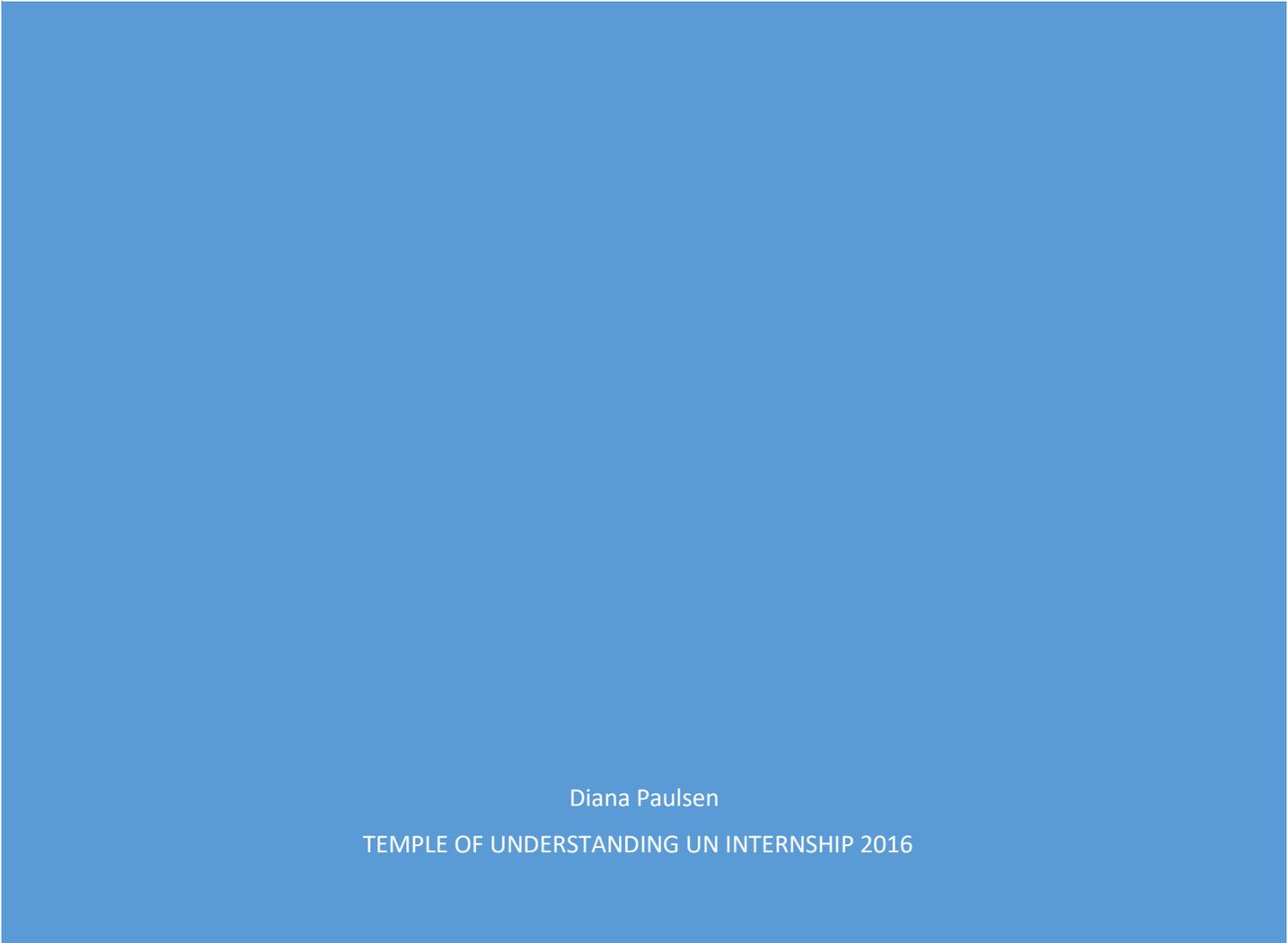




WOMEN, ENVIRONMENT, AND SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

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Introduction

When discussing implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, there is constant emphasis on “breaking down silos”. To translate from UN Jargon, “breaking down silos” means ending separation and isolation between separate development fields in favor of an approach that recognizes the inherent connections between all 17 SDG’S. The issue of Sustainable Agriculture exemplifies the need for this approach. Sustainable Agriculture, especially that involving women farmers, involves the intersection of many difficult issues, including but not limited to: climate change, access to land, gender inequality, cultural norms of gender roles, education and literacy, natural disaster management, and many more issues that this paper hopes to examine.

The Challenges

Women and Natural Disasters

One of the biggest emerging issues as regards to climate change is the increased frequency of natural disasters. This disproportionately affects women. In 2006, A London School of Economics study analyzed 141 natural disasters and found that gender inequality was directly correlated to gender disparity in those who perished.¹ This discrepancy is due to many factors. For instance, studies in Central America have found that women are often more at risk because they stay behind to help family members.² Women are also put at risk by societal norms that dictate restrictive dress codes which makes it harder for women to flee from natural disasters. Also, many conservative societies look down on women learning to swim or climb trees, skills which could help them escape a natural disaster.³

¹ “Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change”. UN Women Watch. 2009. http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/climate_change/

² “Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change”. UN Women Watch. 2009. http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/climate_change/

³ “Overview of Linkages between Gender and Climate Change”. UNDP Global Gender and Climate Alliance. 2013. <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/gender/Gender%20and%20Environment/PB1-AP-Overview-Gender-and-climate-change.pdf>

Post-Disaster, women also face greater challenges. Women often care for elderly family members and children and are responsible for obtaining food or supplies. They are also at a greater risk of sexual or physical assault in shelters. Women also face a unique set of challenges in attaining financial security after natural disaster.⁴

Women and Natural Resource

Resource collection is an exhausting task often delegated to women. This burden is becoming even greater with climate change as resources become even scarcer. One study found that across 25 Sub Saharan countries women collectively spend 16 million hours a day collecting water.⁵ In addition women and girls are responsible for collecting traditional fuels, a physically draining task that can take from 2 to 20 or more hours per week.⁶ As a result, women have less time for other activities like reading, attending school, or engaging in society.⁷ Moreover, when environmental degradation forces them to search farther afield for resources, women and girls become more vulnerable to injuries from carrying heavy loads long distances, and also face increased risk of sexual harassment and assault.⁸

Women and Access to Education

Female Farmers face unique challenges because of underlying gender inequalities. Lack of education access for girl's results in two thirds of the world's 743 million illiterate adults being

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "The State of Food and Agriculture: Women in Agriculture" Food and Agriculture Organization. 2010-2011.

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e.pdf>

⁶ "Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change". UN Women Watch. 2009. http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/climate_change/

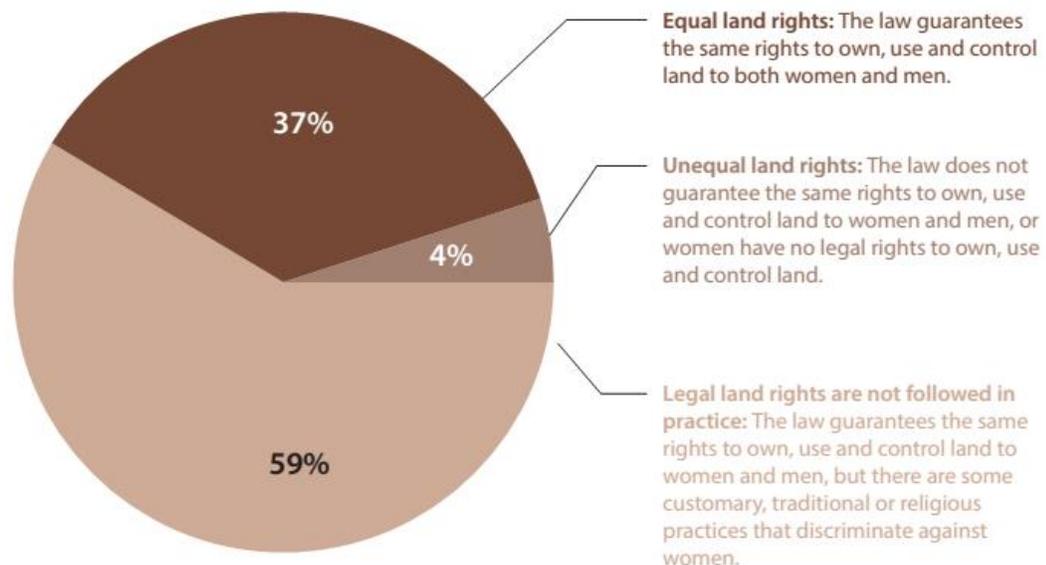
⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

women.⁹ This lack of education is compounded by the fact that, only 5% of agricultural education services are directed to women and only 15% of extension personnel are women, creating some practical and cultural barriers to teaching women about sustainable agriculture.¹⁰

Women and Land Ownership

Overall, women make up half of the agricultural labor force in the least developing countries, while in developing countries (where data is available), they own between 10 and 20 percent of the land.¹² In many places legal or customary practices prevent women from owning or inheriting land.



Source: OECD (2014)

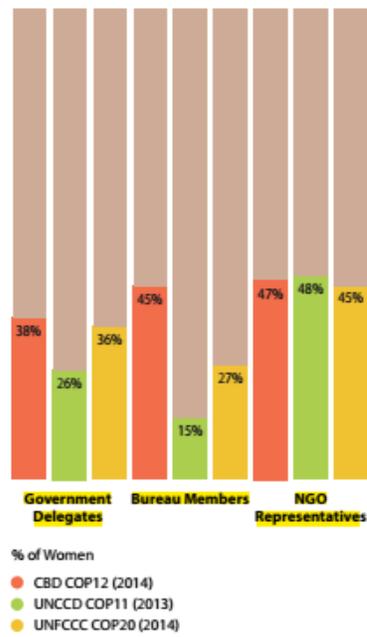
⁹ "Overview of Linkages between Gender and Climate Change". UNDP Global Gender and Climate Alliance. 2013. <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/gender/Gender%20and%20Environment/PB1-AP-Overview-Gender-and-climate-change.pdf>

¹⁰ "The State of Food and Agriculture: Women in Agriculture" Food and Agriculture Organization. 2010-2011. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e.pdf>

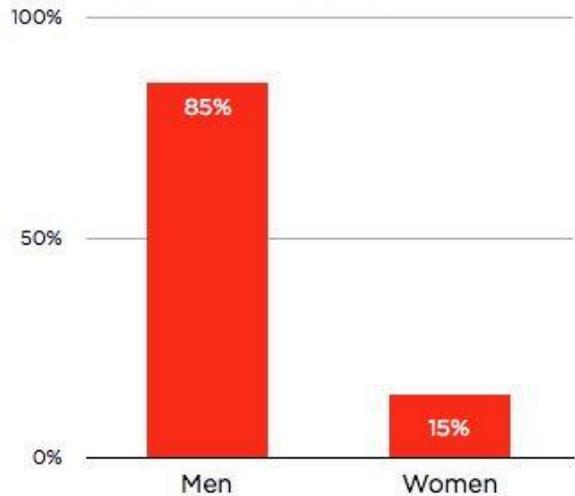
Women and Climate Advocacy

Though women are disproportionately affected by climate change, they are often underrepresented in climate change conferences as panelists, negotiators, and delegates.

Figure 1.1: Participation of women in three Rio Conventions



Who Was Quoted On Climate Change?



Based on coverage of the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change by major print, broadcast and cable outlets, and all 2013 broadcast coverage of climate change.

MEDIAMATTERS

Women and Agriculture

Women farmers currently account for 45-80 per cent of all food production in developing countries depending on the region.¹¹ However women face huge barriers in accessing resources and education and in owning land. In addition, food insecurity has a disproportionate effect on women who often go without in times of drought or famine.¹²

¹¹ "Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change". UN Women Watch. 2009. http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/climate_change/

¹²Ibid.

Strategies Moving Forward

An increased amount of women in leadership positions, especially in regards to environment and agriculture empirically has a positive effect on community outcomes¹³ Gender must also be taken account into the policies that governments adopt and the data that governments collect.¹⁴

Many Gender sensitive approaches to sustainable agriculture are currently being implemented and are having success. For instance, public procurement from smallholders programs are having success in Brazil and India where they help support small farmers and ensure fresh, nutritious food in government facilities.

In many sub-Saharan African countries so-called “Smart Subsidies” are being effective in helping small farmers, especially women without the usual side effect of further benefiting large agricultural producers.

One NGO, Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (WOCAN) is having success in expanding farmer education programs to be more inclusive to women as well as campaigning governments for a more gender sensitive approach to agricultural and land policy.

¹³ “Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change”. UN Women Watch. 2009. http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/climate_change/

¹⁴ “Overview of Linkages between Gender and Climate Change”. UNDP Global Gender and Climate Alliance. 2013. <http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/gender/Gender%20and%20Environment/PB1-AP-Overview-Gender-and-climate-change.pdf>

Impacts on the Sustainable Development Agenda

No Poverty

A joint study from UN Women, UNEP, UNDP, and the World Bank in 2015 found that creating equal levels of agricultural productivity between men and women would lift 238,000 people in Malawi out of poverty, 80,000 people in Tanzania out of poverty, and 119,000 people out of poverty.¹⁵

Zero Hunger

The FAO State of Food and Agriculture Report in 2011 found that women having equal access to agricultural resources would lower the amount of hungry people in the world by 12-17%¹⁶

Good Health and Well Being

A 2011 FAO report found that closing the gender gap in agriculture would reduce the number of malnourished people by 100-150 million.¹⁷

Quality Education

Greater agricultural productivity means that children will less necessary for agricultural labor, freeing them to attend school. Increased agricultural productivity also means that families will have more money to send their kids to school.¹⁸

¹⁵ The Cost of the Gender Gap in Agricultural Productivity in Malawi, Tanzania, and Uganda". UN Women, UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative Africa, and the World Bank. October 2015.
http://www2.unwomen.org/~media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2015/costing%20gender%20gap_launch.pdf?v=1&d=20151015T142608

¹⁶ "The State of Food and Agriculture: Women in Agriculture" Food and Agriculture Organization. 2010-2011.
<http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e.pdf>

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid

Gender Equality

Equal access to agricultural resources helps to close the gender income gap and to economically empower women.

Clean Water and Sanitation

Sustainable agriculture helps reduce erosion and groundwater pollution. Also, initiatives to increase women's access to clean water help entire communities gain access to sanitation.

Affordable and Clean Energy

Clean energy can help power farms and create sustainable methods of food production.

Decent Work and Economic Growth

Closing the gender gap in agriculture would bring 100 Million dollars to the economy of Malawi, 105 million to the economy of Tanzania, and 67 Million to the economy of Uganda.¹⁹

Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure

Having systems that ensure sustainable agriculture create more robust infrastructure for food security and help ensure that agriculture, one of the world's largest industries, can continue to adapt and grow.

Reduced Inequalities

Giving women access to sustainable agriculture reduces gender inequalities. In addition, giving small farmers access to field education and new techniques helps lessen inequalities between

¹⁹ The Cost of the Gender Gap in Agricultural Productivity in Malawi, Tanzania, and Uganda". UN Women, UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative Africa, and the World Bank. October 2015.
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small and large scale farmers. In addition, smart subsidies like those outlined in the solution section can also create a more even playing field for small scale farmers.

Sustainable Cities and Communities

Sustainable agriculture helps to create more stable food supplies. Including women these initiatives also helps ensure a sustainable workforce for generations to come.

Responsible Consumption and Production

Including women in sustainable agriculture initiatives helps to educate more people about how to create sustainable, responsible systems of consumption and production.

Climate Action

Sustainable agriculture helps societies to both lessen environmental degradation and help them adapt to the effects of climate change.

Life below Water

Sustainable Agriculture helps reduce the use of pesticides and fertilizers, therefore reducing runoff into bodies of water. This helps alleviate the harmful effects of these chemicals on marine biodiversity.

Life on Land

Increased agricultural productivity per acre means that less land will have to be cleared for farming, preserving natural habitats and biodiversity.

Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

The approaches outlined as possible solutions all attempt to provide justice in access to education and resources and attempt to create strong institutions of sustainability and food security.

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