



## GENDER AND CLIMATE CHANGE NETWORK – WOMEN FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE POSITION PAPER

UNFCCC COP 13, Bali, Indonesia, Dec 2007

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together with women's organisations and gender experts from around the world

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**There will be no climate justice without gender justice**

### **PROTECTING TROPICAL FORESTS AND GENDER JUSTICE**

Upon the initiative of the *Coalition of Rainforest Nations*, tropical forests are now in the centre of the international climate policy debate. A variety of proposals have been put forward, reaching from linking reduced emissions from deforestation to carbon trading, to establishing funds to support the protection of forests. Gender cc wishes to highlight that forestry is not only about trees and their carbon content, but also about the ecosystem in a broader sense and the people who live in and from the forest. Since the social issues are, to a large extent, gender issues, **gender cc** believes that it is urgently needed to introduce such considerations into the debate, rather than only focussing on technical and methodological issues. The real direct and underlying causes of deforestation must be addressed, such as overconsumption, agrofuel expansion, fossil fuel extraction, the replacement of natural forests by monoculture tree plantations, and the lack of respect for indigenous peoples' rights.

**When addressing deforestation, establish a close link to relevant international conventions and processes, in particular CBD, MDG, and ILO.**

Undoubtedly, forests play an important role in the climate system. However, trees are not just carbon stores. Forest are home to over 300 million people who are entirely or partly dependent on forests for their livelihood. Forests yield subsistence and income for more than 60 million indigenous people who are almost wholly dependent on forests, for some 350 million people who are depending on forests to a high degree, and more than 1.6 billion people who depend on forest products to some degree, for survival necessities e.g. for fuel wood, medicinal plants and some foods. There is a close link with poverty: The majority of people living in extreme poverty depend at least in part on forests for their livelihoods, permitting them to survive. Moreover, forests are hosts to a wealth of biodiversity, 70% of flora and fauna species live in tropical forests, and forests play an important role for water resources and protection of the land from flooding and erosion.

To value forests *beyond* their carbon value is perhaps the only way in which forests and consequently their value as carbon storage and sequestration agents can be preserved. Protection of biodiversity, safeguarding the livelihoods of forest peoples are not just co-benefits of climate change policy, they are benefits of their own. Thus, **gender cc** believes the primary issue is to protect forests in order to safeguard their ecological balance and the livelihood of the people living in and from the forest.

We would thus prefer to talk about preserving forests and their biodiversity while maintaining and enhancing the livelihood of forest peoples, and creating co-benefits for the global climate. This is not just different wording, it rather implies deep consequences for policies and measures. The creation of every new policy is an opportunity to advance human rights. The Bali Roadmap should ensure that climate change policies are compliant with human rights.

**Acknowledge the contribution of women to forest preservation. Within community programmes, empower women to participate in planning and decision-making. In formal forestry, increase the share of women and develop and implement gender-sensitive policies and programmes.**

Forest policies are not gender neutral. The gender roles existing in societies are reflected in the different ways women and men use forest resources. In most countries, forest women's livelihoods and social roles rely directly on forest resources to meet the nutritional, health, and cultural needs of their families and communities; forest resources are also crucial to women's income-generating capacities., while men are involved in timber extraction and the use of non-timber forest products for commercial purposes. Due to this division of labour, women living in or near the forest are more relying on non-timber forest products and dependent of intact forests. Thus, they are differently and often disproportionately harmed by deforestation and have a stronger inherent interest in forest preservation. Men are more likely to benefit in the immediate or short term from deforestation in many forms, through jobs in the timber industry, or other ways of participating in the commercial use of the cleared land.

Moreover, women are virtually invisible in formal forestry, particularly in decision-making positions. Thus, policy-making in the forest sector is male-dominated and tends to neglect women's needs and interests.

At the same time, women's specialised knowledge of forestry, botany, biodiversity, and water management makes them critical resources in combating deforestation. To realise this potential, women's leadership must be supported by policies that recognise their expertise and support women in combating gender discrimination.

**A compensation and carbon trading system is not the solution. Other solutions which address the root causes and the complexity of the problem need to be developed.**

A compensation system would primarily benefit those who are currently responsible for the problem, because if deforestation would effectively be stopped, they would lose income and profits. Women, who have been actively contributing to protect the forests through their way of living from the forest, would not be rewarded under such a system, but instead those who have created or contributed to the problem. Women are the least to profit from the destruction of forests, and so they would be the least to receive compensation. For them, it would be most difficult to participate in the carbon market, but, instead, they would lose control over land and forest resources. Instead, others would receive compensation, in particular exactly those who, so far, played a major role in forest destruction. E. g., the World Bank, in their plans for the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) proposes "*... the Facility would compensate opportunity costs from short-term and unsustainable gains (e.g. uncontrolled fires, illegal logging, or conversion to cropland or pasture..*".

With such strategies we are concerned that these countries are still evading the critical urgent responsibility of deeper cuts in their own emissions. Moreover, the amount of carbon contained in the world's tropical forest is so large that it seems unrealistic to generate the required amount of money to pay for each ton avoided through forest protection. The costs to halt only a part of the deforestation in this way are estimated to range between US\$ 10 and 20 billion annually. We see no evidence that Annex I countries are both able and willing to generate a demand for carbon credits of this magnitude.

In addition, a compensation and trading system would provide a disincentive to stricter legislation such as logging bans, and their enforcement. We believe that the costs of enforcing logging bans through satellite monitoring, community programmes, education, etc. would be lower than compensation for opportunity costs.

Therefore, we call for a funding option, rather than a market-based option.

**Prior informed consent of forest and indigenous peoples, ensuring participation of women, on any forest protection mechanisms and measures.**

At present, potentially affected communities are not involved in the debate on forest preservation in the climate regime, therefore, it is essential to include them in a broad regular and on going consultation and monitoring process. However, this is only the first step. The next step, which is not automatically guaranteed, is to involve women in these consultation processes, to develop adequate means to inform them and involve them in decision-making and, later on, in implementation.

It is a false assumption, that such issues can be resolved later on, once a global mechanism is already in place, because effective information and participation would influence the design of such global mechanisms. Therefore, any mechanism to protect the forests must be an outcome of a broad consultation process of indigenous and forest communities ensuring an effective participation of women. We therefore call for explicit integration of forest women's experience and needs into the agenda of all further deliberations on REDD.

**Priority should be put on community based programmes, including gender sensitive approaches and empowering of women.**

Any policies and measures related to tropical forests need to be ruled by a set of principles ensuring the recognition of the contribution of indigenous peoples and other forest dependent communities to forest protection, and their legal and traditional rights over forests. In particular, the historical role and positive contribution of women in the governance and nurturing of forests must be recognised and their full participation in decision making must be ensured. The institutional mechanisms for the social control by forest peoples -including indigenous peoples and other forest dependent communities – over forests will evolve according to the socio-ecological and economic needs of the communities and will take separate shapes according to the varied cultural profiles of the communities in various parts of the world.

We call for a process to establish and agree upon such principles, starting from the principles drawn up by the Mumbai-Porto Alegre Forest Initiative.

**Seek for a proper balance between legislation, funding and capacity building.**

Instead of pursuing a global approach, we believe that it would be more useful to identify case by case, local and national root causes of deforestation and address them, where possible, locally and specifically. E. g., one of the underlying causes of deforestation is the lack of enforcement of existing legislation, due to a lack of means and capacity for monitoring and effective control, competing economic interests, corruption, etc. In addition to the environmental and social impacts, this leads to major losses of income for the governments due to unpaid tax revenues.

We call for a step-by-step approach to involve nations into a global forest regime. As first step, a national baseline needs to be established, however, not restricted to quantifying forest areas and carbon content, but rather including an analysis of direct and underlying causes of deforestation, and an assessment of existing legislation as for its effectiveness and compatibility with traditional land rights and human rights. Based on this, comprehensive national forest conservation strategies encompassing legal instruments and their enforcement, and community programmes, need to be developed in line with the principles mentioned above. Only then a country should be eligible to receive funds from an international forest fund in order to implement the strategy. Governance and institutional capacity needed to enforce existing legislation would be an essential precondition for any trading system, too, and should therefore be also subject to funding.

**Further information:**

Women, forests and plantations: <http://www.wrm.org.uy/subjects/women.html>

Climate Change: <http://www.wrm.org.uy/actors/CCC/index.html>

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