

In-session workshop on gender-responsive climate policy with a focus on adaptation, capacity building and training for delegates on gender issues

Bonn, 17 May 2016

Session II: The drivers of change: enabling conditions for advancing gender equality in climate change policy, planning and programmes

Intervention by Ms. Josephine Castillo

Biography:

Josephine Castillo is a grassroots community leader and organiser with DAMPA in Manila, Philippines, a country that is extremely vulnerable to climate change. She has worked extensively on a number of key urban poor issues, including reversing forced eviction and involuntary relocations, ensuring land and housing security for poor communities, and advocacy for the provision of basic services in urban poor communities. Josephine's participation in the In-session workshop on gender-responsive climate policy was supported by the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate.

Josephine Castillo's story

I am Josephine Castillo, a grassroots leader and community organiser from the Philippines. I work with DAMPA Federation, a woman led grassroots organisation with 237 local members from urban and rural communities.

I want to share with you some of the work we are doing with grassroots communities to build resilience to climate change.

Firstly we work with women because we are good at managing money and getting organised. We are born to be responsible and to take care of our families – and we have volunteers heart & soul. We are responsible for food and water in the household and have a focused and positive outlook.

I am living on the island of Leyte. It was hit by Typhoon Haiyan in November 2013. We are still recovering from this extreme event – but we also struggle with ongoing changes due to climate change. The changes in the seasons mean that farmers are struggling to produce harvests as they did in the past – especially as they used to produce rain fed rice. This declining harvest affects families' incomes and their food security.

We work with women farmers to help them to get organised to build their capacity to negotiate with government agencies so that they access support and benefit from projects such as farm diversification. So for example as this is traditionally a rice farming area and unreliable seasons and drought are negatively affecting crops – we are working with the women to do livestock farming in addition to growing rice (raising chickens, pigs, goats etc.). We are providing training for the women so that they know how to care for the animals and access to traditional medicinal knowledge so that

they can care for the livestock when they are ill. The additional farming activity provides another source of income for the household, improves food security and nutrition, and helps the women to send their children to school.

All of this helps to make the whole community more resilient.

To build capacity for the longer term we work with women to create community savings and loans an important mechanism to empower women economically and to build their resilience – it also protects them from having to borrow money from money lenders.

These community savings also help the women to negotiate better with the government to access support for grassroots community projects and programs in building resilient communities on climate change. It also shows them that the community has capacity to manage a project.

Another story I would like to tell you is from an urban area in metropolitan Manila.

During drought it is very difficult for the urban poor people to access clean drinking water. These poor communities do not have a water connection because there is no clear title to the land where they live and no legal right of way into their community for the water pipes

As a result they have to buy expensive water from private sellers and this has a knock on effect on food security – as there is less money to pay for food.

We worked with the women to train them and provide them with access to information so that they could dialogue with local government and the legislators in Manila. They also create community savings so that they could have collateral to show the government. As a result they were able to secure a legal right of way for the water pipes to come in to their community and access to subsidies to fund the water system.

And now through this water connection they have organised a water cooperative – and through the coop they use the money they generate to dredge canals, make pathways and create small shops and businesses. They also use the funds they raise to provide access to healthcare. As a result the whole community becomes more self-sufficient and resilient.

So it is very important to empower women economically and to know their rights so that they can play their part in building resilient communities. Women are at the centre of all the activities we do at the local level and they have been able to convince

We grassroots women know the solutions, we are doing the work on the ground – we need to be recognised and heard more at conferences like this as agents for change and partners in building resilient communities & countries.