

# Is the Perception of Climate Change Gendered?



Report from workshops at COP-10 in Buenos Aires.

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Demonstration  
Photo by FOE

## ***Do women see both the risks and the solutions to climate change in a different way from men?***

This was one of the issues debated by a group of men and women from developed and developing countries during a day of side events on gender and climate change at COP-10 in Buenos Aires. Although hard and fast answers to this question are difficult to establish – as well as the question of whether any such difference is the result of nature or nurture – a number of ways in which women’s attitudes tend to be different from men’s could be observed.

First, cases were cited in which women had a risk perception which seemed to suggest that the threat was wider than the single event. For example, in Bangladesh, women linked the flood to difficulties in obtaining food and potable water, as well as to protecting their assets. Not for them the abstract “big bang” view of the disaster. Rather, they viewed this extreme event within the context of their chronic day-to-day problems. Men in the same context, on the other hand, tended to focus on impacts on longer-term income and food security.

Secondly, within the discussions that took place, it was noticeable that many women present had less faith that the global and national solutions being proposed in the Kyoto process would, on their own, be sufficient. They looked in addition for a grounded approach that would explore, in a participatory way, local community solutions, particularly those that involve behavioural change and structural change as well as technological innovation.

The doom scenarios which see environmental collapse on every corner from desertification through coastal erosion to ecosystem collapse were discussed. Several women professionals present, however, demonstrated optimism in their arguments, based on recognition that life-

styles could and would change, a view which perhaps relates to an ideology of the women’s movement, that the personal is the political. It is an optimism that recognises that people (individually, and then collectively), rather than things, power change.

The lack of representation of women’s organisations in the whole Kyoto discussion process is quite noticeable. But this may reflect not so much a lack of interest by women as these discussions are so very narrowly focused on technological and market solutions. Few women would deny that technology and the market have an important role to play in mitigating climate change, but many would like to see a broader approach recognising that people are at the centre.

There are of course many other issues regarding gender and climate change apart from differences in women’s and men’s perceptions of the problem.

Above all there is a need for differences in gender to be picked up and highlighted in any tools and instruments used to design and access interventions (both mitigation and adaptation).

*A detailed paper that makes recommendations are available*

- UNFCCC website, on the
- Gender and Climate Change website [www.gencc.interconnection.org](http://www.gencc.interconnection.org), and
- LIFE/genanet website [www.genanet.de](http://www.genanet.de).

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