

Gender Justice to Eliminate Climate Change Impacts in developing Countries, a case study from Sudan

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Introduction and Abstract

This paper illustrates the different land use systems, human activities and importance of the Savannah Belt to the Sudanese economy and natural resources in an area that since the 1970 has been most affected by environmental conflicts and climate change risk. This paper sheds light on the effect and impact of climate change and conflict on women in the Savannah Belt, which not unlike other areas of Sudan, have suffered from social exclusion and have often been neglected in attempts to address the drivers of climate change and its resulting conflicts. The significant impact of this neglect can, however, be balanced against the more positive gains taken from examples where women have not only been included both programmatically but also in the policy arena, such as the development of Sudan's reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+ Proposal Document/Policy).

Positive examples, whilst still few, illustrate the importance of combining climate justice and gendered approaches to achieve practicable and inclusive policy and programmatic solutions for mitigating the impact of climate change and conflict.

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In Sudan, lessons learned from the best practices of Sudan's social forestry have led to modifications at the policy level and the creation of mutual collaboration between government officials and non-governmental bodies to address issues of gender equality in climate change adaptation and mitigation. Such policy approaches have grown out of locally developed policy initiatives based around the concept of social forestry, which in more recent developments has served to empower women and enhance gender and climate justice – creating fertile ground for REDD+ Proposal Document/Policy and resulting programmes to incentivise equitable and inclusive participation of local communities, ensuring women's inclusion and participatory management of local environment and ecosystems. Although such examples are few upon the ground, their inclusion as a best practice influences the development of Sudan's REDD+ Proposal Document/Policy, facilitating the roll-out of similar programmatic approaches across the country.



Research Methodology

The research for this paper is based on a number of data collection methods, including collation of primary data from personal observations, along with 17 local community consultations during the development of the REDD+ Readiness Programme (RPP) in Sudan (between 2012-2014), including Gedaref, Blue Nile, Sennar, White Nile, north Kordofan and Gezira states.

Secondary data were utilised via a literature review, including analysis of a number of programme and project reports, assessments, published books, papers and online documents, along with critical analysis of the provisions and articles contained within Sudan's REDD+ Proposal Document/Policy. The research methodology applies and tests the gendered climate justice approaches, examining if and how they can address vulnerability to drivers of climate change, and conflict through their integration into the REDD+ Proposal Document/Policy. Discourse analysis of the integration of gender into the REDD+ Proposal Document/Policy examines both the methods in which gender was integrated, along with the end result in terms of provisions contained within the document. The data for this paper were collected via semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The research specifically included women from a number of disadvantaged tribes of the Savannah Belt from six different states

Some Reflections from the Local Communities

I am from pastoralist family, I born in the north of Kordofan, my area is affected by the desertification and conflict, after we lost all our livestock, we relocated here since 1980s, this place becomes my home, we have been learned from our grandmother that people cannot live without trees and trees give us a live. This why I care about the forests because, it is the future for my children and human in the earth.
Khadija, Northern Kordofan (on 12 April 2014).

People from the urban areas or Khartoum should asked us why the forest is important for our livelihoods as we live with forest and protect it. I can not understand some people care only about the forest and not about the people.
She insisted that:

Women know more than men about the forests and environment, because we enter the forest three times per day for firewood and bring water, so we know well which tree is sick or old and where new trees suppose to be planted. Men just go to forest to make charcoal or stay at home to eat the food we cooked for them.
Mrs Howa, the Blue Nile State (on 21 March 2015).

REDD+ should be for the people who suffer and vulnerable by the drought and rain fluctuations, as we are women who stay caring about our families under all the threats and we know well how our environment is affected by the climate change and conflict.
Halima, White Nile states (on 16 March 2014)

We carried and delivered human being to the life from our stomach, we managed to survive during the drought and war as women, do you think we are not strong to conserve and prevent our forest with some support from REDD+.
Mariam, Gedarif state (on 2 August 2014)



Concluding Remarks

*The advent of conflicts, oftentimes directly related to land use and natural resources constraints compounded by climate change, have caused further devastation. However, a constant factor implicated in this entire process has been the neglect and lack of visibility of Sudanese women and their voices. In this regard, the legislative and policy framework in this region has been a mixed bag of overlapping, contradictory and causative frameworks for both the escalation of conflict and the neglect of women.

*Sudan's new institutional and policy arrangements, through the application of the climate justice and gender tool in Social forestry, has resulted in the development of a positive-looking REDD+ policy. The current approach has made the necessary early connections between climate change and conflict drivers whilst drawing linkages between the social, economic, political and ecological factors at play.

*Priorities must ensure and focus upon Sudanese women having access to financial assistance and substantive capacity-building measures; women (and men) from local communities will need to continue to be engaged and be included in an inclusive and meaningful manner in both ongoing policy development and implementation programmes to ensure the sustainability of such approaches; and best practices will need to be recorded and documented for potential application across other parts of the country (and possibly the wider region of the Savannah Belt of Africa).

*Social forestry in Sudan's Savannah Belt provides an example of an extremely effective climate justice approach, integrating women's roles, needs and interests (and those of other vulnerable or marginalised communities) in a holistic manner.