

# Urban Poor Women: the hidden victims of climate change in Manila in the Philippines

Climate Change exacerbates existing hardship of urban poor women in Metro Manila. Only five out of ten women in the urban center of Manila participate in the labor force and the average pay for the most common jobs for women is equivalent to \$3 USD a day.

Increasing global temperature have a direct effect on job availability for urban poor women in Manila. The women rely primarily on factory work, local markets, domestic work, or other miscellaneous jobs like street sweeping or laundry. Deregulation and casualisation of the workforce means women only get paid they work. A rising number of typhoons and an increase in heavy rainfall often prevent the women from getting to work. When factories close temporarily due to bad weather it is women who are called off first and called back last because men usually take the jobs of fixing the factories after storms. Rising temperatures also make jobs like street sweeping or selling goods in the local market unbearable, cutting off another source of income for urban poor women.

High rains and flooding are also responsible for extreme loss and damages to what very little property the women have. Many urban poor live in scanty structures that can barely withstand the waters and the winds when storms hit. Many also live in low-lying areas by the river. The government has deemed many of these areas “danger-zones.” Those who live in the “danger-zones” are made to leave their homes and are sent to resettlement camps that are often inadequate and unsafe. Potable water, main roads and access to regular wage work are extremely limited in the resettlement zones. As one woman describes, “I don’t understand how come the government can reclaim big portions of the sea (Manila Bay) for the SM Mall of Asia but they cannot do anything to build infrastructure so that those in the ‘danger zones’ will no longer be in danger. Indeed, they send us away from ‘danger zones’ and bring us to ‘death zones.’”

Repeated typhoons and flooding caused by climate change continuously threaten the already fragile livelihood and very few properties that urban poor women have. For most families of urban poor and women workers, it is already difficult to set aside part of their earnings to buy essential appliances and furniture at home (such as stoves, electric fans, beds and closets). Due to their meager income, urban poor families often have to resort to loans from individual creditors who charge interest rates as high as 20% per week, only to keep up with the rising expenses. Due to loss or damage to property and decreased income in times of calamities, it is almost a necessity for families to get loans so they have something to eat or so that they can immediately repair their houses. The constant threat of climate change related disasters forces women into this cycle of disaster and debt.

Climate-change induced natural disasters have traumatic long term social and psychological effects on urban poor women and poor women workers. Particularly in flood prone areas, mothers are the ones at home and the first to worry and take care of the children before, during and after a disaster. During the monsoon rains that lasted numerous days in August this year, mothers reported being unable to rest or sleep because they had to stay awake and monitor the water level of the river. The situation becomes more difficult when floodwater rises and they need to evacuate and seek refuge in taller buildings.

It is women, particularly mothers, who mostly feel the added pressure when financial difficulties arise during or after a disaster because they are the ones who are responsible for budgeting their limited income. Some urban poor women say that making ends meet is such a challenge it is “almost maddening at times,” especially when disasters hit.

## 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 adaptation measures for developing countries**, including through finance, technology transfer, capacity building and the removal of patent and intellectual property restrictions;
- A ‘just and equitable transition’ should include the recognition of **decent work standards** and challenge the **gendered division of labor**. New economic models should promote decent work in **low carbon women dominated sectors**, including subsistence farming, service industries, domestic and care work.
- **Loss and damage** must address long term and slow onset loss and damage as well as immediate disaster related damage;
- **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

- **Gendered impacts of climate change** on the urban workers, especially the poorest, should be recognized;
- **Work decent standards** should be established for all economic sectors, including decent wage and working hours, social security, safety conditions, among others;
- The **working poor, including women**, must be included in all **in all decision-making policies** and measures on climate change affecting them;
- All national development policies climate-related programmes should respect the principle of **free, prior and informed consent** of communities impacted, particularly for those threatened of **displacement**;
- 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 most vulnerable, including the **working poor**.



# Philippines Country Info

**Population:** 100.5 million

**Human Development Index Ranking:** Ranked 117 on Human Development Index of 187

**Greenhouse Gas Global Emission:** As of 2013, the Philippines contributed 0.27% of global greenhouse gas emissions and in 2014 has a per capita emission rate of 0.87 metric tons (as compared to 17.5 metric tons for the US, and 6.18 metric tons for China).

**Climate Change Vulnerability:** The Philippines is extremely vulnerable to climate change. Climate change is expected to limit freshwater supplies, cause massive forest die-offs, and amplify coastal erosion. Changing rain patterns and warmer temperatures are expected to reduce agricultural production, increase malnutrition, and cause a surge in the spread of waterborne diseases.

**Costs of Climate Change:** For the Philippines, the human and economic cost of climate change is already enormous. According to the World Bank, climate change related loss and damages were estimated to have cost the Philippines USD 18.6 Billion (P 799 Billion) in the last ten years, while over 10,000 people were killed due to Typhoons Yolanda, Ondoy, Pepeng and Sendong.



# Community Info

Research group comprised of 8 barangays in four cities in Northern Capital Region.

- Poverty rate of 25.6% for women.
- Only 5 out of 10 women participate in labor force.
- Minimum wage in Northern Capital Region- USD 10/day (P 466).
- Average pay for domestic work in Northern Capital Region- USD 3/day (P 138).
- Average cost of living in Northern Capital Region (for family of 4)- USD 23/day (P1,032).
- Women reliant on factory work for industries like garments, plastics and paper, and food (chips, crackers, peanuts, spices).
- Extremely poor working conditions- 12 hour days, no breaks, no days off.

# Organization Info

The **Center for Trade Unions and Human Rights (CTUHR)** is documenting the social and economic effects of climate change on urban poor women and women workers in Metro Manila. The CTUHR works in collaboration with numerous women's organizations working on displaced women workers, women workers in low-wage, low-security jobs, and other related topics. The CTUHR assesses the impacts of recent natural disasters on these communities as well as their own practices of adaptation to analyze implications these circumstances can hold for climate policy at the national, regional and international levels.



# 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](mailto:apwld@apwld.org)

Website: [www.apwld.org](http://www.apwld.org)

