



SPOTLIGHT SERIES: LEARNING AGENDA ON CLIMATE SERVICES in Sub-Saharan Africa

Female farmers in Niger, Mercy Corps

BENEFITING ALL USERS: Gender Equality and Inclusion

Women’s needs and priorities often differ from those of men, and their ability to access and use climate services is significantly more constrained. To address these disparities, and to ensure access to and benefit from these services, it is critical to use gender-informed approaches.

CONTEXT

Whether they are developed through the public or private sector, rural climate services have the potential to equally benefit women and men if they respond to gender-specific challenges to access and use of climate information in livelihood decision-making. The approaches outlined in this brief address these challenges and help to ensure that climate services are gender responsive, with a special focus on enhancing inclusion of women and their needs. Women’s needs and priorities often differ from those of men, and their ability to access and use climate services is significantly more constrained. To address these disparities and to ensure that both women and men are able to access and benefit from these services, it is critical to use gender-informed approaches.

Examples of these types of approaches include using channels based on information and communications technology (ICT) tailored to women’s needs, developing partnerships with civil society organizations and women’s groups, and producing climate information products that are relevant to women’s climate-sensitive decisions. To increase gender equality in the use of climate services, it is critical to target key knowledge gaps regarding the channels that promote women’s learning, and to assess the potential for climate services to contribute to women’s enhanced voice in agricultural decision-making.

**“THIS IS THE FIRST TIME
THAT A [CLIMATE SERVICES]
PROJECT HAS COME HERE
AND ASKED TO SEE
THE WOMEN.”**

**- A WOMAN DURING A CLIMATE
SERVICES SYSTEMS MAPPING
WORKSHOP IN NIGER**

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LEARNING HIGHLIGHTS

Climate services risk reinforcing harmful gender inequalities if they fail to account for and effectively target both women's and men's needs. In much of the developing world, women and men face different challenges to accessing and taking action on weather and climate information. For example, gender inequalities in access to ICTs and media-based channels can effectively disadvantage women from accessing information at the necessary times. Additionally, biased institutions and gender differences in group and network participation can inhibit women's access to key communication channels where weather and climate information is shared. Men and women also farm different crops, thus information that doesn't account for women's farming practices is not valuable or usable for women.

Gender norms that define the gendered division of labor can impact women's access and control over resources and their ability to make certain decisions, thereby determining which types of climate information would be most useful to women versus information that would be most useful for men. Factors related to the gender division of labor, resource control, and decision-making power can also influence women's and men's differing capacities to use weather and climate information to manage risks and make changes in livelihood planning. In both of these latter two cases, women are often at a distinct disadvantage with regards to being able to use climate information relative to men.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Climate services that are truly gender-responsive seek to address the differing challenges that women and men face in accessing and using weather and climate information, and can help all smallholder farmers manage climate-related risks and build resilience to climate variability and extreme events. The following are potential pathways for developing gender-responsive climate services, with a special focus on women who are most often disadvantaged by current approaches:

ICT and media-based communication channels tailored to women's assets and needs help enhance women's access to routine weather information and advisories. Limited resources, including financial and technological (e.g. cell phones), and low literacy levels can restrict women's access and control of ICTs in comparison to men. Household labor responsibilities and disproportionate unpaid care work burdens can also limit women's time available to listen to media-based services. For example, findings from pilots of a Participatory CS Systems Development methodology in Niger and Senegal suggest that women lack the means to purchase radios and the time to listen to them, thus limiting their access to this communication channel. Women stated that even if they receive information, they lack the resources, such as land, equipment, and agricultural inputs, to act on the information (see also, [Participatory Climate Information Services Systems Development Methodology](#)). It is critical that CS interventions using ICTs carefully consider local household trends in accessing communication assets and other resources. They must ensure that ICT and media-based channels are appropriate given women's livelihood activities, finances, and climate-sensitive decisions (described in more detail below).

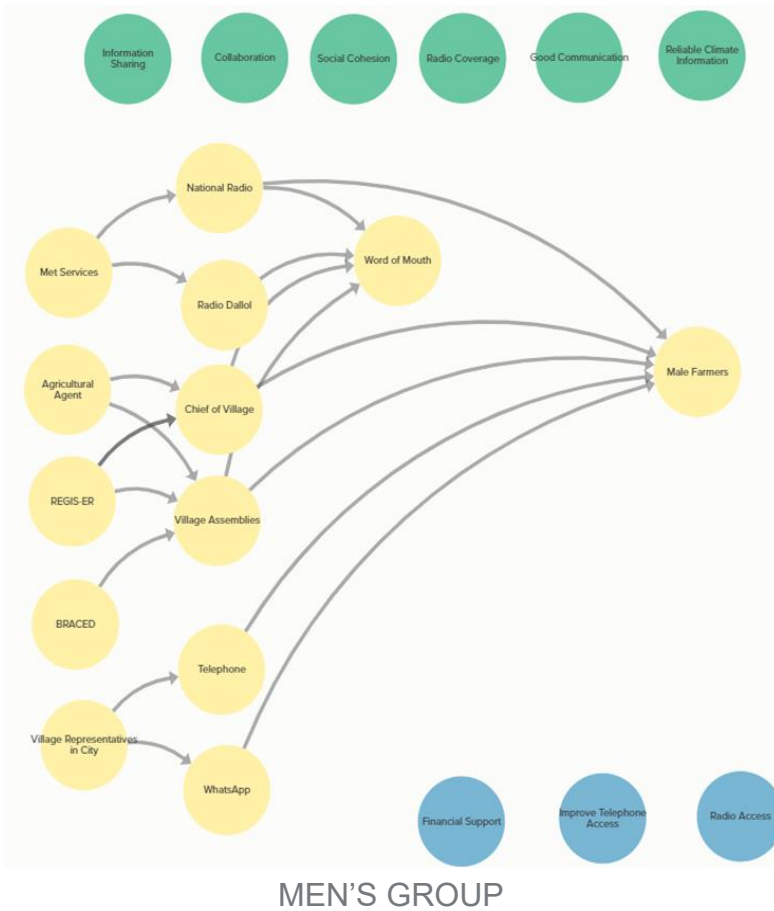
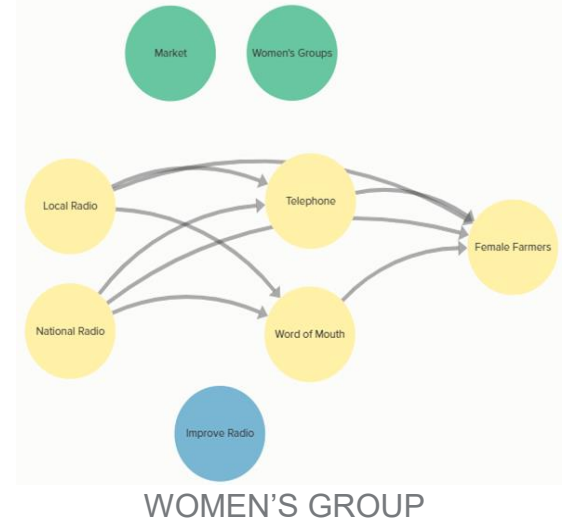


Image 1. During a systems mapping workshop of climate services in the Nigerian village of Borgou Béri, women (systems map on the right below) identified word of mouth, telephone, and radio as the only channels to receive climate information, while men (systems map on the left) receive the information through word of mouth, telephone, radio, agriculture services, village assemblies, and projects delivering information (including the DFID-funded SUR1M project and the USAID-funded REGIS-ER project). Women stated that they do not attend the village assemblies at which agriculture services and projects disseminate climate information.



Communication channels that include women's groups are effective means to promote women's access to weather and climate services. In general, farmers' associations and cooperatives underserve or effectively exclude women due to membership criteria based on land ownership and other capital requirements. Even when women are part of farmer groups, the groups may not be sensitive to the differing needs of women and women may not have equal access to resources. The inclusion of community-based and female-dominated groups in communication channels can help to circumvent the gender barriers women face to access and equal inclusion in characteristically male groups and, therefore, create a new pathway for information sharing. As a result, women can benefit from access to climate information, agro-advisories, and related technical trainings shared via these groups.

Partnerships with civil society organizations can be important to facilitating women's access to extension services and externally-based communication channels. In some contexts, gender norms that limit public interactions between women and men can restrict women's access to agro-climatic trainings. For example, research from Niger and Senegal suggests that projects often

USING GROUP LEARNING PROCESSES THAT BENEFIT WOMEN

A WOMEN-MANAGED VILLAGE KNOWLEDGE CENTER (VKC) IN PUDUPATTI, A VILLAGE IN TAMIL NADU, INDIA, HAS HELPED TO TRANSLATE AND COMPLEMENT INFORMATION DISSEMINATED BY EXTENSION SERVICES TO LOCAL WOMEN FARMERS.

GIVEN ITS EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH WOMEN FARMERS, THE VKC IS ABLE TO MAKE CLIMATE INFORMATION RELEVANT TO WOMEN THROUGH AGRO-ADVISORIES SUITED TO THEIR NEEDS.

GIVEN ITS LOCAL PRESENCE AND ROLE AS A FAMILIAR SOURCE OF INFORMATION, THE VKC IS PARTICULARLY SUCCESSFUL IN MAKING AGRO-ADVISORIES ACCESSIBLE TO WOMEN.

disseminate climate information at village assemblies. However, these assemblies are not well attended by women for a variety of reasons, including their husbands' opposition to their attendance, time poverty, lack of resources for travel, competing family responsibilities, and mobility and security issues. Furthermore, women also reported that their husbands often do not share the climate information learned at meetings with them. To address this challenge, gender-focused local organizations could be effective partners in identifying gender-sensitive communication channels to assist in addressing this challenge. For example, for an agro-climatic information services project in Southeast Asia, the World Agroforestry Center (ICRAF) partners with CARE International's local offices, which contribute tools and approaches for engaging men and promoting women's participation in decision-making forums. It is critical to ensure the most marginalized women within communities have equal access and opportunity to engage with such partners.

FEMALE COMMUNICATORS ENHANCE WOMEN'S ACCESS

In the Ida Mouride commune in Senegal, women demonstrated a more complex and detailed understanding of the climate services system than men. They attributed this to the **PRESENCE OF 20 WOMEN'S GROUPS THAT HAVE FORMED A UNION AT THE COMMUNE LEVEL**, are well-organized, and are linked to projects providing climate services, as well as the **PRESENCE OF A DYNAMIC FEMALE RELAY** from a project that manages a demonstration plot and receives SMS alerts from the Civil Aviation and Meteorology Agency.

In the Indian village of Kannivadi, women farmers' increased awareness of and enthusiasm for the integrated Agro-meteorological Advisory Service (AAS) and other agricultural information was due to the **EFFORTS OF A WOMAN VOLUNTEER** who recorded weather data from a manual weather station and then **PROMOTED THE INFORMATION THROUGH INTERACTIONS WITH OTHER WOMEN FARMERS IN THE VILLAGE**.

Climate services that are relevant to women's climate-sensitive decisions are necessary to ensure that the information is useful to them. Gender norms concerning labor roles, control of resources, and decision-making influence the types of information most useful to women and their capacity to use the information to make climate- and weather-informed decisions in managing risks. For instance, in Niger and Senegal women expressed challenges in being able to act on the information they did receive due to lack of decision-making control over and access to land. Despite this barrier to using climate information in farm management, women reported using climate information for reasons beyond agriculture, such as to secure their children and family during the rainy season when a storm is predicted. Effective climate services must identify women's and men's information needs specific to their service area and tailor the information to ensure it meets everyone's needs. This includes private sector companies, which rarely think explicitly about the inclusion of women's needs in their design of climate and weather services, decision-making, or service offerings. Effective services must also take into account gender norms that might prevent use of such information, and ideally collaborate with other efforts to overcome these barriers.

NEXT STEPS

Understand what combination of communication processes best enable women to understand and act on information. A critical opportunity lies in identifying when communication channels like ICTs, group learning, and gender-sensitive facilitation more effectively enable women to interpret and

act upon information. While ICTs may be particularly helpful for communicating information at a weather timescale, other communication channels might be better-suited to enable women's understanding and use of other types of information, such as seasonal forecasts. This is important considering that women often face challenges in understanding and interpreting the technical information provided through forecasts and climate services.

Identify how gender interacts with other socioeconomic attributes to shape access preferences and information needs. Socio-economic attributes such as age, seniority, and ethnicity can influence women's and men's household decision-making roles, access, and control of productive resources and technology, and the social groups and networks accessible to them. In order to ensure climate services meet the needs of all rural farmers, it will be important to use methodologies that permit differentiation of types of farmers and identification of their delivery preferences and information needs.

Assess the influence of climate services on women's participation in decision-making. In some cases, climate services may help local actors challenge limiting gender roles. For example, access to weather forecasts has helped women to make informed agricultural decisions in India. Their increased role in decision-making has then influenced a shift in gender roles, wherein men are no longer seen as the sole decision-makers and women are seen as more than farm laborers. Evaluation of the conditions that may enable access to climate information to contribute to women's enhanced role in agricultural and livelihood decision-making is a key knowledge gap. Along with understanding enabling conditions, it is important to acknowledge and understand that efforts to empower women could change traditional gender roles, which could result in more exclusionary practices if men feel their roles are being threatened.

Integrate climate services with rural development efforts that seek to overcome women's resource constraints. Limited resource control and lack of opportunity to participate in agricultural decision-making can significantly restrict women's capacity to make full use of climate information. This then acts as a deterrent on women's demand for and interest in climate information. While it can be difficult for climate services programs alone to address the extreme challenges that marginalized groups confront to act on climate and weather information, coordination with other efforts can be a key opportunity to enhance impacts in these cases. Robust understanding of how climate services can work in the context of broader development programs to promote gender equality will be an important area for additional learning.

“THE WORKSHOPS MADE US AWARE OF THE ISSUE OF CLIMATE INFORMATION. WE IDENTIFIED EXPERIENCES RELATED TO IMPROVING OUR CROP YIELDS THROUGH THE USE OF INFORMATION, AS WELL AS THE SECURITY OF OUR CROPS AND INPUTS, AND DECISION MAKING REGARDING WHICH CROPS TO PLANT.”

- PRESIDENT OF THE KEUR MOUSSA NDIAYE WOMEN'S GROUP AFTER A PARTICIPATORY MAPPING WORKSHOP IN SENEGAL

The Learning Agenda on Climate Services in Sub-Saharan Africa generated new information, evidence, and learning on the effective and sustainable production, delivery, and use of climate information to improve rural agricultural livelihood decision-making and outcomes. The program began in October 2016 and ran through September 2019. More information can be found at: climatelinks.org/projects/learningagendaonclimateservices.

SUGGESTED READING FROM THE LEARNING AGENDA ON CLIMATE SERVICES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

- *PARTICIPATORY CLIMATE INFORMATION SERVICES SYSTEMS DEVELOPMENT METHODOLOGY*. MARCH 2019.
- *IDENTIFYING PATHWAYS FOR MORE GENDER-SENSITIVE COMMUNICATION CHANNELS IN CLIMATE SERVICES*. JANUARY 2019.
- *PARTICIPATORY CLIMATE INFORMATION SERVICES SYSTEMS MAPPING IN SENEGAL*. JUNE 2018.
- *GENDER RESPONSIVE RURAL CLIMATE SERVICES: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE*. JUNE 2018.
- *CLIMATE INFORMATION FOR THOSE WHO NEED IT MOST: CONTRIBUTIONS OF A PARTICIPATORY SYSTEMS MAPPING APPROACH IN NIGER*. JANUARY 2018.
- *WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT GENDER AND RURAL CLIMATE SERVICES*. OCTOBER 2017.