



## Submission to the UNFCCC Talanoa process from the 12<sup>th</sup> Community-Based Adaptation conference in Malawi

### 1. Introduction

This year's Community-Based Adaptation event in Malawi (CBA12) brought together 300 practitioners and policymakers to share developments in locally-driven climate action from 45 countries. The LDC group of climate negotiators, IIED and MRFCJ ran a Talanoa on Gender and Climate Change to generate insights into how we can deliver the Paris Agreement's commitment to promote gender-responsive climate action.

There was a rich and diverse discussion as participants shared why the Talanoa process resonates with them, how in so many cultures there are inclusive spaces to share local and traditional knowledge and reach consensus-based decisions that benefit everyone in the community. In Malawi, Pabwalo means 'a place of gathering', in Lesotho, Pitso is a community gathering, called and chaired by the village chief; Musangano is a comparable meeting in Zimbabwe. In Kenya it's Baraza - a word also used in parts of the DRC. In Ghana, it's Badwa. In Vietnam, Ngow Am describes a "village gathering to share experience and information and make collective decisions that matter to the whole community". In Nepal, each community has a chautari or resting place. This typically has a stone seat usually by a Pipal tree. The traditional purpose was to provide a rest stop to travellers, but they also provide a place for community gatherings.

CBA participants believe that gender is key in climate action largely because women face specific vulnerabilities due to their responsibilities, the resources they have access to and control of, and their exclusion in many cases from wider decision making.

### 2. Where are we now on gender and climate action?

*Women and gendered perspectives are not well enough represented at national and international scales of climate action:* The agency of women as holders of knowledge and solutions is not yet fully recognised. In some contexts, women are well represented at local community level and are strong agents of change for climate action, but this does not often translate into influence at national and global levels, including in decision making fora like the UNFCCC. Participants felt that some women in international spaces do not see it as their role to be raise gendered perspectives and they tend not to raise gender issues when in rooms predominantly of men. When women do have representation, they may not be in positions that influence decision making. At higher levels, lack of education is a barrier to engagement, but even at local levels, women may be present but without confidence to challenge men or even speak in front of them. As a result they remain passive participants.

*There are barriers for women to meaningfully engage in the climate policy arena:* There are inherent challenges for women less experienced in the climate debates to engage with technical discussions designed for people classed as 'experts'. Language, logistics and format can all exclude women as well as confidence and unsupportive power dynamics. It can be challenging to get permission to attend

meetings; and other barriers to women's participation include work load; and lack of control over age of marriage, family planning and childcare responsibilities. These all limit opportunities for leadership. When women overcome these obstacles, leadership can become an additional burden on grassroots women, in terms of time commitments. Women interact and communicate in different ways to men and these can be less visible to those who might be in a position to support and amplify their voices on climate action.

*There is still a large gap between gender and climate policy and implementation:* In some places the idea of gender has become synonymous with improving participation in general, not gendered participation, and financing for gender responses is limited. To date, women's inputs into the design and delivery of climate programmes has been limited, with inadequate engagement of people across communities to tackle the rapid changes households are facing due to climate change. There is experience from outside the climate context to draw on on how to engage women more effectively. There is also a need to prove the value of women's participation to actors in the climate community.

### **3. Where do we need to get to?**

*Diverse women's perspectives must routinely inform climate action.* This would imply meaningful representation at different scales of climate policy, including women from different generations, women living with disability and women from different ethnic and cultural groups. This requires going beyond counting numbers of women represented to enable the agency and presence of women at the decision-making table. There is a need to value the lived experience of men and women and to enable them to use this experience and knowledge to influence climate action. Participants made the point that women can be relied on to speak out truth if actions are inadequate – forcing others to move 'from talk, to do'. Women and men with limited access to resources will have a different perspective on what is working and what are the priorities. All of these different perspectives are valuable inputs to climate action.

*Regular dialogue between men and women is required to tackle power relationships and cultural norms and to change the gender and climate discourse.* These dialogues need to engage men by talking about gender in the widest sense and as development issue, and by building vocal champions at different levels. It also needs to be informed by the way women self-organise and communicate with each other to engage them in processes, rather than expecting them to attend meetings designed to suit experts or the men in the community. Participants stressed the importance of deliberate strategies to enable this shared dialogue – with women *and* men – to shift power dynamics.

*All countries need stronger and higher quality responses to climate change and gender equality.* Participants had experience of achieving this through policy and legislation which create norms for gender balance; policies can change culture as we have seen in land ownership, age of consent, age of leaving school. Another lever is more systematic financing and resource allocation for gender-responsive climate action and meaningful engagement in decisions – gender budgeting for climate change and holding governments accountable on commitments and financing. There is a need to explicitly define roles and benefit sharing, ensure gender balance and consider gender relations, structures and incentives in policy, as well as in technology development (e.g. in reducing women's domestic labour).

#### 4. How will we get there?

The CBA community of practice therefore calls on the UNFCCC Secretariat and Parties to consider the following action points:

- Provide **explicit support for women** to ensure they are engaged, confident and able to represent their views in climate decision making. This needs to take a variety of forms such as investing in leadership skills to engage women strategically and effectively – as well as establishing wider processes that offer a receptive arena and policy space for gendered perspectives. Special emphasis is needed on ensuring that participation does not become an additional burden for women.
- **Create spaces and feedback loops** across local, national and international policy discussions – deliberately providing women with opportunities to participate, to analyze policy and feedback their perspectives. Bringing women with experience of international climate policy into national and local discussions to share those perspectives is a powerful enabler of capacity development and empowerment. Likewise, making spaces for women with local experience to share their stories at national and international level can be impactful. Identifying policies and rules that enable meaningful engagement by women and men with lived experience of climate change can inform more effective and inclusive climate action.
- **Frame gender responsive climate action in terms of real change to peoples' lives** – ensure that decision making includes men and women who are willing to bring a 'gendered' perspective, as well as people with different backgrounds and experience of the gendered impacts of climate change. Ensure that all climate programmes demonstrate what socially transformative climate action looks like for men and women, young and old, so that we explicitly tackle the power dynamics and structures that underpin the gender dimensions of climate change.