCAP and Abibimman Foundation had decided to bring you all together to continue the consideration of this common problem of the extraordinarily worrying environmental issue of the current adverse impact of our changing climate.

The problem has been in the making for a long time. I know that as far back as over 30 years ago, from the United Nations Environment Programme, we started warning the world about the impending dangers of the change in climate which was taking place as a result of various unsafe development processes around the world. Some scoffed at the claim, others did take it seriously, but most people either remained unaware of the impending danger, or if they knew, did not care. And now, we, at our level in our homes are being hit with the dangers of climate change because of our contact with nature. Most glaringly, we feel the change through problems with water for our farms and even for our daily use.

I said we are fortunate that we can come together to think about our common problems. I am, and I have always been concerned that when we do take decisions, we do not always follow through with action. As a result, the problems often remain or escalate. There are many examples of decisions and resolutions by the UN, Africa Union, European Union, many, many important world organizations right down to local NGOs in all countries throughout the whole world. With this attitude, even if we hold a million meetings, conferences and workshops, we will never solve our problems.

I am sure you that as we deliberate on the woes brought by the climate change, we will come up with very good "women-deduced" effective suggestions for meeting the problems.

The essential victory from today's meeting would be that you follow up with concrete, down-to-earth action which will contribute to solving the problem that you have met to consider today.

I have every confidence that since we are seeing the problem from a woman's angle, we will come up with worthwhile practical actions.

4.0 Country Analysis by Gloria Kaful Amegah

Ghana is a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol on Climate which entered into force 16 February 2005. Ghana's Parliament ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on 26 November 2002. Ghana has therefore bonded itself to meeting the obligations under the Convention and the Protocol for achieving stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere to minimize the effects of climate change.

Climate variability challenges the success of poverty reduction programs since relief and rehabilitation efforts reduce development budgets, and simultaneously, lost assets reduce the ability of the poor to cope with the host of current stresses. Climate change increases the vulnerability of poor people by adversely affecting their health and livelihoods and undermining the growth opportunities, which are crucial for poverty reduction. Significantly aggravate water stress, reduce food security, increase impacts from extreme weather events, displace many people (due to floods, droughts and sea level rise) and potentially increase the transmission of vector and water borne diseases.

Climate change in Ghana has become a threat to women livelihoods. Drought and over flooding in parts of the Northern and Eastern Regions of Ghana has become a yearly worry to the people. Women along the banks of the Volta river are constantly displaced, homeless and landless. In the South particularly aquatic life is affected as a result of human activities and sea level rise that pollutes water bodies and the main economic activity which is fishing drops and this has affected the income levels of the people. The climate change impacts in the Northern part of Ghana results in severe drought, floods, high temperatures and, the influx of pest and diseases on human life and that of farms. The heavy lost of farm crops is predicted to bring famine if appropriate adaptation and mitigation measures are not put in place.

It is clear that the government of Ghana views the issue of climate change as a critical one for policy-making, particularly in terms of how international commitments are translated into national measures and strategies for mitigation and adaptation. However, just as the efforts at the international levels are limited, so are those in Ghana to incorporate gender concerns into the climate change discourse and processes.

Whereas there is clear evidence of a direct link between gender relations and adaptation to climate change, women's voices and participation in decision-making structures and processes is woefully inadequate. Even though we have the National Adaptation Plans for women and gender issues, the involvement of women is limited. Ghana must work to prepare for and adapt to these impacts. Integrating climate concerns in development is critical for Ghana in order to ensure the long-term achievement of the Ghana development goals,

EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON WOMEN LIVELIHOOD IN THE NORTHERN REGION

There are many effects on climate change on women livelihood in the Northern Region.

Two of these effects are:

- (a) THE RURAL URBAN MIGRATION**
- (b) AGRICULTURE**

- (a) On rural urban migration women in the Northern Region face many challenges when they travel to the Southern sector of Ghana to look for jobs known as (“Kayayee”)

Some of these challenges are:

- (i) Inadequate proper accommodation
- (ii) Feeding
- (iii) Lack of health care
- (iv) Inadequate proper payment by their employees
- (v) Some of them are involve in immoral acts due to the challenges mentioned above.

These challenges sometimes results in the divorce among some families because their husbands believe the women have HIV/AIDS. Girls who are not married find it very difficult to get men back at home to marry because both married and unmarried who migrates to the southern sector are believe to might have contracted any of the deadly disease.

AGRICULTURE

The climate change in the Northern Region mostly affects women. These changes are the flooding and the droughts which have effect on cultivation in Northern Region and these results in the suffering of women.

These seasons are:

- (i) The perennial floods.
- (ii) The seasonal drought.

The perennial floods always lead to lose of lives mostly women who try to cart food staff from the farms across rivers and streams to their houses and to market centers.

Women are also responsible for fetching firewood and water for the upkeep of the family despite long distances. Most women provide ingredience and make provision for the grains to be grinded at the grinding mill for the whole family meals.

Seasonal drought is a period when rains are not sufficient for food production, at this period; there is less or no food on the farms to harvest. At this time, the man sits back and it is let for the women to fetched firewood from the bush, sell buy food to feed the family.

To crown it all, these women who travel to the South for “Kayayee” activities, their children are denied formal education.

4.0 Testimonies from Affected Women

1. *Ms. Akos Matsiador (Xorvi Community in the keta Municipality Volta of Region)*

“My village was submerged by the sea and some people even lost their lives. Baskets of smoked fish that I had stored to sell to other women in other villages were swept away by the sea. I was rendered homeless and jobless and I don’t have any source of livelihood and am barely surviving with my children”

2. *Ms. Mercy Hlordzi (keta Municipality Volta of Region)*

“I lost my husband in a terrible way when the sea overflowed its banks and collapsed the house in which we live. When the house collapsed my husband was trapped in it and he died. At the moment life has become unbearable and I feel like giving up because since that tragedy took place I have not been able to put myself and family together”

3. *Ms. Adwoa Adjei (Eastern region)*

“In the month of May, there was a torrential rainfall in the Eastern region where I farm and live was washed away completely rendering me homeless and jobless. My 16 acres of land which I cultivate tomatoes, maize and pepper where all destroyed as a result of the flood”

4. *Ms. Abiba Muhammed (Gulpe community in the Northern Region)*

“I am a single mother and I cultivate yam and maize to feed my 4 children. I lost my house and belongings when it rained heavily in the month of June and for 2-days I had stay under a tree with my family”

5. *Ms Rakia Kande Ibrahim (Northern Region)*

“We want to work, we need to stay in our farms and do trading at the market places, but it is very hot here, the sun is squeezing the comfort, good health and life out of our village. This climate change has negatively impacted our tradition and lifestyle. The dignity and modesty of our traditional women and mothers are compromised to survive the weather. Our skin (especially the school going kids) are blackened and vulnerable to diverse tropical diseases. Women and caretakers of farms suffer most.

6. *Priscilla Amezogbe Yayra (Volta Region)*

We live on a hill and the impact of the rain much because the whole place was flooded and we could not go out to do anything. Our farms was also washed away by the torrential rainfall.

7. *Adwoa Agyeiwaa (from Ashiaman Irrigation)*

“I took loan from the bank to cultivate maize and rice around the Ashiaman Irrigation Farm but the flood that hit Ashaiman recently destroyed everything I invested into at the farm. When we grow crops it doesn’t yield as expected and brings low income to us, so we ask government to intervene urgently. At the moment i am indebted to the bank and I don’t know how am going to pay back the money”

8. *Mrs Memuna Iddrisu (from West Mamprusi District)*

As a young girl growing, my mother could just go behind our house and come back with fire wood within an hour. But now we travel several miles to get fire wood. I come from Sariba Community of the West Mamprusi District; I was raped by Fulani man in a bush when I went to fetch fire wood. I came home and reported to my husband only to be sacked for “immoral” act. As a result of the embarrassment, I traveled to Kumasi for ‘Kayayoo’ (head porter) business. Only God knows the number of rural women who go through this same ordeal like me.

9. *Ms Mumin (Diary community in the Walewale District North Region)*

We go for bank loans, and rely on weather forecast but everything gets destroyed with unpredictable drought and flood. Sometimes we buy volumes of water to irrigate our farms and yet when harvest is due an unfavorable climatic condition affects the yield.

10. *Joana Dampsey (from in the Akadum Eastern at Koforidua District)*

The rain pattern in my community has changed but unfortunately lack of information, attitude and ignorance has greatly affect the impact of production of yam, cocoyam, cassava and other roots and also increased incidence of pests and strange diseases.

11. *Ms Linda Akosua Asante-Yeboah from Afranse (a farming community near Asamankese) in the West Akim District of the Eastern Region in the Southern Zone*

Agriculture in our community is generally food crops production at subsistence level. However, cash crops like Cocoa, oil palm and citrus are also grown on commercial basis providing employment for 80% of the inhabitants of this community. Out of this, 30% of women are directly or indirectly involved. The recent flooding swept many farmlands and destroyed many lives and properties. The irregular rainfall has also caused farmers so much resulting in poor harvest. This has therefore caused so much pressure on cassava which is the raw material for making gari. Some of the women now find it very difficult to support their husbands to meet the needs of their families including payment of school fees for their wards. Economic situation of the women in my community is hopeless.



5.0 Comments from Jury

The Jury expressed empathy with the testimonies that were shared and called on various stakeholders to undertake the following actions support victims of the impact of climate change with a strategy on mitigating its impact;

- Government and other stakeholders should develop a comprehensive strategy to addressing the needs of women who are affected by climate change
- Government to assist farmers with establishment of factories and economic ventures, creation of Dams and wells for farming and domestic use
- Government should engage women in the design and implementation of climate change policies, to make more dams as well as improved seeds available for reforestation and tree planting ventures as a pragmatic approach to reversing the trend.
- Blame on human activities change. Community dwells should take up the responsibility of keeping a healthy environment. We don't want the future

when women are forced to stay indoors due to bad climate. This situation is a recipe for unplanned pregnancies and child bearing.

- Urge Governments to ensure that Green Economies enhance human well being, narrows the gap between rich and poor, create decent green jobs

6.0 Statement by Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Women & Children Affairs

The Ministers of these sectors were represented and a statement was read on their behalf. Highlights of the statements are;

- Government is considering the active participation of women in the development of funding criteria and allocation of resources for climate change initiatives.
- Gender analysis of budget lines and financial instruments for climate change is crucial to ensure gender-sensitive investments
- The involvement of women adaptive measures and their successful implementation elaborating that without its successful implementation, climate change policies will remain doubtful.
- Involvement of women in planting of tree

Achievements

The Ministry of Environment expressed interest in the output of the dialogue and assured Abibimman Foundation and GCAP of using the information from the hearing in designing programmes and policies on climate change. Participants committed themselves to taking the discussion to their various constituencies to influence change at the local level.

The Media

The involvement of the media was much better . The media gave visibility to the campaign both in the print and electronic media. The media made a number of follow up interviews with policy makers on issues raised in the campaign.

<http://www.ips.org/africa/2011/10/ghana-the-woes-of-women-amid-climate-change/>

<http://ghanaiian-chronicle.com/regional-files/greater-accra-region/women-want-voices-heard-in-climate-change-decisions/>

http://www.menafn.com/qn_news_story.asp?storyid=%7B2a60d58d-7b62-481b-84a8-bed053988d29%7D

<http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/regional/artikel.php?ID=219592>

<http://ghanaian-chronicle.com/regional-files/greater-accra-region/abibiman-launches-women-climate-change-justice-hearing-2011/>

7.0 Key Demands for Government

1. Ghana government and other African leaders should be very vigilant and take key interest in the negotiation with the interest of women and Children their citizenry at heart.
2. Sea defenses must be constructed with an accompanying component to enhance the livelihoods of vulnerable groups such as women, physically challenged and children who live along the coast.
3. Government should invest in developing climate resistance crop varieties and also provide alternative source of livelihoods women in the coastal and savannah belts respectively.
4. Rio+20 needs to strengthen an agricultural system that is sustainable, resilient to climate change, improve food security and benefit the livelihood of millions of farmers and their families.

8.0 Key Demands for COP 17

- The Durban outcome must be ambitious, balanced and based on science, equity and the rule of law.
- Adaptation should be funded at full cost through direct and simplified access to public grant-based financial resources, following a country driven approach.
- Reduce their emissions by at least 40 per cent by 2017 and 95 per cent by 2050, compared to 1990 levels.
- To protect ecosystems, food production and sustainable development, particularly in vulnerable developing countries.
- A global goal for reducing global emissions by 2050 is required in order to maintain global warming well below 1.5°C.
- Negotiations must produce two outcomes in Durban in line with the Bali Roadmap, for an agreed outcome to implement the Convention and a second and subsequent period of the Kyoto Protocol. Emission cuts under the Kyoto Protocol commencing in 2013. fulfillment of their commitments relating to finance, technology transfer and capacity building

9.0 Way-forward

The outcome of the dialogue will be used to engage the government of Ghana and other foreign government missions in Ghana as preparations towards the Durban

Conference. It will also offer inputs into developing Ghana's position for the outcome of the Durban meeting together with other allies. Addressing poverty reduction, food security and employment should be top on agenda at Rio+20 and allow civil society representatives to participate in decision-making and support knowledge generation and sharing among key players in developing countries.

10.0 Conclusion

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