



Ulrike Röhr, Minu Hemmati

A Gender-Sensitive Climate Regime?

COP13 in Bali: from a gender perspective, a significant breakthrough was achieved.

For the first time in UNFCCC history, a worldwide network of women, **gendercc – women for climate justice**, was established. The group published several position papers articulating the women's and gender perspectives on the most pressing issues under negotiation. And for the first time a range of activities on women's and gender issues was organized by various organisations and institutions. And they met with interest, increasing awareness, and increased expression of commitment to gender justice from a number of stakeholders.

It was already at the SBSTA/SBI meeting in Bonn in May 2007, half a year before the COP, when the Indonesian Ministry for the Environment, preparing to host the COP, expressed their commitment to support women's involvement in the conference as well as the desire for integrating gender equality in the deliberations. Furthermore, the president of the conference, Indonesian Minister for the Environment Rachmat Witoelar, expressed his commitment to mainstream gender into the Bali Outcomes during a meeting with Indonesian NGOs. Although he did not succeed doing this, his statement constitutes a strong message. Some days after the conference, the Bangkok Post published an article referring to Thailand's Minister of the Environment expressing his disappointment with the Bali outcome and calling on governments to support women's roles in combating global warming.

Beyond such statements, there were also a great variety of activities addressing women's and gender concerns going on around the Bali COP, for example:

- *Side events* of development organisations, women's and women ministers' networks, and governmental departments were the most visible manifestations of the new situation. Altogether, six side events had women's / gender issues as their main focus or integrated them in a broader framework. This is the highest number of such events ever held at a climate COP. The events addressed an impressive array of issues, including forestation/deforestation, adaptation, financing, energy, biodiversity, and future climate regime, among others.
- The *Women's Caucus* was cooperating closely with the *Climate Justice Caucus*, which was newly established at the COP. Issues of climate justice are proving to be excellent entry points for highlighting gender issues. Indeed, it seems that climate justice is one of the upcoming and may play an important role the debates over the next years.
- *Trade Unions*, traditionally a partner for campaigning on gender equality, were approved as a constituency to the UNFCCC for the first year. They expressed their interest in cooperation and included a paragraph on gender equality and gender mainstreaming, suggested by the Women's Caucus, in their lobbying document.

- A press briefing of the newly established global network *gendercc – women for climate justice** during the conference and media coverage in various countries generated additional attention to the issues beyond the closed conference area.
- And finally, daily Women's Caucus meetings helped to draft positions and statements and to coordinate lobbying efforts among the participating women. The Women's Caucus and the *gendercc network* was also the main node of contact between the women and gender advocates and the UNFCCC Secretariat.

The described activities and developments mark a step change in terms of gender and climate change issues in the international policy process and arena: new connections between different issues have been made, and new alliances have been established.

Climate Justice: Entry Points for Gender Justice

It was not only NGOs, but also United Nations Organisations and International Organisations like IUCN who expressed their commitment to gender mainstreaming in climate change policies. Thus, it seems that 'gender equality' is finally beginning to be accepted as one of the core principles of mitigating climate change and adapting to its impacts. This may be due to the importance of climate justice in the future climate regime and the increased understanding among at least some of organisations forming the UNFCCC constituencies that the discourse on climate change needs to be widened beyond its current main focus on technologies and economic instruments. Root causes of climate change, like consumption patterns and lifestyles in industrialised countries and quickly developing societies must be brought onto the agenda immediately. Women and gender activists have been pointing out for some years that we need to question the dominant perspective focusing mainly on technologies and markets, and put caring and justice in the centre of measures and mechanisms. The lack of gender perspectives in the current climate process not only violates women's human rights, but it also leads to shortcomings in the efficiency and effectiveness of climate related measures and instruments. The notably increased attention paid to climate justice and gender mainstreaming is certainly the outcome of many, many conversations with individual delegates, the increasing presence, and other aspects of the multi-track advocacy strategy that a small group of women and gender experts has engaged in at the COPs over the years. It seems that these patiently continued activities, including through tough times, are finally paying off.

Some countries, and not least the UNFCCC Secretariat, are also appearing more open-minded towards gender equality. During the side event "Integrating gender into climate change policy: challenges, constraints, perspectives" and in various smaller debates they expressed their concerns about the lacking gender dimension and assured their support for future activities. And they asked for very concrete suggestions, in particular regarding language, to be used in upcoming negotiations. This will be one of the tasks, and challenges, for further collaboration in the *gendercc network*: to pay very close attention to the negotiations and work closely with like-minded parties towards appropriate agreements. The network is committed to doing engaging in this way without compromising the independent, and sometimes radical, stance that the *gendercc network* has developed. Taking gender aspects into account implies a radical move away from dominant, market-based to people-centred mechanisms. This is a message that is not warmly welcomed in most of the climate change community. Hence, while there has been a step change at Bali in terms of awareness of and public commitment to gender sensitivity, really integrating gender into climate protection will remain a big challenge.

Future Strategies

Activities during COP13 in Bali were supported by funding from UNDP, aiming to bring seven women from developing countries and countries in transition to the conference, and to organise and coordinate the activities. This included preparing women's position papers, which generated a lot of interest, providing arguments and recommendations for the debates. Developing further positions and suggestions and to provide necessary background information will therefore be essential for further developing a gender sensitive climate regime.

In the future, efforts similar to those before and at COP13 must be undertaken related to the process and institutional arrangements. Continuous representation of women and the *gendercc network* will be crucial. Furthermore, it will not be sufficient to participate in the annual COPs and SBSTA/SBI meetings. In order to succeed in integrating gender in climate change policy, it will be even more important and more promising to actively participate in the growing number of workshops organised in the context of pursuing the Bali Roadmap. Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC, announced 4 to 5 additional annual meetings in order to discuss and negotiate the future climate regime. In addition, there is a significant number of related workshops, for example addressing access and benefit sharing, review of articles and conventions, or methodological issues.

On the other hand, in order to prepare substantial input into the workshops, it is necessary to link discussions at local levels to those at the international level – feeding local realities and experiences into the general and abstract discussions at the global level, as well as 'translating' global changes and international policies so as to communicate what these will, or may, mean for local communities. Providing capacity development opportunities for women and gender activities who are prepared to raise their voices in the international policy arena will be key, so that they can become effective advocates on policy and effective communicators to communities and networks around the world.

In order to be able to meet said requirements, the *gendercc network* agreed to work towards institutionalizing its structure and activities by:

- Establishing *regional focal points*, aiming to communicate between international, regional and local levels (in both directions!) to improve women's capacity on climate policy as well as climate change experts' capacity on gender equality issues. Positions and text modules for workshops, meetings and conferences should be drafted by the focal points, using materials shared in the global network;
- Establishing a *gendercc network secretariat*, coordinating the activities of the focal points, discussing the most important issues and meetings, providing support and conducting outreach and advocacy globally; and
- *Raising funds to cover the costs of participating* in the UNFCCC process for a number of women from around world.

Such a structure will also serve the women's goal of being recognised as a constituency in the UNFCCC process. This recognition, in turn, will facilitate invitations to participate in workshops, give statements and submit positions.

Network members stand ready to do this work, and there are ideas and concepts to move it forward. However, the *gendercc network* will need more, and more sustained financial support. The growing interest and expressed commitment from government parties, IGOs and others give hope that such support will be available: further progress will indeed depend on potential funders putting their money where their mouth is.

Anecdotal conclusion

In a meeting with NGOs in Bali, UNFCCC Executive Secretary was asked how he would ensure that women's perspectives and issues of social justice and human rights were being advanced in the Post-Kyoto Regime. His answer: "I have no idea, tell me how". Gender and climate change experts from all over the world are prepared to tell him what to do and how to do it, and are awaiting his request. Knowledge and skills are available. Time is ripe for open minds to learn and change.

* The **gendercc network** is the global network of women and gender scholars and activists from Asia, Africa, America, The Pacific, and Europe working for gender and climate justice. www.gendercc.net

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