

Theme: Mitigation climate change and its social dimensions

Climate change is essentially inevitable; therefore adaptation and mitigation to climate change in developing countries is critical for the protection of the livelihoods and to have continuous progress to achieve development gains¹ (Todaro & Smith 2011:21). The Pacific region being the least carbon emitters encounters the full brunt of the impacts of climate change. This is evident in the recent extreme weather events in the Pacific, majority of the vulnerable members of our community (i.e women, children, disabilities and old age suffer most from the impacts of Climate Change. The aftermath of any tropical cyclones or low depression always brings flash flooding for most villages, towns in low coastal areas and the mostly affected are the disadvantage and the marginalized group, who live below the poverty line and rely on natural resources for survival and source of income. Therefore it is essential to integrate gender at all levels in the process of developing adaptation or mitigation programs. A gender sensitive approach is needed in order for these programs to be all inclusive and avoid marginalization of disadvantaged groups and communities and to be successfully implemented at national and community level.

The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) is currently implementing the project titled “Gender in Adaptation and Low Carbon Development”. The project is funded by Federal Ministry for Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) in collaboration with the Gender CC – Women for Climate Justice. This is in its final year of implementation. Gender issues must be integrated into both mitigation and adaptation programmes in order for our communities to achieve a sustainable future.

Mitigation in climate change refers to activities that will challenge and reduce carbon emissions use of , alternative energy sources and the weaning of societies from fossil fuel. The Pacific with its own uniqueness in culture, communal living and traditional knowledge strive for survival and use of best practice to mitigate and adapt to climate change. Mitigation policy or projects has a direct social and economic impact to community/village members (women, children, men, youth and the disabilities). The Pacific Island Countries have limited technological capacity and resources to mitigate to climate change and their dependency on fossil fuel for their economic growth remains high. Other socio-economic scopes can be considered as food security, water and sanitation, survival of culture and reviving of traditional knowledge. Highlight some positive socio-economic impacts of mitigation activities in the Pacific (Kiribati & Fiji).

Focus on social dimension – Culture is important to all PICs and energy in the past has been predominantly through the use of local resources such as biomass, wind and solar. Wind energy has been used in the past years for transporting people between the islands. While solar energy has been used in the preservation of foods for example drying and heating of marine products and fruits. In the past, during seasonal months, local fruits are usually preserved and kept aside for use during famine or droughts and in the past years as people have traditional knowledge of coping with changes in climate. Nowadays, the preservation of foods and products also empowers women in income generating activities. The use of electricity and electric appliances such as refrigerators for food storage and preservations of food, mainly in urban areas where electricity is accessed have a

¹ Three core values of development: sustenance (providing basic needs like food, clean water, sanitation, housing, clothing and shelter), self-esteem (dignity, integrity and self-determination and freedom (range of choices for society or individual).

negative impact on the socio dimensions: the culture and traditional knowledge of preserving foods or navigation using wind energy are being lost as countries and people are dependent on use of fossil fuels and modern energy sources.

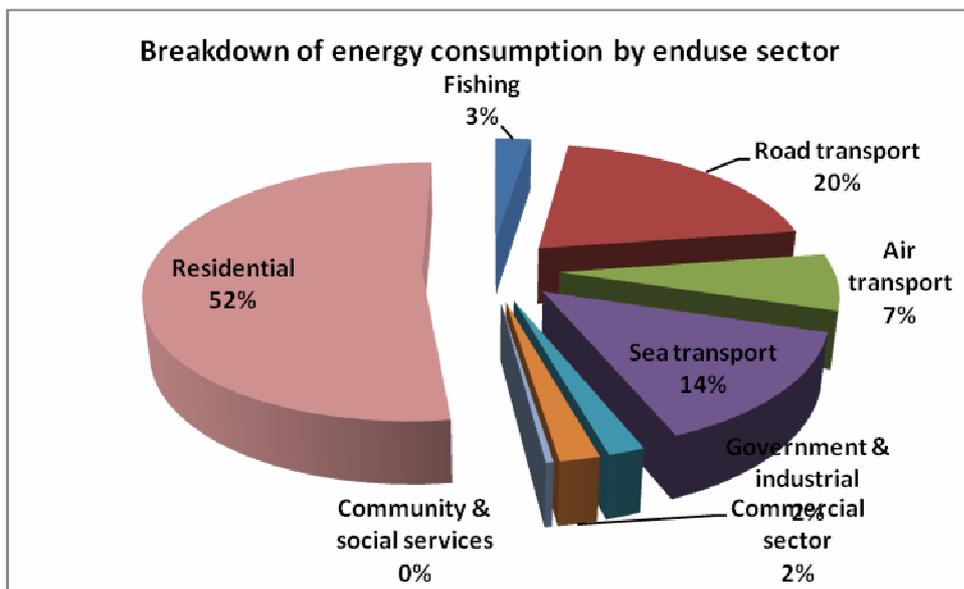
Culture and our social systems is what define our traditional roles and at the local level gender issues are handed in these traditional roles influence by our culture and social systems.

The Pacific context – Mitigation and Gender- is more about preserving our culture and empower of women to mitigate to the impacts of climate change through our traditional knowledge and culture.

Example of Kiribati Community- Preservation of culture, promotion of accessing clean energy sources, communal living (social capital-“Pacific Way” to re-plant tradional trees- energy source (residues, preservation of traditional local food and use of wind and solar energy :

At a Community based workshop on gender, climate change and energy, it was interesting to note how the participants used their culture to understand the link between gender and energy. A representative from the youth group (female) discussed the use of an energy source, firewood from the pandanus tree, to preserve their dancing skirts for a cultural performance: ‘With limited firewood on Tarawa, the traditional knowledge on the preservation of dancing costumes will also be dying out.’ Energy has an important role to play in the preservation of culture, in income generating activities and in our daily livelihoods. Participants were able to understand and appreciate the different energy needs of youth, people with special needs, women and men. To have abundance supply of pandanus youth villages are planting these local traditional trees to help women preserve their culture and able to hand down that traditional knowledge to their daughters.

According to the draft energy statistics year book 2000 to 2009, the energy end use consumption for the 10 years period for the Gilbert group shows that the residential sector consumes an average of 52% of the primary energy supply, 19% on road transport, 17% on sea transport, 8% air transport, 3% fishing, 2% government and industrial sector and 1% commercial sector. The primary sources of energy supply are: biomass (coconut & palm residues, firewood and waste), imported petroleum, electricity (a secondary form of energy) and solar energy. The residential sector end use activities include cooking water heating, drying fish and food crops (copra), cooling (refrigerators, fans) as well as lighting at night.



SPC is working with Kiribati in promoting the use of efficient stoves women and girls are less exposed to smoke that can cause health problems. Also it will save them more time which they can use for other economic activity (weaving of mats and handicraft products). The pandanus trees are also a food (fruit) and herbal medicine for the Kiribati people, by re-panting these trees it also provide secure source of their traditional food and herbal medicine.. Kiribati is similar to most of the other atoll islands in the Pacific, they use coconut residue for source of energy. (Recycle model). Graph below shows the renewable energy source of energy production is mainly from coconut residue (biomass) used for household energy source (cook food and preserve culture –traditional dance clothes) and solar.

The pacific- using culture as a communication tool to promote mitigation activities that will empower women and the marginalised groups will help us preserve our culture, document our traditional knowledge for future generation and generate economic activity that will benefits the community. The Pacific has come to understand that gender evolves changes with their social capital “Pacific way” working together for the betterment of the community is good model to be used in addressing the importance of gender needs.



Kiribati- Woman using biomass for cooking food



Model of “rocket stove”