

Life at Sea: Women bear the brunt of climate change in Central Vietnam

Climate change is already a lived reality for women of 2 coastal communities, Huong Phong and Hai Duong in Thua Thien Hue province in Vietnam. Women in this coastal lagoon area are suffering from changing tidal rhythms, erratic weather patterns, sea water intrusion, sea bank erosion and polluted water. As the primary providers and caregivers in a traditional grassroots community reliant on aquaculture, women are extremely vulnerable to changes in their natural environment.

Huong Phong and Hai Duong communes in Thua Thien Hue province are small fishing communities comprised of an estimated 5,700 women. Women in the province are primarily responsible for providing and caring for the family. This includes getting food, doing housework as well as processing and selling seafood at local markets for a small income. In these areas, water storage is very time-consuming: women spend a lot of time storing water in big containers. The difficulty in getting fresh water sometimes forces the women to use less potable, lower-quality water. This inevitably leads to an increase in waterborne illnesses, threatening their health and increasing their working load when they, as primary caregivers, must take care of the ill.

Living on a lagoon, changing coastal conditions are constantly increasing the threat of food insecurity for the women and their families. Salinity, heavy rains, flooding, erratic tides, all reduce the reliability of aquaculture as the women's main source of food and income for their families.

Women of these coastal communities also suffer under the increasing threat of natural disasters, most notably floods and typhoons. Natural disasters have been more frequent and more destructive in recent years. Typhon Xangsane in September 2006 caused an estimated 650 million USD in damages. Women have a high burden of responsibility when a natural disaster hits the province. They play an important role in the work of storm and flood control, protecting children and older family members, and are largely responsible

for recovering the house after the disaster. Existing social structures deprive women of education opportunities, training and engagement in disaster prevention and preparedness, and women often end up the most vulnerable to natural disasters. Lacking access to warning information and critical skills such as swimming, women are extremely ill-prepared for natural disasters.

Climate change is a frightening reality for the women in coastal communities of Thua Thien Hue province. From their food to their income to the very shelters they live in, every aspect of these women's lives is affected daily by climate change. Their experiences must be recognized, and their voices listened to in global climate discussions.



International Recommendations

- Commit to a radical and urgent transition from extractive, profit based economies to people centered models that are just, equitable, gender-sensitive and locally driven;
- Commit to a comprehensive, ambitious and binding new climate agreement which aims to limit global warming below 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels;
- **Mitigation:** the new agreement should target the elimination of all fossil fuels and the use of 100% renewable energy by 2030 for developed countries and 2050 for others;
- **Mitigation** should not include commercializing of the climate through mechanisms that have failed to reduce emissions including REDD, REDD+, and "climate-smart" agriculture, among others;
- **Adaptation:** Developing countries needs (particularly LDCs and SIDS) should be addressed as a priority in the new agreement. Developed countries must recognize their historical responsibilities and fulfill their obligation to support adaption measures for developing countries, including through finance, technology transfer, capacity building and the removal of patent and intellectual property restrictions;
- **Loss and damage** must address long term and slow onset loss and damage as well as immediate disaster related damage;
- **Support small-scale,** locally owned and developed ecological responses ensuring food sovereignty and traditional knowledge and practices of indigenous and rural women are retained and promoted;
- **Decision-making processes at the local, national and international levels:** should be led by those most affected by the impacts of climate change, particularly women;
- **Disaster Risk Reduction:** A gender-responsive approach should be integrated in all disaster risk reduction strategies, humanitarian assistance and reconstruction policies and measures;
- **Accountability mechanism:** A strong and effective compliance mechanism to the agreement should be established to ensure the fulfillment of Parties' obligations.

National recommendations

- A gender-responsive approach should be included into the design and implementation of all aspects of disaster readiness-relief, recovery and development, with a special attention to the rural communities;
- **National adaptation plans** should be based on traditional knowledge of the local women, guarantee their equal access and control over natural resources, and provide them with alternative, sustainable and locally owned livelihood options;
- **Rural communities, including women,** must be included in all decision-making policies and measures on climate change affecting them.

Vietnam Country Info

Population: 90 million

Human Development Index Ranking: Ranked 121 of 187 on Human Development Index

Greenhouse Gas Emissions: In 2013 Vietnam contributed 0.48% global greenhouse gas emissions and has in 2014 a per capita emission rate of 1.71 metric tons (as compared to 17.5 metric tons for the US, and 6.18 metric tons for China).

Climate Change Vulnerability: Vietnam has been identified as one of the 12 countries at highest risk from climate change, and is most threatened by rising sea levels. More than 12 million people could be affected by increased water stress. Vietnam is also highly susceptible to floods and droughts, saline intrusion and increased health risks from heat waves, dengue fever and malaria.

Cost of Climate Change: A 2012 report by the Asian Development Bank identified that by 2100 climate change will cost Southeast Asian Nations 6.7% GDP. Vietnam is one of the most vulnerable to climate change, and will likely suffer some of the highest economic costs. Rice cultivation, Vietnam's primary source of revenue, is susceptible to production declines due to rising sea levels. This will affect Vietnam's capacity for food security and sovereignty as well as its economy in the future.

Community Info

An estimated 5,700 women live in Huong Phong and Hai Duong coastal communities of Thua Thien Hue province. Rice cultivation and aquaculture are the main livelihoods of those living in this coastal area. Women in the traditional Thua Thien Hue community are primary caregivers and providers for the family and are usually in charge of selling aquaculture and agricultural products in the local markets.

Organization Info

The **Center for Sustainable Rural Development (SRD)** is leading research on the role, responsibilities and contributions of rural and marginalized women in climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction amongst fishing and rice farming communities in central Vietnam. SRD seeks to gain recognition at the local, national and regional levels of the vital role of women in climate change adaptation and natural disaster readiness.



Climate Justice is a Feminist Issue

APWLD is Asia Pacific's leading feminist, membership driven network. We hold consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Our 180 members represent groups of diverse women from 25 countries in the region. For 25 years APWLD has been empowering women to use law as a instrument of change for equality, justice, peace and development. We use research, training, advocacy and activism to claim and strengthen women's human rights.

Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD)
189/3 Changklan Road, Amphoe Muang, Chiang Mai 50100,
Thailand

Tel: (66) 53 284527, 53 284856

Fax: (66) 53 280847

Skype: apwldsec

Email: apwld@apwld.org

Website: www.apwld.org

