Gender equality, climate change and education for sustainability

Ana Agostino

Flash floods in Char Atra, Bangladesh, mean that children like Keya can’t go to school.

Climate Change is currently at the centre of our day to day life, as its impacts and consequences are being experienced in all regions of the world. But as we know, climate change is not a natural phenomenon; climate has natural variability over time, but when we talk about climate change it refers to the alterations in the atmosphere that are over and above natural climate variation, and that are a result of human activity. This means that the situation can be changed if human beings transform their ways of living to be more sustainable and friendly to the environment. Climate change, though, affects different social groups in different ways. This means that responsibility for making the necessary transformations in ways of living is also differentiated.

It is widely recognised that climate change is having a greater effect on vulnerable populations, groups and communities, this vulnerability being the result of different factors such as age, gender, geography, ethnicity, and income group. Poor communities often live in high risk areas and have limited access to resources and services that would enable them to mitigate and adapt to the problems caused by climate change. Women are particularly affected because they are the largest percentage of the poor population (it is estimated that women account for 70% of poor people) and they also face gender inequalities, which climate change tends to exacerbate, as highlighted by the 2007 UNDP Human Development Report. Some of these inequalities are: lack of access to resources such as land, credit and training; limited participation in decision making processes; more dependence on natural resources, and; greater caring responsibilities.
These existing gender inequalities exacerbate many of the consequences of climate change. For instance, reduced access to water puts further pressure on women, as in many countries of the South, women are the main collectors of water, spending several hours every day on this task. Women are also the main producers of food in many regions: according to UNIFEM, in some regions of the world, particularly in Sub Saharan Africa, women provide 70% of agricultural labour and produce over 90% of food. This means that changes in ecosystems and loss of diversity that are leading to reduced agricultural output and increased food insecurity are bringing greater problems to women as food producers, as well as impacting on human settlements as some areas become uninhabitable. Finally, the adverse impacts of the effects of climate change and environmental degradation on human health, such as waterborne diseases as a result of polluted water supplies, more extreme weather resulting in natural disasters, and changes in air quality and food quality, also have a particular impact on women in their role as principal caregivers. Many are having to take on an increased burden of care as they look after other family members and people in their communities, as well as having to deal with the impacts of these changes on their own health and wellbeing. This is further exacerbated by the fact that in some regions, women have less access to medical services, either as a result of living in remote rural areas where medical facilities are few and far between, or because they are not in formal employment and are not covered by medical insurance schemes as a result.

The 15th Conference of the Parties (COP 15) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which was held in Copenhagen from 7 to 18 December, 2009, aimed to reach agreements among governments on long term cooperative action towards sustainability. The ultimate objective of the UNFCCC is to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases, which interfere with climatic systems. Greenhouse gases occur naturally and as a result of human activity. They trap the heat in the atmosphere; when emissions of greenhouse gases are too high, this results in raised temperatures in the earth’s climate. According to the text prepared for COP 15, “The shared vision for long-term cooperative action aims to achieve sustainable and climate-resilient development and to enhance action on adaptation, mitigation, technology, finance and capacity building, integrating the means of implementation needed to support action on adaptation and mitigation, in order to achieve the ultimate objective of the Convention”. In this context, adaptation and mitigation relate to measures that will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote environmentally-friendly development.

The achievement (or not) of these very technical objectives will have a direct impact on the lives of millions of people around the world, and, as mentioned above, particularly on those who are more vulnerable. That is why civil society organisations and movements representing various constituencies are mobilizing to put pressure on governments to commit themselves to a deal that will change the current trend of unsustainable development. Women’s organisations in particular have mobilized to ensure that: gender equality is integrated in the Copenhagen outcome and follow up activities; the differentiated impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations, groups and communities are recognized and priority is given to those most vulnerable; all those affected by climate change are encouraged to participate in the decision-making, planning, implementation and evaluation of the Copenhagen outcome, and this participation is based on gender equity; women’s capacity to act and contribute in all measures is enhanced; and progress towards meeting commitments is regularly reviewed using sex-disaggregated data (so it will be easier to know how men and women are being differently affected).

As part of the preparatory process towards COP 15, the Feminist Task Force of the Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP) held a series of tribunals on gender and climate change during October and November of 2008. The idea of these tribunals was to provide a space where women could share their testimonies of how climate change impacts on their daily lives, and present proposals on how to mitigate the impacts and move onto a sustainable path that will benefit society at large. They also aimed at putting political pressure at national, regional and international levels so that proposals arising from these events were taken into consideration in designing policy. The tribunals took place in Brazil, Nepal, India, Pakistan, Botswana, Nigeria and Uganda. Conclusions were presented at the Klimaforum, the parallel forum organised by civil society groups – which included a number of sessions that brought together concerns with climate justice and gender justice - at the same time as the main UN conference in Copenhagen.

Another important aspect that needed to be monitored by civil society in the negotiations and follow up activities is the capacity building dimension. The negotiation text included four areas where countries need to reach agreement: a shared vision for long term cooperative action; enhanced action on adaptation; enhanced action on mitigation; and enhanced action on financing, technology and capacity building. This capacity building included in the document refers mainly to technocratic capacity building approaches for mitigation and adaptation processes and there is no reference to democratic lifelong learning for sustainable societies and global responsibility. It is important to carry out advocacy work so that capacity building is understood in this broader sense. For instance, when speaking of training, reference needs to be made to the promotion of sustainable ways of living, both in the North and in the South, acknowledging the need for a shift from the production and consumption models that have led to present-day climate change, to sustainable models. Since this dimension was not included in the official negotiation text, it is essential that civil society organizations continue to raise awareness of this, and that governments responsible for the implementation of training incorporate promotion of the need for fundamental lifestyle changes into those programmes.

Existing gender inequalities exacerbate many of the consequences of climate change

In Tanzania Ndetia Koipa and her neighbours are already noticing the effect that changes in weather patterns are having on their crops.
The challenges currently posed by climate change highlight the need to consider the necessary articulation of efficiency and sufficiency in adaptation and mitigation actions. Efficiency actions refer for example to the use and recycling of energy sources or the development of clean technology, while sufficiency actions have to do with decisions about how much to produce, how much to consume, and setting limits on both production and consumption.

Education has a specific role to play in these shifts. Already at the Rio Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 a specific Treaty on Environmental Education for Sustainable Societies and Global Responsibility was approved at the Global Forum. The Treaty called for a collective understanding of the systemic nature of the crisis that threatens the world’s future, indicating that “The root causes of such problems as increasing poverty, environmental deterioration and communal violence can be found in the dominant socio-economic system. This system is based in over-production and over-consumption for some and under-consumption and inadequate conditions to produce for the great majority”. In the many years that have passed since Rio little recognition has been given to the fact that development based purely on economic growth can contribute to worsening environmental conditions.

Central to this is the role that Lifelong Learning can play in altering popular attitudes. This is mainly in connection with the provision of information on the causes and impacts of climate change, but also includes other aspects such as: the promotion of sustainable ways of living; challenging traditional views on environmental conditions.

Climate change has profoundly limited sustainable development in poor countries already struggling to cope with issues such as food insecurity, conflict, and HIV and AIDS. Gender has long been established as a key concern in development, impacting on income generation, access to education and other basic services, and control over resources. But despite this, development policy-makers and practitioners have so far given little attention to how gender roles and relations, and gender inequality, shape poor people’s vulnerability to climate change, their ability to adapt to its impacts, and to act to mitigate those impacts.

Likewise, the impacts of climate change on boys’ and girls’ access to quality education have also not yet received much attention, nor have the possibilities of education to support initiatives for sustainability.

In some cases, it is easy to see how gender roles are shaping the way people respond to the effects of climate change. One of the effects of climate change is increasing food insecurity and water scarcity. In many societies, women and girls are responsible for collecting water, meaning that climate change is bringing an increased burden, as they spend a greater part of each day fetching water. This in turn is actually serving to strengthen gender inequality, and poverty, as it means that women have even less time to participate in income generating activities, contribute to decision-making processes, or to find out about things that they could do to cope better with the impacts of climate change. And of course, it leaves less time for girls to go to school or for women to support children’s learning at home. But gendered expectations also mean that as drought and other natural disasters reduce opportunities for employment at home, men – expected to provide for their families – have to migrate elsewhere to look for work, where they may face exploitation, dangerous working conditions and pressures associated with absence for households.

Increased poverty at home due to the impacts of climate change means that girls and boys may be taken out of school to work, but increased instances of flooding and other natural phenomena also result in school buildings being damaged, impacting on children’s right to receive an education. Damage to housing caused by natural disasters leaves many children homeless, or living in accommodation that is overcrowded and inadequate. This also impacts on their capacity to study at home, meaning that even if they can continue to attend school, they fall behind.

While the outcome of the recent meeting in Copenhagen to agree targets for reduced greenhouse gas emissions is certainly disappointing, the fact that these negotiations failed indicates that those designing policy on climate change and campaigning on the issue need to reassess their approach, and the issues on which they want to focus. Campaigners for women’s rights and education for all need to seize this moment and push their agenda, highlighting how climate justice entails meeting commitments for gender equality and education. If they are able to do so, this could be the moment when the impact that climate change is already having on existing gender inequality and on girls’ and boys’ access to quality education is finally taken seriously.

Joanna Hoare, Amy North, Elaine Unterhalter


**Letter from the Editors**

Hello and welcome to this issue of Equals newsletter, which looks at gender, education, and climate change. We are publishing this issue as people around the world try to take stock of the outcomes from the Copenhagen Summit and respond to the very grave and dramatic emergency in Haiti, where the effects of poverty, land and water degradation are horrifyingly evident.

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Learning with story and metaphor

Siân Davies, Heila Lotz-Sisitka and Rob O’Donoghue, Rhodes University, South Africa

Introduction
Much has been said about climate change and its projected impacts on rural communities in Africa. Little has been said, however, on how we should think about facilitating learning at the local level, in ways that support people’s capabilities to adapt to the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. Climate change remains a somewhat abstract, yet ever present risk which is difficult to see or do anything about, particularly when you are at the receiving end of climate change impacts, as most southern African communities are.

Our learning story is based on working with women shellfish harvesters in Hamburg and Ngqinisa, two coastal communities in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. While this work does not focus directly on climate change, it addresses the wider issue of how communities faced with risk learn about these risks and about possible alternative practices. The community of women we worked with are faced with similar risks to others in southern Africa who are living in extreme poverty, and are faced with challenges presented by the loss of the marine resources on which they depend.

The average household income of the women we worked with was in the region of $80-$100 per month, and most women were caring for between 6-9 children – some of whom were orphans resulting from the impact of HIV and AIDS on their community. Our aim was to understand how women learn to mediate risk in such a context.

Picture stories and metaphor as learning methods
We needed to create and develop learning spaces and educational materials that could bridge the divide between two worlds of knowledge and context – the ecological explanations of scientists and conservationists, and the everyday practices of collecting marine resources for survival. To do this, we decided to focus on developing co-learning methods, and started by using a picture-based story approach.

We began by asking the women to tell stories of their harvesting experiences. Their initial stories emphasised the abundance of resources available, and the belief that they were in fact, increasing. Thus, they argued, the limitations stipulated by the harvesting regulations were an unnecessary hardship, especially in the context of poverty. Through photographs taken by all of us (the women and the researchers) of the rocky shore environment and harvesting practices, we built up a picture that more accurately reflected the reality of declining coastal resources. Looking at these pictures led the women harvesters to alter their stories. They started to talk more about the loss of the resources and what it would mean for their incomes, and their livelihoods. This indicates that the use of photographs led to a heightened self-awareness among the women and enabled them to begin talking about the realities of resource decline. Despite the recognition of resource decline and the risk associated with this, the women remained united in the belief that marine resources could and would never be completely depleted.

We decided to focus on developing co-learning methods, and started by using a picture-based story approach through listening to the women’s stories, we came to realise that few opportunities for learning were open to the women while they were ‘trapped’ within the bounds of the contexts in which they worked, limiting their capacity for critical engagement and decision-making. How could they develop wider knowledge of risk, and alternative practices? Implementing educational programmes that keep communities trapped in their own realities, without gaining further or new information and insights into alternative practices, aspects, context, environments or knowledge is to leave these communities continually at a disadvantage.

Developing new languages for new stories and practices
To allow the women in the two communities to learn from others and other contexts, we planned a field trip to another coastal community, some 500 km down the coast in Coffee Bay, where they could observe and talk to people from other communities who were implementing methods of coastal resource rehabilitation. We were, however, acutely conscious that if the women were to gain from this experience, they needed to understand the ecology of the marine species in question, and be provided with the necessary ecological concepts and
language to do so. So we needed to find a method of introducing this language in ways that would connect with, and arise from concepts and experiences that would be familiar in the socio-cultural context of the harvesters’ lives.

We turned to the use of metaphor, since this is widely used in isiXhosa cosmology and is a key feature of the isiXhosa language and communication system. We found that metaphors provided a means to bridge the gap between situated knowledge and experience and ecological or scientific knowledge and experience.

**Metaphor 1:** Central to the isiXhosa culture and belief system is the ownership of cattle and thus the necessity of productive grazelands. A grazing metaphor was developed to explain that in the grazelands there are many types of grass. The sweet grass keeps the cows fat, healthy and productive. But if all the sweet grass is burnt or eaten, only the hard, sour grass will grow and the cows will start to grow small and thin, stop producing milk and not have many young. We explained to the women that it is like this in the sea, where there are many types of plants and animals living together on the rocks. The iqongwe (alikreukel) graze on the sweet, nutrient-rich seaweed (green and red) that grow next to the imbaza (mussel) and oyster communities. When too many imbaza and oyster are taken off the rocks, the sweet sea grass no longer grows and the empty rocks become covered by hard sour sea plants (pink and grey crusts). The iqongwe have less sweet seaweed to eat, and so become thin, do not grow well and cannot reproduce many babies.

**Metaphor 2:** The second metaphor focussed on the homestead, and the story we told went something like this: people and animals can only reproduce if they are mature adults. These adults can have many young that will grow to be big and strong, but only if they can welcome their young back to and protect them in a safe, productive homestead. When the young return home, there must be adults there to welcome and protect them. If the homesteads are empty the young ones will move off and not return. We explained that it is like this in the sea. The imbaza (mussel), oyster and iqongwe (alikreukel) can only reproduce once they have grown up to become adults. This takes about six months for imbaza and oyster, and about three years for the iqongwe. They let their sperm and eggs flow into the water, where they meet to form tiny young shellfish that can swim. These tiny shellfish need to swim back to the shelter of the communities on the rocks. They can only come back to the rocks if there are enough adult shellfish left on the rocks to welcome and protect them. If people have taken too many imbaza, oyster or iqongwe off the rocks, then the young cannot find their way back. Also, if too many of the big ones are taken, then there will not be enough adult shellfish to send their sperm and eggs into the water to make more young shellfish. And so the communities will slowly get smaller and smaller.

**Metaphor 3:**

We found this story-based education strategy to be highly effective, and the women responded to the stories with a great deal of discussion. In concluding this story, we recommend to others engaging with communities in contexts of risk and vulnerability to take time to learn with communities the languages and methods necessary to bring about changes in practices. Developing more insight into pedagogies for socio-ecological resilience building is likely to be a key challenge for the future, and a critical issue for empowering women to develop their capabilities for everyday risk management and negotiation in marginalised communities.

In concluding this study, we were able to confirm their understanding of the basic ecological concepts.

**Conclusion – openings for new sustainable practices**

This work with metaphor provided the participants with adequate ecological knowledge to engage productively with the community of harvesters in Coffee Bay who were implementing a mussel rehabilitation project. They understood what the community were doing, and why they were doing what they were doing. They were able to conceptualise this as a possible alternative practice in their own community, and when they returned to Hamburg and Nquima they organised a number of community meetings to explore the possibility of establishing a mussel rehabilitation project, which had the potential to enhance the size of their harvests, while maintaining ongoing access to the natural resources that were so important for supplementing their livelihoods and feeding their families.

This paper is based on research undertaken by Siân Davies for a Masters Degree in Environmental Education at Rhodes University, a study supervised by Heila Lotz-Sisitka and Rob O’Donoghue. Reference for the full study: Davies, S. 2009. The potential for stratified ontology for developing materials in community-based coastal environmental education processes. Unpublished Masters of Education Thesis, Rhodes University Faculty of Education, Grahamstown, South Africa.
Drought, drop out and early marriage: feeling the effects of climate change in East Africa

Amy North

East Africa is a region in which the effects of climate change are already being felt acutely: Oxfam estimates that over 23 million people across East Africa are facing critical shortages of food and water following successive years of failed rains and worsening drought. The impact of such drought is not gender neutral – it affects men and women, boys and girls in particular ways. Women and girls’ caring responsibilities mean that during times of drought they must often spend long hours in search of water and firewood – often at the expense of productive economic activities, or schooling.

In a series of interviews conducted with officials working in provincial and district education departments in Rift Valley Province in Kenya, as part of the Gender, Education and Global Poverty Reduction Initiatives research project, a number of participants voiced concern about the impact that drought has had on the pastoral communities in the area. One participant explained that:

“People are really suffering because we didn’t receive rains in March and April. So the animals are actually emaciated, and selling them, they are going at a very low price. So parents can’t depend on that to support the families.”

Another described how people in the region have become increasingly reliant on food relief, and have to sell their animals in order to be able to send their children to school, as well as cover their basic needs.

"Once you’ve been struck by drought it means that all your livestock is gone and you have no other source of living”

Rising poverty, associated with drought, as well as the aftermath of the post election violence in Kenya, has affected pastoral communities in a number of ways. Some participants explained how people are being forced to sell land and move into urban areas to find work. Others spoke about poverty affecting school attendance as children drop out of school to find work. This work is often highly gendered in nature: participants explained that girls may be employed in the flower plantations as “there is this belief that girls have flexible fingers”, or find work as house helps. They may also be required to care for younger siblings as their parents seek work. And when families are forced to withdraw children from school due to poverty, participants suggest that it tends to be girls that are withdrawn first. One participant pointed to the way in which poverty and gender interact in affecting school attendance:

“Poverty is a big constraint. But the problem is that when it comes to gender it becomes double. It is double because for example, if you look at a family that is poor, definitely it is the boy who will be taken to school”.

‘Famine-brides’

A number of participants cited early marriage as a significant issue that has a detrimental effect on girls’ education in the province. Girls may be withdrawn from school when they are married, or parents may be reluctant to educate girls who will move across to their husband’s family when they marry. One participant explained:

“When we try to sensitize people on the need to take their children to school especially the girls, then they will tell you ‘no, in our community girls are supposed to be married off so as to attract bride price, so why should I educate my girl when at the end of the day she is going to get married’.”

While none of the participants explicitly linked rates of early marriage – and subsequent withdrawal of girls from school – with the effects of drought, it is clearly possible that the practice of exchanging girls for bride price in the form money or cattle when they marry, means that, as pressures on families increase in the face of poverty, this practice may become more common.

Certainly, this is something that has been observed in neighbouring Uganda, where rainfall has become increasingly erratic over recent years resulting in both droughts – as the rainy season becomes shorter – and flooding – as when the rain comes it is heavier and more violent. In the face of such changes, and the food crises that they have resulted in, it has been noted that some parents marry off their daughters in exchange for dowry or bride-price. These “famine marriages” not only lead to girls dropping out of school, but also make them vulnerable to sexually transmitted infections and related reproductive complications.

Over the past year governments have been drawing up National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) to outline their priorities for adapting to the effects of climate change. It is essential that these take into consideration the particular effects of climate change on women and girls, and links to education and schooling.

The Gender, Education and Global Poverty Reduction Initiatives project, funded by the ESRC (award no. RES-167-25-0260) is a collaboration between the Institute of Education, the Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kenya, the University of the Witwatersrand and the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The research team comprises Elaine Unterhalter, Amy North, Veerle Dieltiens, Stu Letsatsi, Jenni Karlsson, Jane Onsongo, Herbert Makinda and Chris Yates. More information about the project is available at http://www.ioe.ac.uk/research/26514.html

More information on the impact of climate change in Uganda is available in the Oxfam report “Turning up the Heat: Climate Change and Poverty in Uganda” http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/climate_change/uganda.html
Talking with Teachers

“Poor women are suffering more”: exploring climate change in Cuttuck, Orissa

Gazala Sahin

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges in today’s world. School is the best platform to build the capacity of young people to cope with the challenge of climate change. In light of this, I carried out a group discussion with female teachers to explore the present situation of one primary school in Orissa, India.

Do you feel that the climate is changing? Yes. It is due to development of science, infrastructure, increased nuclear warheads, missiles, increased use of fossil fuel, and excess use of polythene bags. The outcome of climate change is mainly irregular and scanty rainfall, short winters and very long summer days. The quality of food has changed. Earlier it was tasty and nowadays the taste has deteriorated. On summer days, due to excess heat students also faint during prayer.

Do you feel climate change is affecting men and women differently? No. But men are stronger than women and can bear the stresses of climate change more comfortably. Poor women are suffering more as they have to collect firewood and water and that is becoming harder because of climate change. The situation is better for middle class women as they have basic facilities available in their houses which means that they are less affected.

Do you feel education is important to tackle the issue of climate change? Yes. Students are being taught about climate change issues at the primary level. But there is no discussion about how climate change is affecting men and women differently, and about how women are in a disadvantaged position to cope with climate change. They have chapters on protection of trees, conservation of rain water etc. The students at our school prepared a project on Smokeless Burners for our science exhibition.

How do you suggest climate change issues can be discussed in schools? Planting coconut trees in places where space is scarce. Construction of urinals and latrines will keep the environment clean. For waste management, produced due to the preparation of midday meals and left out by the students, a compost pit is necessary. The effect of climate change on both boys and girls is the same. As the girls are involved in cooking, they can be taught about the bad effect of smoke and the positive aspects of using smokeless burners.

Gazala Sahin is studying for a Masters degree in Education, Gender and International Development. Prior to this she was responsible for planning and implementing girls’ education projects in her home state of Orissa, India, for various government, DFID and World Bank funded educational programmes.

Gazala interviews a group of women teachers at Rodhapur Upper Primary School.
Ushahidi: crisis mapping using SMS

Amy North

Over the last few years, mobile phone technology has transformed communication across the globe. Now, an innovative new website is finding ways to use SMS (text) messages to collect and visualize information about crises or other events as they unfold. Ushahidi, which means 'testimony' in Swahili, was originally developed to map reports of violence in Kenya after the post-election fallout at the beginning of 2008. Ushahidi’s roots are in the collaboration of Kenyan citizen journalists during a time of crisis. As the violence unfolded citizens were able to send in reports of incidences witnessed by them using the SMS facility on their mobile phones. These were then used to create maps showing outbreaks of violence across the country. Since then, the Ushahidi platform has been used in a number of countries and projects across the world. These include:

- Stop Stockouts: an initiative to track falling stocks of medical supplies at medical stores and health facilities in Kenya, Uganda, Malawi and Zambia.
- Vote Report India: a collaborative citizen-driven election monitoring platform for the 2009 Indian general elections.
- The mapping of xenophobic attacks perpetrated against non-South Africans in South Africa.
- The Cuidemos el Voto mashup: an independent platform to help monitor the federal elections of 5 July 2009 in Mexico.

Ushahidi is now being further developed by a group of volunteer developers and designers, many of whom are women and who hail primarily from Africa. It is using lessons learned from Kenya to create a platform that anyone around the world can set up in their own way to gather reports by mobile phone, email and the web, and map them. It therefore represents an invaluable tool that has the potential to transform processes of collecting and using data for advocacy by enabling activists, researchers and members of the general public to join together to monitor and produce immediate reports on situations of concern to them. Gender and education, and the impacts of climate change are clear areas in which Ushahidi could be used to build knowledge and galvanize action, by, for example, mapping the impacts of droughts or flooding caused by climate change, the distances girls and women have to walk to fetch water, or incidences of violence affecting girls in schools.

For more information go to www.ushahidi.com

Conference Comments


Jude G. Akudinobi

This year’s Women in Africa and the African Diaspora (WAAD) International Conference, convened by Professor Obioma Nnaemeka, of Indiana University, Indianapolis, drew together hundreds of participants from eclectic backgrounds across the globe to discuss ‘Education, Gender, and Sustainable Development in the Age of Globalization’. The conference’s scope was innovative and ambitious, and the proceedings generated many discerning insights.

The conference opened with a plenary session on the intricacies and intrinsically plural nature of feminism. Subsequent workshops and seminars addressed the complex economic, political, cultural, institutional, and social experiences and networks of globalization, all within a vigorous, transdisciplinary framework. A technology forum and film series enabled participants to consider the links and exchanges between cultural production and development discourse, and to grapple with the vastly tangled, material realities which constitute them.

The conference’s diasporic component was not limited to the impressive number of participants from all over the world. Prospects for transnational and transcultural collaborations to address pertinent issues were also discussed. In addition, through the prisms of gender and globalization, presentations explored the expressive practices through which essentialist ‘understandings’ of the African diaspora are contested.

Sessions sought to address the gendered aspects of issues such as health, trafficking in persons, sexual harassment, and domestic violence in nuanced ways, rather than merely cataloguing problems. Thus, presentations affirmed that while gender-based systems of inequality and privilege work within and are supported by certain social institutions, specific histories and contexts, diverse artistic, cultural, aesthetic, and technological forms exist for the subversion of these systems of inequality.

In keeping with the hallmark Jessie Obidiegwu Memorial Lecture and Flora Nwapa Memorial Lecture that drew important links between education and capacity building, many speakers presented education as something that should not be limited to the classroom, but rather as a process that inherently encompasses complex forms and dynamics of learning and reflection. Hence, educational systems condemning discriminatory practices were seen as affronts to social justice, participatory citizenship, and as undermining prospects for sustainable development.

Several days of fruitful exchange and insightful sessions resulted in a consensus that this had been a benchmark conference. Participants agreed that the momentum built up during the conference should be maintained, along with endeavours to continue to merge theory with practice, to tap indigenous knowledge systems for their transformative potentials, to learn from the past, to nurture budding reformists, and to extend dialogue between scholars, institutions, governments, practitioners and the wider public.

More information on the conference is available at: www.waadconf.org. Dr. Jude G. Akudinobi teaches in the Black Studies Department, University of California, Santa Barbara.
The organising committee for the UNGEI E4 conference is made up of education activists, academics, practitioners and policy makers from many countries of the world. We have been drawing together papers and presentations that deal with gender, education, empowerment, and equality for our innovative E4 conference in May 2010. Although, over the last ten years, children around the world have had increased opportunities to attend school and benefit from education, nearly a billion people still receive little or no education. The majority are women and girls who face gender inequalities in many areas of their lives. The harsh effects of climate change, war and economic recession impact particularly heavily on women and girls, and if not addressed, will place enormous obstacles in the way of their education. This conference is part of a world-wide mobilisation of partnerships to realise the rights of girls and women to education and training and address the gender inequalities that prevent initiatives from reaching their full potential to transform societies. The key theme of the conference is: Partnership, participation and power for gender equality in education

Parallel streams will look at:
• Addressing violence
• Challenging poverty and inequalities
• Beyond access: policy and practice for gender equality in schools

Cross cutting themes will consider:
• Health, water, nutrition and HIV
• Participation
• Climate change

What will happen at E4?
Through presentations, papers, discussions, and video conversations, we will review ten years of the work of UNGEI and other organisations concerned with gender and education, looking at different forms of participation and the challenges of working collaboratively. In the work of the conference we aim to bring more voices into the conversation to deepen understanding of policies and practices in education that can support gender equality and the empowerment of women, reflect on what we have been doing and how we can support each other, and thus accelerate progress on gender equality and empowerment in education.

Be part of E4!
E4 aims to bring together activists of all types—practitioners on the ground, national and international policy makers, researchers—who work on gender and education. Together we will engage with each other to tackle the question of partnership, participation and power for gender equality in education, and to address the E4 themes of ‘Engendering Empowerment: Education and Equality’.

Bring your ideas to the conference! Since partnerships are at the centre of any successful change, we are particularly interested in collaborations such as:
• Campaigning alliances concerned with girls, women or gender working to change education policy or deliver schooling
• Young adult activists or founders of organizations whose missions and goals are related to gender and education and any of the main conference themes (violence, poverty & inequity, school conditions)
• NGO activists who work with young people in and out of school
• Partnerships between policymakers and practitioners/activists
• Academics working collaboratively in the global south, or south–north
• Collaborations between academics and policy-makers/practitioners/activists

We welcome papers and presentations for the e-conference which will run from April 12th – May 17th

Participating in the e-conference
If you are interested in participating in the web discussions, receiving e-mail alerts etc., please go to http://www.e4conference.org/

Who is supporting E4?
E4 has been organised by UNGEI (UN Girls’ Education Initiative). UNGEI was formed in 2000 as a global partnership of governments, civil society, multilateral agencies and the private sector to narrow the gender gap in education and ensure girls and boys everywhere in the world enter and complete schooling.

Where will E4 take place?
Our face-to-face conference will take place in Dakar, Senegal, 17-20 May 2010. Between February and May 2010 there will be opportunities to participate in the conference in many ways through e-discussions and SMS.

E4 languages
The main languages for the face-to-face conference will be English and French. The web discussions will, in addition, use a wide range of languages (e.g. Spanish, Portuguese, Hindi, Mandarin, Bangla, Kiswahili).
Midterm is usually a good time for taking stock of where things are heading and whether objectives are on track. Accordingly, UNESCO has reviewed the UN Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) 2005 -2014 in the report ‘Review of Contexts and Structures for Sustainable Development 2009’.

The review begins by looking at the different regional contexts for Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) and proceeds to discuss different meanings for Sustainable Development (ESD) and different regional contexts for Education for Sustainable Development. The review ends with a number of suggestions for ways forward. Despite the documentation of numerous activities and initiatives, not least within the UN itself, ESD is clearly suffering from the lack of a commonly agreed definition. The result is a wide variety of interpretations that eventually appear to embrace all and nothing, and that frequently could describe other, parallel educational processes just as well. The way gender equality is addressed provides a good example. ESD has wide ranging aspirations that interconnect the environmental, social, economic and cultural dimensions of human organization. Solidarity and social transformation are central concepts for ESD and key capacities include democratic participation, understanding of complexities, seeing connections and interdependencies, and questioning dominant and long-accepted exploitative systems. These are all aspects that are highly compatible with approaches to gender equality. This notwithstanding, the review is conspicuously quiet on how gender inequalities will constrain the implementation of ESD. Gender equality is mentioned a few times as being an important aspect of ESD, however there are no further elaborations and it is never analysed as an integral part of the context and structures that promote – or demote – ESD. Rather, the document is totally gender blind.

Gender equality is frequently referred to as a prerequisite for sustainable development. At the most basic level the argument is that when development only considers and benefits a fraction of the population, then it can hardly be considered development, even less sustainable. Is this true for ESD as well? Well, if we accept the fundamental fact that girls and boys, women and men, are differently able to access and make use of resources, not least education itself, then gender equality ought to be not only a part of ESD but also conditional to its successful implementation.

Weblinks

www.gendercc.net
Gender cc – women for climate justice
Gender cc is a global network of women and gender activists, and gender experts from all over the world who are working for gender and climate justice. Their website includes news on issues relating to gender and climate change and information about new resources, and also hosts the network and a database of case studies.

www.wedo.org
Women’s Environmental and Development Organisation – WEDO
WEDO’s mission is to empower women as decision makers to achieve economic, social and gender justice, a healthy, peaceful planet, and human rights for all. Research and campaigning on climate change issues and their impact on women is a key aspect of their work, and there is a section within their website dedicated to this.

www.genderandenvironment.org
World Conservation Union – IUCN
The IUCN is an international network of NGOs, scientists and government agencies working on environmental issues. Its website includes links to publications, as well as a discussion forum.

www.envirolink.org
Envirolink
This website provides links to resources on a wide range of environmental issues.

http://climatechangeeducation.org
This American website provides teaching resources for teachers and parents on climate change and other environmental issues.

www.foei.org
Friends of the Earth International
Friends of the Earth is a long-established environmental network, campaigning on climate change and other environmental issues. Their website contains links to a wide range of news, publications, and campaigns, including ‘community testimonies’ from people affected by the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. The network has member groups in 77 countries.

Tck Tck Tck
Tck Tck Tck is a coalition of leading international, national and local organizations all calling for a fair, ambitious and binding climate change agreement in December 2009 in Copenhagen.
New resources

Gender and climate change: mapping the linkages.
A scoping study on knowledge and gaps
BRIDGE/Institute of Development Studies
(available at www.bridge.ids.ac.uk)

This paper draws on existing available resources on gender and climate change to identify useful insights that could inform and strengthen future research and interventions. The paper outlines key linkages between climate change and gender inequality, focusing particularly on best practice on adaptation and mitigation, and ends with recommendations regarding priority areas for future research and highlights some practical steps required to achieve more equitable, appropriate climate change policies and programmes. The paper notes that gender-sensitive responses to climate change require more than disaggregated data showing that climate change has differential impacts on women and men, but rather needs to take into account existing inequalities between women and men, and the ways in which climate change can exacerbate these inequalities. Attention is also drawn to the fact that poor men and boys are also vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, but in different ways; these need to be identified and addressed.

The paper is divided into three parts. The first part examines some of the differential impacts of climate change on men and women, as well as highlighting implications for gender inequity. The second part takes a gendered approach to climate change adaptation. The final section provides insights into the complexities of climate change mitigation. It emphasises the need to include women in developing and implementing mitigation strategies, both to ensure their full participation in these processes and to ensure that such strategies are effective in addressing the ‘bigger picture’ of climate change and its human impacts.

Knowledge about the links between gender inequality and capacity to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change remains patchy at the level of policy and decision makers, within government, international development agencies, and civil society organisations. This manual is designed primarily to provide comprehensive training to these people, but is written in a manner that is engaging and accessible, making it just as suitable for working with other groups. In addition, the training manual is modular, so facilitators can tailor sessions to meet the learning needs of the particular group they are working with.

Modules cover a wide range of topics including ‘gender and gender mainstreaming’, ‘overview of gender issues and climate change’, ‘gender mainstreaming in adaptation efforts’, and ‘gender-sensitive strategies for mitigation actions’. Each module begins with material for participants, consisting of a list of ‘key messages’, followed by a discussion of the issue, and a list of further resources. This is followed by notes for the facilitator, case studies, and worksheets and handouts for each suggested activity. The manual ends with a comprehensive annotated bibliography, including details of organisations and networks working on climate change.
Beyond Access was set up in January 2003. Its main aims are:
• To contribute to achieving MDG 3 – promoting gender equality and empowering women – by generating and critically examining knowledge and practice regarding gender equality and education
• To provide appropriate resources to share and disseminate for the purpose of influencing the policies of government departments, national and international NGOs and international institutions including UN agencies

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The views expressed in this newsletter are entirely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the project, their partners or sponsors.

The KIC Project
KIC is an Oxfam International project which is based on the existing needs of counterparts to improve learning from one another. It seeks to promote the systematic exchange of knowledge and learning from relevant experiences and networking around 5 key themes, including education.

KIC offers the infrastructure to do this: a virtual KIC Portal, where counterparts and others can meet each other, locate other partners working in the same field, browse through thematic web sites, document their practices and research, find knowledge sources and participate in “virtual discussion rooms”, known as “Communities of Practice”.

This issue of Equals has been supported by the KIC project, which is collaborating with Beyond Access to reinforce learning on gender and education. It is hoped that this collaboration will encourage counterparts and Equals readers to use Equals to actively share their own knowledge around gender equality in education, by publishing practices, taking up guest editorship roles, reacting to Equals articles and participating in on-line discussions in Communities of Practice or forums on the KIC website.