**Gender and Climate Change “101”:**
WEDO’s glossary of key terms – and points on why gender matters

**Adaptation** – Coping with the impacts of climate change. “Actions by individuals or systems [undertaken] to avoid, withstand, or take advantage of current and projected climate changes and impacts. Adaptation decreases a system’s vulnerability, or increases its resilience to impacts.”

> “Women have a strong body of knowledge and expertise that can be used in climate change mitigation, disaster reduction and adaptation strategies. Women’s responsibilities in households and communities as stewards of natural resources have positioned them well for livelihood strategies adapted to changing environmental realities.”
> -- Finding of the 52nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

**Afforestation** – “Planting of new forests on lands that have not been recently forested.”

> “In the Uttarakhand region of the Himalayas, the Chipko Movement [...] demonstrated that women can make a difference when protecting forests and developing afforestation projects. Their afforestation programme not only reduced landslides, but also solved the problem of fuel and fodder.”
> -- Lorena Aguilar, et. al.; read more about the Chipko Movement at [http://www.iisd.org/50comm/commdb/desc/d07.htm](http://www.iisd.org/50comm/commdb/desc/d07.htm)

**Agenda 21** – “Agenda 21 is a comprehensive plan of action to be taken globally, nationally and locally by organizations of the United Nations System, Governments, and Major Groups in every area in which human impacts on the environment. It was adopted by more than 178 Governments at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3 to 14 June 1992.”

> Women were established as a major group recognizing that “effective implementation of these programmes will depend on the active involvement of women in economic and political decision-making and will be critical to the successful implementation of Agenda 21”
> --Agenda 21 Section II Chapter 24

**Anthropogenic Emissions** – “Emissions of greenhouse gasses resulting from human activities.”

> Some research coming out of the Global North indicates that women tend to have smaller carbon footprints than men, meaning they contribute less to anthropogenic emissions. A recent study in Sweden showed women account for only 25% of car usage and only 1/3 own cars; moreover, men’s energy consumption is 20% higher than women’s.
Biofuels – “Biofuels are renewable fuels made from plants that can be used to supplement or replace the fossil fuels petroleum and diesel used for transport. The two main biofuels are ethanol and biodiesel.”

In Ghana, the “energy crisis and high cost of fossil fuel have given rise to the quest for [the] alternative energy source of biofuel. [...] It is exactly the areas that women congregate such as agriculture which has long been an important source of income for them, that would be under attack amidst [a] biofuel production craze.” – Ama Achiiaa Amankwah

“Industrial biofuels are not the fuels of the poor; they are the foods of the poor transformed into heat, electricity and transport.” – Vandana Shiva

Cap and Trade – “A cap-and-trade system sets an overall limit on emissions, requires entities subject to the system to hold sufficient allowances to cover their emissions, and provides broad flexibility in the means of compliance. Entities can comply by undertaking emission reduction projects at their covered facilities and/or by purchasing emission allowances (or credits) from the government or from other entities that have generated emission reductions in excess of their compliance obligations.”

Women often have limited access to formal financial systems such as credit or insurance, thus are traditionally excluded from the Cap and Trade method of limiting GHG emissions. Where women do not have access to government level finance mechanisms which address climate change, they make important contributions to climate change reduction through adaptation and mitigation strategies such as tree planting and sustainable harvesting, to name just two.

Carbon Cycle – “The term used to describe the exchange of carbon (in various forms, such as carbon dioxide) between the atmosphere, ocean, terrestrial biosphere and geological deposits.”

Carbon Dioxide – “A colorless, odorless, non-poisonous gas that is a normal part of the ambient air. Of the six greenhouse gases normally targeted, CO₂ is the primary human-induced gas contributing to global warming. Human activities such as fossil fuel combustion and deforestation have increased atmospheric concentrations of CO₂ by approximately 30 percent since the industrial revolution. CO₂ is the standard used to determine the global warming potentials (GWP) of other gases.”

Carbon Sinks – “Processes that remove more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere than they release. Both the terrestrial biosphere and oceans can act as carbon sinks.”

(Carbon) Source – “Any process or activity that results in the net release of greenhouse gases, aerosols, or precursors of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.”

Carbon Tax – “A surcharge on the carbon content of oil, coal, and gas that discourages the use of fossil fuels and aims to reduce carbon dioxide emissions.”
**Clean Development Mechanism** – As one of the three market mechanisms established by the Kyoto Protocol, the CDM is designed to promote sustainable development in developing countries and assist Annex I Parties (i.e. industrialized countries) in meeting their greenhouse gas emissions reduction commitments. It enables industrialized countries to invest in emission reduction projects in developing countries and to receive credits for reductions achieved.

The present system for the CDM lacks an accountability mechanism to ensure incorporation of gender equality. Adding such a tool would directly affect women’s lives by ensuring that poor women have access to funds through projects such as making renewable technologies available to women. See also Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF): [http://www.wecf.eu/english/articles/2009/04/sustainable-CDM.php](http://www.wecf.eu/english/articles/2009/04/sustainable-CDM.php)

**Climate change** – “A change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.”

“Given the variety of women’s daily interactions with the environment, they are the most keenly affected by its degradation including climate change.” – Patience Damptey and Angelina Tutuah Mensah, Ghana

“Women make up a large number of the poor in communities that are highly dependent on local natural resources for their livelihood and are disproportionately vulnerable to and affected by climate change... It is important to identify gender-sensitive strategies for responding to the environmental and humanitarian crises caused by climate change.” – Finding of the 52nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

**Deforestation** – “Those practices or processes that result in the conversion of forested lands for non-forest uses. This is often cited as one of the major causes of the enhanced greenhouse effect for two reasons: 1) the burning or decomposition of the wood releases carbon dioxide; and 2) trees that once removed carbon dioxide from the atmosphere in the process of photosynthesis are no longer present.”

“In many countries... women’s livelihoods and social roles rely directly on forest resources to meet the nutritional, health, and cultural needs of their families and communities... [Women are] differently and often disproportionately harmed by deforestation and have a stronger inherent interest in forest preservation.”

**Desertification** – “Land degradation in arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid areas resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities. Further, the UNCCD (The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification) defines land degradation as a reduction or loss, in arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid areas, of the biological or economic productivity and complexity of rain-fed cropland, irrigated cropland, or range, pasture, forest, and woodlands resulting from land uses or from a process or combination of processes, including processes arising from human activities and
habitation patterns, such as: (i) soil erosion caused by wind and/or water; (ii) deterioration of the physical, chemical and biological or economic properties of soil; and (iii) long-term loss of natural vegetation. Conversion of forest to non-forest.”

“The UNCCD is one of three conventions resulting from the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992. This convention emphasizes the importance of equal participation of women and men in combating desertification: “Stressing the important role played by women in regions affected by desertification and/or drought, particularly in rural areas of developing countries, and the importance of ensuring the full participation of both men and women at all levels of programmes to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought”

— Preamble of the UNCCD

Externalities — “By-products of activities that affect the well-being of people or damage the environment, where those impacts are not reflected in market prices. The costs (or benefits) associated with externalities do not enter standard cost accounting schemes.”

Gender mainstreaming — The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men a key part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated.

“Governments should be encouraged to mainstream gender perspectives into their national policies, action plans and other measures on sustainable development and climate change, through carrying out systematic gender analysis, collecting and utilizing sex-disaggregated data, establishing gender-sensitive indicators and benchmarks and developing practical tools to support increased attention to gender perspectives.”

— Finding of the 52nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

Greenhouse Effect — “The greenhouse effect causes the atmosphere to trap more heat energy at the Earth's surface and within the atmosphere by absorbing and re-emitting longwave energy. Of the longwave energy emitted back to space, 90% is intercepted and absorbed by greenhouse gases. Without the greenhouse effect the Earth's average global temperature would be -18° Celsius, rather than the present 15° Celsius. In the last few centuries, the activities of humans have directly or indirectly caused the concentration of the major greenhouse gases to increase. Scientists predict that this increase may enhance the greenhouse effect making the planet warmer.”
**Greenhouse gases (GHG)** – “Gases responsible for the greenhouse effect. These gases include: water vapor (H\(_2\)O), carbon dioxide (CO\(_2\)); methane (CH\(_4\)); nitrous oxide (N\(_2\)O); chlorofluorocarbons (CFxClx); and tropospheric ozone (O\(_3\)).”

**Fossil Fuels** – “Carbon based remains of organic matter that has been geologically transformed into coal, oil and natural gas. Combustion of these substances releases large amounts of energy. Currently, humans are using fossil fuels to supply much of their energy needs.”

**Global warming** – The increase in global average temperature near the Earth’s surface that is likely caused by greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations in the atmosphere.

**Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** – “The IPCC was established jointly by the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Organization in 1988. The purpose of the IPCC is to assess information in the scientific and technical literature related to all significant components of the issue of climate change. The IPCC draws upon hundreds of the world's expert scientists as authors and thousands as expert reviewers. Leading experts on climate change and environmental, social, and economic sciences from some 60 nations have helped the IPCC to prepare periodic assessments of the scientific underpinnings for understanding global climate change and its consequences. With its capacity for reporting on climate change, its consequences, and the viability of adaptation and mitigation measures, the IPCC is also looked to as the official advisory body to the world's governments on the state of the science of the climate change issue. For example, the IPCC organized the development of internationally accepted methods for conducting national greenhouse gas emission inventories.”

*In its 2007, 4th Assessment Report, the IPCC found that climate change impacts will vary among regions, generations, ages, classes, income groups, occupations and gender, and that the most marginalized will be disproportionately affected. Read more at [http://www.ipcc.ch/](http://www.ipcc.ch/)*

**Kyoto Protocol** – “An international agreement adopted in December 1997 in Kyoto, Japan. The Protocol sets binding emission targets for developed countries that would reduce their emissions on average 5.2 percent below 1990 levels.”

**Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF)** – Those activities which fall under the LULUCF sector have the capacity to reduce emissions in a cost-effective way, including through tree planting and forest management to help remove GHGs, and the reduction of GHGs through slowing deforestation. The benefits of these activities, however, may be difficult to quantify, and unintended events such as forest fires can negate benefits by releasing emissions into the atmosphere. Read more at [http://unfccc.int/methods_and_science/lulucf/items/3063.php](http://unfccc.int/methods_and_science/lulucf/items/3063.php)
**Mitigation** – “Any attempt to reduce the rate at which greenhouse gasses are accumulating in the atmosphere.”

“In addition to vulnerability, women’s and girls’ exclusion from climate change-related information, decision-making and implementation processes actually undermines the climate change mitigation response. In fact, their exclusion from such processes undermines economic and trade development, as well... Providing fora for women to share their knowledge and experience on coping with climate change and disasters can mitigate the negative impacts and halt the rise in vulnerability.”

— Supachai Panitchpakdi, Secretary-General of UNCTAD

**Precautionary principal** – “Avoiding a solution that is irreversible, because the assumptions on which the solution is based may prove incorrect, in favor of a seemingly inferior solution that can be reversed.”

**Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in Developing Countries (REDD)** – A UN Collaborative Programme aimed at making the sustainable management of forest resources more economically advantageous in order to ensure “economic, environmental, social and economic goods and services benefit countries, communities and forest users while also contributing to important reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.” The goal is to make funds and capacity support available in order to, “create the incentives to ensure actual, lasting, achievable, reliable and measurable emission reductions while maintaining and improving the other ecosystem services forests provide.”

If women as a group were to benefit from market based REDD financing schemes, the question of gender and tenure will have to be addressed upfront. For example, REDD participation by national governments could be contingent upon fair land ownership laws and the reform of existing, often gender biased land legislation, with some of the initial REDD funds being used for statutory reform efforts. Additionally, mandatory gender inclusive sustainability standards should be required for any market ready REDD project as fiduciary duty. Such standards need to be worked out under strong participation of women and indigenous groups at every level of standard setting and development.

— Heinrich Böll Foundation, Some Gender Considerations of REDD Financing

**Reforestation** – Planting forests on lands which have previously been forested but recently harvested.

“In the process of education that takes place when someone joins the Green Belt Movement, women have become aware that planting trees or fighting to save forests from being chopped down is part of a larger mission to create a society that respects democracy, decency, adherence to the rule of law, human rights, and the rights of women.”

Resilience – “The ability of a system to absorb some amount of change, including shocks from extreme events, bounce back and recover from them, and, if necessary, transform itself in order to continue to be able to function and provide essential services and amenities that it has evolved or been designed to provide.”

“In Zaheerabad, dalit (the broken) women forming the lowest rung of India’s stratified society, now demonstrate adaptation to climate change by following a system of interspersing crops that do not need extra water, chemical inputs or pesticides for production…”

“In the climate change framework, this system of dryland agriculture has the resilience to withstand all the fallouts of elevated temperatures”

– P.V. Satheesh

Rio Earth Summit – Summit convened to address problems of environmental protection and socio-economic development. Over 100 heads of state gathered in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992 and signed the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity, endorsed the Rio Declaration and Forest Principles, supported a new, integrated approach to combat desertification and adopted Agenda 21, a 300 page plan for achieving sustainable development.

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – “The Convention on Climate Change sets an overall framework for intergovernmental efforts to tackle the challenge posed by climate change. It recognizes that the climate system is a shared resource whose stability can be affected by industrial and other emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. The Convention enjoys near universal membership, with 189 countries having ratified.

Under the Convention, governments:
- gather and share information on greenhouse gas emissions, national policies and best practices
- launch national strategies for addressing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to expected impacts, including the provision of financial and technological support to developing countries
- cooperate in preparing for adaptation to the impacts of climate change”

The UNFCCC remains the only major global agreement to neglect to include a strong social component—much less a gender component. The Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA) is a network of 37 UN agencies and non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations working together to ensure that climate change decision-making, policies programmes, at all levels, are gender responsive. Read more about the GGCA:

http://www.wedo.org/category/learn/campaigns/climatechange/ggca

And stay tuned for the soon-to-be-launched website: www.gender-climate.org
Vector-borne disease – “Disease that results from an infection transmitted to humans and other animals by blood-feeding anthropods, such as mosquitoes, ticks, and fleas. Examples of vector-borne diseases include Dengue fever, viral encephalitis, Lyme disease, and malaria.”

During times of climate crisis, women and children are generally harder hit than men. “Children and pregnant women are particularly susceptible to vector and waterborne diseases [their vulnerability often increasing in times of crisis, while] Anemia – resulting from malaria – is responsible for a quarter of maternal mortality.”

In addition, during natural disasters, “maternal and infant mortality rise due to poor access to health care.”

“Women are particularly exposed to water-associated diseases through their traditional chores of washing and water collection.” These chores are often made more difficult by climate induced natural disaster, and may increase women’s vulnerability still further.

Vulnerability – “In the most general sense, a susceptibility to harm or change. More specifically, the degree to which a system is exposed to, susceptible to, and unable to cope with, the adverse effects of climate change, including climate variability and extremes. Vulnerability is a function of the character, magnitude, and rate of climate variation to which a system is exposed, as well as of non-climatic characteristics of the system, including its sensitivity, and its coping and adaptive capacity.”

“Among the poor, vulnerability varies, since some groups are more lacking in the financial, social, and political means of securing alternative livelihoods less exposed to risk than others. Women for example may be constrained by social and cultural structures that place them in inferior social positions, limiting their access to income, education, public voice, and survival mechanisms.”


“Glossary of Key Terms”, Pew Center on Global Climate Change.


Refer to greenhouse gases definition for the other five gases

“Glossary of Key Terms”, Pew Center on Global Climate Change.

“Glossary of Key Terms”, Pew Center on Global Climate Change.

“Glossary of Key Terms”, Pew Center on Global Climate Change.

“Glossary of Key Terms”, Pew Center on Global Climate Change.

The other two mechanisms under the Kyoto Protocol are emissions trading and joint implementation <http://unfccc.int/kyoto_protocol/mechanisms/items/1673.php>.

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“Climate Change: A Glossary by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (1995)”.


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“Glossary of Climate Change Terms”, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.


The other two conventions are the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).


ECOSOC, 1997.

“Gender Perspectives on Climate Change”, 52nd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, 3.

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44 Ibid.
48 Acharya.
49 For more information refer to definition of Agenda 21 http://www.un.org/esa/earthsummit/
51 "Glossary", Pew Center on Global Climate Change.
52 "Table 2: Potential Impacts of Climate Change on the Millennium Development Goals” in the Report, “Poverty and Climate Change: Reducing the Vulnerability of the Poor through Adaptation”, Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), 24.
53 Panitchpakdi.
54 "Poverty and Climate Change: Reducing the Vulnerability of the Poor through Adaptation”, 22.
55 "Climate Terminology", California Climate Change Portal.
56 "Poverty and Climate Change: Reducing the Vulnerability of the Poor through Adaptation”, 18.