

Gender Agenda for Climate Adaptation: A Pact for Governing Adversity[†]

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Abstract: What is proposed is the construction of a gender agenda in the implementation of climate adaptation projects for Latin America, whose fundamental characteristic is the consideration of a double transversalization between gender equality and adaptation to climate change. To this end, a case analysis is used for the main climate adaptation initiatives in the region, with the objective of constructing our proposal from that implied by public policies and, above all, the socio-cultural norms and exclusions existing in the region.

Keywords: gender; climate change; climate adaptation; gender agenda; Latin American region



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1. Introduction

Today, the effects of climate change are undeniable, because in addition to generating a higher level of uncertainty towards the future, they have led to an increase in social imbalances that currently generate high levels of inequality expressed in different facets such as inequality by income, territorial distribution, gender, and inequality in the perception of the impacts of climate change. Although they have reached everyone, there are some groups that have resented them to a greater extent, given their historical level of vulnerability in economic, cultural, social and political terms; those with the levels of greatest vulnerability are women, and as such, they are accentuated victims of the negative effects of climate change. The importance of understanding the lack of neutrality in this problem dictated by gender is found in the formulation of actions for mitigation and adaptation of climate effects, since by remaining biased from this perspective, the results of their development would not only imply a limitation of benefits in terms of climate, but also on a social scale, since they foresee a widening of gender gaps guided by this historical vulnerability.

What this research proposes is the construction of a gender agenda in the implementation of climate adaptation projects for Latin America, whose fundamental characteristic is the consideration of a double transversalization that allows the dimensions of gender and adaptation to climate change to be considered at all levels of development in the region as an imperative of this double problem that plagues more than half of the Latin American population. Finding a common characteristic of abandonment from the gender perspective, we built our proposal focused on seven priority elements identified in the case studies, such as: decision-making spaces in climate change; food security; access to means of agricultural production; natural disasters; access to social support; migration; digitalization and access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICT); as well as access to financing. This initiative is formulated in a full transversalization from that involving public policies and above all socio-cultural norms and existing exclusions in the region.

The contribution concludes that climate change adaptation interventions should be based on an analysis of the conditions of gender inequality in the region and other indicators that characterize it multidimensionally, which will make it possible to differentiate needs and capacities by gender, and thus abandon the stereotypes that persist in the sector.

2. A Double Inequity

The current situation in Latin America is clear evidence that all problems at a generalized level are constituted as a cause and consequence of the differentiated effects that affect society, as in the case of those generated by climate change and that affect women to a greater extent.

The phenomenon of double inequity, which is represented as a sequence of inequalities, has been explained theoretically by two fundamental factors. The first of which is biological, and falls directly on those determined by sex, such as the comorbidities that make women more vulnerable to the effects of climate change, and sociocultural factors, which include everything related to gender, such as the biases and exclusions experienced in the social structure, simply due to being women [1].

In such a way that vulnerability becomes a limiting predisposition of the capacity and resilience to recover or adapt to the conditions of environmental degradation and natural disasters, according to a study by [2] it was found that women suffer a greater impact than men in extreme weather events. In the selected sample of natural disasters that occurred in Latin America, it was evidenced that when women's economic and social rights are unprotected, they are 14 times more likely to die; a phenomenon that does not occur in countries where all people without exclusion of sex and/or gender enjoy rights and their mortality is lower [3]. In the case of Latin America, this figure is increasing by a rate of 1.6 per 100,000 women due to climate change [4], as a consequence of the limitations that the unequal socioeconomic status of women has generated, and their low adaptation to risk. It is necessary to mention that 70% of poor people in the region are women, and their vulnerability is accentuated according to their race, ethnic group, and age. Such is the case of urban households headed by women of which 40% are in conditions of poverty, making it difficult for them to relocate to protect themselves from the negative effects of climate change. In the rural sector, women are the main group involved in the production of staple foods with 65% participation and ownership of approximately 10% of the total arable land and animal production, meaning that the profits from their work are not reflected in the increase in their incomes. This means that the profits from their work are not reflected in an increase in their income, but rather in an activity that complements the activities of male landowners. It must be remembered that agricultural activities have been particularly affected by droughts and floods caused by climate change, which in turn has caused women who work in these activities to lose their main source of income and have greater difficulty adapting to the effects of climate change by losing their source of income, food, and not having the ability to adapt to a new activity given the urgency of their needs [5]. As such, a labyrinth is constructed between the causes and consequences of the double inequity in climate change. Among a representative list of these effects, we list the following.

For women and girls in the region, the water supply problems generated by climate change have caused them to triple the number of hours they devote to fetching and transporting water and firewood for their families. Likewise, it is necessary to consider that even with this increased use of their time in these activities, more than 40% are in a condition of scarcity of these means. That is, around the world, the average time spent by each family in transporting water and firewood for domestic activities is 1320 h per year of which 1095 h are spent by the women in each family, limiting them from other activities necessary for their full development such as education, recreation, and rest [6]. This generated a reduction in children's time in schools because of the fulfillment of women's role in family reproduction, as well as migration associated with the effects of climate change, or the need to move for medical assistance in shelters and humanitarian assistance facilities, although these alternatives still represent a limited option due to economic constraints, the overload of care responsibilities, and work [7].

Likewise, among other responsibilities of women, the provision of water, food, and firewood, women are responsible for food cleaning and waste disposal, so they are strategic allies in preventing the spread of endemic diseases. At the same time, it implies an overload in the intensity of women's unpaid (and paid) work, and in the same way, it increases

the risks to their health [8]. In relation to the above, we find that women are exposed to greater amounts of POPs (e.g., pesticides, household cleaning products, etc.), and that women are exposed to greater amounts of pesticides (e.g., pesticides, household cleaning products, etc.). With a thicker subcutaneous fat layer that retains POPs and other residues of toxic chemicals, the health effects of environmental hazards have a greater effect on women [9], such as vulnerability to malnutrition, infectious and respiratory diseases of pregnant women, increased risks of maternal mortality, unwanted pregnancies, and even in malaria and COVID-19 infested areas infected pregnant women are at risk of contracting anemia or having other health complications that can be life-threatening, which becomes a worrisome condition knowing the figures regarding access to medical services for women in the region. Finally, in terms of health, women are at greater risk of contracting Zika, malaria, and dengue fever, as well as other injuries due to heat waves and fires caused by climate change.

Finally, it is also estimated that the effects on labor productivity, due to the low response or recovery of women and their high vulnerability, have seriously affected their capacity to manage natural resources and their way of life, their means of production, food security, and well-being. In addition, women perform a large number of activities that are not valued or remunerated, such as care, domestic activities, and the triple workday they must cover, given their gender role within the social structure. Although in a structured way they may seem to be isolated elements that address various institutional problems, the truth is that they not only mark the impact of women on their environment but also how this environment, for natural and social reasons, affects them in a differentiated and historical way, whose framework, if not addressed, will limit the development of the region and above all, more than half of the population will be the main victims of its negative effects in the short and long terms.

At this point of the research, it is clear that it is impossible to separate one problem from the other, since their effects are reversible between them. By increasing gender inequality in a transversal way, they will have a lower capacity to face the conditions of climate change, and this will generate greater inequality, and a slow response to climate conditions in a structured way. While, in a social deconstruction for the defense of their rights, the arrival of the pandemic can be addressed through a collective defense built from equity and sustained in the institutional framework.

Case Studies

Given the above considerations, in the Latin American region, a broad portfolio of strategies related to climate change and its distribution [10] between adaptation and mitigation to climate change has been unleashed; however, its complex implementation requires considering the specific circumstances of the region, among which the double inequity due to gender inequality, and, above all, the implications of these strategies in the social agenda of Latin America and its integration into the development agenda stand out.

To support understanding, this research considers the concepts of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change to define climate adaptation strategies as those that seek adjustments in natural or human systems in response to climatic stimuli and their effects, which can moderate the damage or take advantage of their beneficial aspects [11]. These actions are particularly focused on the forestry, biodiversity, agriculture, and water sectors; while projects aimed at climate change mitigation are all of the anthropogenic interventions that aim to reduce human alteration of the climate system, such as reducing sources and emissions of greenhouse gases and improving the removal or sequestration of greenhouse gases [12]. These types of strategies have focused on the energy, transportation, agriculture, forestry, and waste sectors.

In the case of Table 1, the selection criteria of the projects were developed according to the availability of information for each project, which would allow us to gather information regarding the main research questions to explore or verify the presence of the gender perspective in the environmental projects of the region as a form of double mainstreaming. We can observe that three of the main climate action projects in the Americas are linked to access to the means of production, specifically the energy sector. Their analysis is based on verifying the gender perspective in their actions, and each of the determinants were identified thanks to the results of the previous sections. Thus, our conclusions in the table will focus on whether the results of each project were based on the gender perspective.

Table 1. Own elaboration and analysis with cases in Latin America, 2020 [13].

Criteria	Countries		
Contextual Approach to Vulnerability	Nicaragua	Guatemala	Salvador
What is the current situation (in relation to education, health, access to means of production, etc.) of women and men in the region where the project is formulated in terms of vulnerability to climate change and other contextual changes?	The PELNICA project improved household electrification in the residential sectors of 379 communities, benefiting 90,000 people in six years, including electrification of workplaces where men work, while electrification of homes and schools was limited.	The project for the productive use of renewable energy in Guatemala did not initially consider gender issues in its design, so it centralized actions in public spaces, without addressing generalized needs in society.	The project on the use of geothermal energy and its (unused) residues sought to empower women economically and strengthen their leadership in the communities surrounding the geothermal plants.
What options are considered to strengthen the gender perspective in the project?	Gender elements are not considered; its main purpose is to increase electrification to improve access in a generic way in the community.	It is not considered. It is identified that the sectors that benefited were only the central ones, the busiest ones, and not those that will be used by the most vulnerable groups, such as those surrounding schools, women's workplaces, or dangerous neighborhoods that women will travel through to a greater extent, in such a way that the needs of women in public spaces were completely ignored, and their participation in the project planning groups was limited.	The active participation of women, thanks to the project's links with women's daily activities, made women's work outside their homes more visible, and led to priority areas of attention, such as energy and sustainable ecosystem care.
			As part of this work, girls and adolescents from the schools also participated in the dissemination of information, which helped to improve integration based on the defense of nature and human rights.

Table 1. Cont.

Criteria	Countries		
Contextual Approach to Vulnerability	Nicaragua	Guatemala	Salvador
Will the project change women's and men's roles in any way and/or perceptions of these roles?	No, and it is even identified that the perspective of improving production over other elements strengthens the stigma that women's work within their homes is not productive and should not be a priority since it does not represent economic benefits, limiting actions that address and strengthen it.	No, it will maintain the conditions, prioritizing electrical adaptation over collective benefit. Gender bias is not increased, but the existing conditions are maintained, which is contradictory to the ideals of progress proposed in the initiative.	It will integrate them under a perspective of gender equity, active participation, and valuing different activities equally. Likewise, the information campaign that was launched in the community's schools will help to replicate the ideals of equity in different generations, which will help to improve the conditions of women in the short, medium, and long terms.
What options are considered to strengthen the gender perspective in the project?	Gender elements are not considered or ignored in the formulation and development of the project.	Potential is seen in helping collectives and training spaces for women, but they are not contemplated in the approach, and the starting point is a generalized floor that leaves the conditions for improvement unbalanced.	Greater integration of women in the labor sectors and of household activities with respect to environmental protection are key to strengthening the gender perspective in the community.
Conclusions	The project did not have continuity since the prioritization of attention to spaces that was maintained did not allow for its expansion.	The project experienced challenges in promoting gender equality in rural areas since, in general, their work is undervalued and there is limited access to their participation outside the domestic space and their capacity to undertake productive activities is limited.	Women's livelihoods were increased. In total, 40 women from 15 communities around the geothermal plants benefited economically from the process.
	On the other hand, it is identified that its distance from the gender perspective limited the participation of women in the project and widened the biases of participation in the public sector and decision making in a diverse way.	A situational analysis of gender conditions was not carried out, so the following are not known.	Likewise, the gender perspective was included in the program from the beginning, which helped to ensure that the actions would have this vision in a cross-cutting manner and improve equity conditions.
	In this case, the gender perspective was not considered, and this limited the results.		

Source: Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo [13].

Part of the limitations found in each project arise from the isolated approaches between each situational approach per project, and above all from a bias of social vulnerabilities at a historical level in Latin America; that is, it does not consider the differentiated effects of both climate change and the strategies that address it. A situational analysis is developed in two cases, which identifies the socioeconomic conditions, but the data is not disaggregated

by sex and gender, which meant that the analysis did not collect what was necessary to mainstream the gender perspective in the actions. Therefore, we cannot conclude that the advances in gender are representative in terms of the needs that this problem demands, which limited the scope of environmental matters. This led us to verify our initial analysis, in which it is stated that if the gender perspective is not included in the projects, by prioritizing other terms of growth and infrastructure progress (in this case, electrical adaptation), the projects will not have a representative social benefit, since they start from gender biases, replicate stigmas, and strengthen a social infrastructure fragilized by these elements. Therefore, the development proposed by the SDGs only finds its integrity in theory.

As the evidence shows [14], climate change projects in the Latin American region are currently facing great challenges, since in their integrity they must maintain constant levels of economic growth, address the constant struggle for the historical levels of inequality, which are expressed with an emergency character in terms of sectoral vulnerability, and which particularly affects the service sector: rural. The effects of the social crisis, such as gender inequality and development gaps, must also be mitigated, as well as the mainstreaming of the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities in climate mitigation and adaptation projects, as proposed by [15], in order to achieve consistency with sustainable development. This would be easier to develop if we work at the regional level through an inter-institutional collaboration that addresses the integral needs of the communities in which it is developed, through a perspective of simultaneity and common collaboration. In this case, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) should be integrated with feminist collectives to take advantage of local female leadership, normative and human rights institutions, environmental policies, women's institutions, and other vulnerable collectives due to gender, in order to integrate an integral perspective that can provide common attention and action in the face of an accumulated crisis.

3. A Series of Recommendations: Between the Environment and People

The results of the research make it clear that the effects of climate change are not a gender-neutral issue. Therefore, the double transversality in climate adaptation and mitigation initiatives are the fundamental guide for the formulation of our agenda, and we consider that the main elements to achieve a social transformation in terms of gender must be transversal. This is contrary to what we found in the cases studied, in which the gender perspective was an isolated element of the construction of these types of initiatives. To ensure that development and its benefits reach all people, these projects must be based on the resolution of social vulnerabilities differentiated by sex and gender.

In view of the above, there are seven fundamental lines of action to which these vulnerabilities have been concentrated, such as agricultural production and food security, access to the means of production, water resource management, forest resources and agroforestry, disaster prevention, migration, and public health. The general recommendations described below are intended as an outline of an early warning route to address the issue. They need more precise analysis in each case, adjusted to the circumstances of the institutional transformation required to make mainstreaming a programmatic line as part of the climate agenda at different levels, and create links between agents that are present at the intersection of gender and climate change, in local communities and among decision makers, to promote synergies and joint commitments to strengthen actions that transform the climate agenda. This requires the development of a situational analysis that allows locating the historical and differentiated context experienced within the region; thus, this baseline is taken as a reference in the framework of the formulation of gender mainstreaming strategies in climate policies, in such a way that the continuums are incorporated. Within the institutional action, we consider that it is relevant to strengthen gender capacities within organizations and government agencies that ensure continuity of gender-responsive actions and extend to all stakeholders.

In other words, a gender perspective training framework should be established in a conceptual and practical manner, so that any action aimed at resolving this double inequity does not reproduce the gender biases that have traditionally developed in the Latin American region, and that have caused the innovations implemented in the area of climate to widen the gaps that affect women. This framework of reference should propose training and capacity building links with the communities, so that this perspective becomes an integral element in the climate actions in such a way that the community is involved in the main transformations expected from the projects. Even though it is not an institution specialized in gender, the current emergency demands it.

- To outline monitoring and evaluation material from a gender perspective, i.e., that within the formulation, practicality, and technical contribution of the projects, gender indicators are constructed, from the situational analysis in which the projects are developed, to the gender implications of each project, which will allow us to monitor and evaluate policies and initiatives effectively.

All these schemes should be linked to legal and institutional frameworks, to ensure that social norms are directed towards the protection and safeguarding of women's human rights, to increase the possibilities for a tool for gender-responsive climate policies. All this will lead to a co-responsibility of environmental, economic, and social defense.

- Promote a more active role of women and their organizations in the discussions and decisions being made in the climate change arena and encourage a more balanced representation of women and men in public decision making in general, ensuring that women's perspectives are heard. This will improve and guarantee women's access to and control of natural resources and provide measures for capacity building and technology transfer, even though communities are remote or more technologically and socially vulnerable.

This will help us to take advantage of the leadership capacities of women that have been identified in them at the local level, and thus, take advantage of the specialized skills of women in mitigation and adaptation strategies. To this end, it is necessary to create equitable conditions and opportunities for education, information, and training on climate change and gender equity, which can be initiated by strengthening the channels of social control and communication, as implied by social networks and other digital platforms. On the other hand, these actions can be achieved by developing channels between women's environmental defense collectives and institutions.

- Develop processes to strengthen the autonomy of the social, economic, and participatory powers of women and other vulnerable groups, based on a characterization that defines the specific needs of each social group, through a fiscal, social, economic, and climate policy agreement, to support the high level of uncertainty of this population sector.

This will allow women to respond to the problems and needs they identify, incorporating their perspective in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of gender interventions and public decisions in our country and at the international level on climate change. Among these discussions, it is worth introducing proposals such as a universal basic income, a basic basket of digital products, and the safeguarding of environmental rights, regardless of the sector to which women belong.

- Mapping the mechanisms or spaces already existing in the different public, private, and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) instances such as social networks, virtual interactive platforms, consultation spaces, radio programs, and other activities of women's organizations that are developed in our country. For example, those organized within political institutions, educational centers, and community centers, to create work networks together with the institutions, which will have positive effects on the dissemination, construction, and protection of development mechanisms and strategies, specifically those of climate change. To approach the relevance that

technology has in the life of Mexican society, which requires exploring the level of access that they have to the indispensable equipment; thus, to include them in the processes of communication, transparency, and political participation. Develop changes in regulations, accompanied by a transformation of the organizational culture, of political power relations, and of the relationship between social subjects and the state apparatus. To bet on greater regional integration, in which initiatives are mediated and regulated in Latin America to make this union a collective defense mechanism for women, such as the integration of a regional agreement to build a feminist policy for environmental protection that not only addresses migratory parameters and territorial mobility, but also covers other international needs, such as labor, security, trade, and research. Directly address the vulnerabilities of the Latin American context, which are identified in the baseline or initial situational analysis to address them without biases or contradictions of the development objectives. To regulate the causes, conditions, and determinants in which migratory flows develop in the region, as well as the economic activities in which women must also engage, or to which they must dedicate themselves again after the transformation of their socioeconomic environment, in case they have migrated or have more responsibilities in their place of origin.

The list of these elements is not directly limited to the sector specified, i.e., by addressing migration, economic conditions are also addressed, and vice versa. On the other hand, by promoting women's participation in the public sector and in social decisions, gender parity is improved and women's capacity to adapt to the effects of climate change is strengthened, as an integrity that characterizes development.

4. Conclusions

In consideration of the cases presented in this research, in which we found a generic isolation and abandonment of the gender perspective in their approaches and actions, and its contrast with the context of the double gender inequity and the differentiated effects that this generates in environmental matters, allows us to show that the projects that should be prioritized in the region are those oriented towards climate adaptation of local character, that allow them to be close to their population, and above all that imply the analysis of their social and cultural transformations, in an integral matter of development, as a multidimensional phenomenon. Therefore, it is not only expected that the projects are gender transforming in the climate, but also in the forms of social organization of the economic structure; thus, the gender approach that we take as a premise of this research maintains gender relations as a transversal theme in the analysis of all the areas of intervention. This should go hand in hand with a monitoring and evaluation scheme with indicators focused on ensuring that these projects do not reinforce the unequal gender patterns that have traditionally guided Latin American communities, as the evidence shows. Therefore, the formulation of measurements should integrate the contextualization and transformation of both sexes and gender expression. Although the valuable effort of Latin America regarding the integration of the gender perspective is recognized, it was reflected that this is not systematically applied in the identification and implementation of projects and programs in the field of development in general, and even less in the specific case of climate change. Therefore, we would like to highlight the relevance of considering the socio-cultural norms and existing exclusions in the context in which we work, for this perspective to be integral and beneficial. In summary terms of our agenda, this requires contemplating the differentiated needs and capacities between men and women in climate matters, so that these are the basis for the formulation and prioritization of climate actions, evaluating and measuring the integral implications for each specific sex, and integrating the intervention actions specifically aimed at challenging gender inequalities.

Thus, not only were the importance of the gender perspective in the agenda and the defense of equality highlighted, but also the urgency of a crucial reconfiguration. For example, a global agreement of a transversal nature in its proposals that does not

attend to goals in periodic terms and focuses on the development debts that are currently expressed as serious socioeconomic and environmental problems that are particularly worrying for women. Including simultaneous short-, long-, and medium-term visions is important. The current findings are the result of a theoretical–practical isolation of the integral approach to development that requires us to become savage fighters in the fulfillment of its proposals [16]. Therefore, the mainstreaming of this perspective in the agenda becomes the axis of its reconfiguration, not only in the search for gender equity, but also for the equity of socioeconomic development and peace that this agreement seeks to achieve. Although the conditions described above do not by themselves guarantee gender equality and the closing of gaps, this analysis is relevant in terms of the reconfiguration of a robust framework for action as a solid basis for mainstreaming the gender perspective for climate decision makers in the region.

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