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Title: Inclusion of Gender Equality in the Cambodia National Policy on Climate Change

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I- Introduction:

The notion of ‘no climate change justice without gender justice’ has become a key argument for many women activists and feminism scholars who are involving and working in relation to climate change. The impact of climate change on gender relations has obviously become evident in many countries that affected climate change threats and hazards such as storms, drought and flood. Many authors highlight that women, especially the poorer, are not only disproportionately affected from climate change impacts and hazards but also their voice is missing (Terry 2009; Lahiri-Dutt 2014, p. 108). This issue is often neglected in many climate change policies. This is due to the policy-making processes are dominated by climate change experts, technological scientists and economic instruments. Issues such as gender roles and equality issues are less likely to be included in the mechanisms and responses on climate change. Terry also indicates that social dimensions, including gender issues are hardly featured in international policy discourses, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol as well as in the individual national policy on climate change (Terry 2009, p. 15). This paper will examine to which extent gender equality is considered in the Cambodian national policy on climate change called ‘Cambodia Climate Change Strategic Plan (CCCSP) that has recently developed. It argues that although the Cambodian policy on climate change recognizes that women are more vulnerable to climate change impacts, it fails to analyze and incorporate some key issues of gender equality. Therefore, there are risks in achieving equal outcomes between Cambodian women and Cambodian men in coping with climate change impacts. This paper starts by reviewing different literature on gender and climate change and then provides a brief description on a recent Cambodia national policy on climate change. The last section of the paper discusses the inclusion of the issues on gender equality in the national policy on climate change.

II- Literature Review

Gender and Climate Change Vulnerability

Climate change impacts vary from one context to another due to an increase in extreme weather such as cyclones, flood, droughts, tsunami and rising sea levels. However, it is commonly seen that poor countries are more vulnerable to climate change and the poor suffer the most because they are lacking of resources and capacity to cope and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Several feminist authors strongly argue that women, especially the poorer in those developing countries are more susceptible than men to the impacts of climate change (Denton 2002, Terry 2009, MacGregor 2009). Denton (2002) outlines that women are generally poorer than men and highly reliant on primary resources taking from agriculture and fisheries which are most likely to be threatened by climate change (p. 12). The effects of climate change exacerbate not only poverty but also existing unequal power and gender inequality. In

many developing countries in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, the lack of women's access to productive resources and control over land, water, information, technologies, and relevant knowledge and skills highly constrain women in developing effective coping and mitigating strategies (IDS 2008, p. 5). Thus, Terry suggests that climate change policies have to provide flexibility, financial capital and other resources that women and men need to respond to climate change impacts in more gender-equitable sustainable development because adaptation strategies sometimes can further disadvantage women and perpetuate inequalities in gender relations (Terry 2009, pp. 12-13).

In addition, in the time food shortages within households, women's health can be severely affected because of the inequity in resource allocation and unequal power relations within households (Bartlett 2008 cited in Lahiri-Dutt 2014, p. 117). Due to social constructed roles as breadwinner, men who are not open to seek mental counseling, have more stresses and also suffer from food insecurities. Thus, gender mainstreaming into environmental and natural resource management policies and in relevant sector such as health is argued by Denton (2002) as an urgent necessity.

Furthermore, Nelson and colleagues (2002) point out that gender and cultural norms place women and men at different risks to climate change hazards. More women than men died during the 1991 cyclones floods in Bangladesh because of cultural preservation of female honor of being seclusion and lacking swimming skills for women. Men are also affected by gender norms during disasters. Male mortality was higher than that female during Hurricane Mitch in Central America because of ideals about masculinity that may encourage for risk-taking and heroic action in a disaster situation (Nelson et al. 2002, 55). This is clear evident that climate change impacts on gender relations are obvious in many countries that affected by climate change hazards.

Women's Agency and Climate Change

Despite the fact that women are experiencing the impacts of climate change and facing several barriers in adapting and coping to climate change, the recent evidence shows that women are involving in developing effective adaptation strategies, including modification of their farming practices (Mitchell et al. 2007, p. 12). However, women's agency has often overlooked in climate change policies and discourses. Some authors point out that the agency of women is undermined by the tendency in the climate change discourses that place them as powerless victims (Arora-Jonsson 2011, p.748; MacGregor 2010, p. 227; Terry 2009, p. 12). In report of ActionAid (2007), it indicates that women often play an important role in adaptation because they have distinguished knowledge and experience in relation to agriculture and maintaining water supplies (Mitchell et al. 2007, pp. 12-15). In addition, Lahiri-Dutt draws an importance of the program that focuses grassroots mobilization of rural and poor women in India. This program has empowered women to be decision-makers in households, communities and local governance as well as enable women to apply their valuable knowledge and experience in developing climate change adaptation strategies (Lahiri-Dutt 2014, p. 115).

International Climate Change Frameworks and Women's Participation

Gender considerations are entirely ignored from the two main treaties of UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol that highlight global efforts to fight against climate change. O'Neil and colleagues indicates that climate change's conferences, media, and science journals concentrate on geoscience and scientific findings which often portrait a hierarchy of knowledge reflecting developed countries' and male's contributions disproportionately influence in this communication (O'Neil et al. 2010, p. 1001). As climate change discourses and solutions are mainly shaped by technology and economic perspectives, Terry points out that it is difficult to introduce issues of gender equality into above frameworks and debates.

Despite in the Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Population and Environment, it recognizes an important role and value of women in environmental and natural resources management, woman remain underrepresentation in the formulation of environmental policy (Denton 2002, p. 12). For example, gender dimensions have also a little focus in the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). MacGregor (2009) points out that IPCC is predominantly represented by male scientists. They dominate in all arenas of climate change policy in which the worldviews and personalities may reflect particular gender issues (p. 129). She also indicates several reasons why women are largely absent from framing and sharpening of climate change as a political issue. First, the main reason is that women represent a small proportion in fields, for example, in Members of Parliament (MPs) that can influence on climate change policy-making. Second, male perspectives of technological science and security have dominated in the climate change debates and therefore ignore women and their concerns. Moreover, women are not encouraged in the fields of sciences and mathematics hence women are underrepresented in climate change discussions (MacGregor 2009, p. 129).

Moreover, many literatures suggest that the climate change policy making needs to ensure inclusive participation in more participatory ways. Nelson and colleagues draw an important attention in ensuring public participation in the formulation of policies. They highlight that the poor and women need to be directly represented in developing and designing climate change adaptation responses to ensure that those responses are critical and responsive to their needs and interests (Nelson et al. 2002, p. 57). Cornwall also points out that unequal power and inequalities of gender relations need to be considered and addressed in institutions and the whole process of policy formulation (Cornwall 2003, p. 1333). In addition, Arora-Jonsson encourages that although there are some commons among women, there has to be thoughtful that women are not a unitary unit or a homogenous group (Arora-Jonsson, 2011).

III- Cambodian National Policy on Climate Change

In response to climate change impacts, the government of Cambodia developed a national policy on climate change called 'Cambodian Climate Change Strategic Plan (CCCSP) for 2013-2023'. This

policy was adopted in 2013 to enhance existing efforts and to fill the policy gap and to overcome the emerging challenges of the development, environment and climate change issues. Cambodia is one of the countries, which faces increasing threats from climate change. The dependency of Cambodia on agriculture, fisheries, water resources, forestry and tourisms, which are identified as climate-sensitive sectors, makes this country highly vulnerable to climate change impacts. This heavily affects both Cambodia's economic growth and the livelihoods of a vast majority of the population. The policy is also designed to engage all key stakeholders such as the public and private sectors, civil society organizations and development partners in responding to climate change and achieving sustainable development.

To ensure proper responses to above concerns in relation to climate change, the CCCSP aims to achieve three main goals. The first goal is to reduce people's vulnerability to the impacts of climate change. Second, the policy aims to drive Cambodia towards a green development through promoting low-carbon emission development and technologies. The last goal is to improve public awareness and to increase people's participation in climate change response actions.

To accomplish these goals, a number of strategic activities are developed with specific consideration on gender. Gender has been incorporated as one of the main section in this policy of climate change. The section on gender and climate change acknowledges that women are highly susceptible to the impacts of climate change due to their reliance on agricultural and national resources. Lack of capacity and resources to adapt effects of climate change makes women and the rural poor are vulnerable to diseases and health problems. The reduction of gender vulnerability and health risks is one of key strategic objectives in this policy. Moreover, the CCCSP also highlights about the primary role of Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) in providing capacity development to all relevant ministries and departments in planning, implementing and monitoring gender mainstreaming in climate change responses. MOWA is responsible to ensure women's participation in climate change policy making processes.

IV- Discussion:

Lack of Women's Agency Recognition

The national policy of climate change in Cambodia places gender and women in the attention of the policy by highlighting vulnerability of women to impacts of climate change, which is taken from Ministry of Women's Affairs' Gender and Climate Change. The policy recognizes women as the most vulnerable group affected by climate change consequences. Moreover, one of key strategic objectives of this policy aims to reduce gender vulnerability and health risks to impacts of climate change (NCCC 2013, p. xvii & 12). This is similar to many other national policies on climate change in developing

countries in East and South Africa whereby women are identified in relation to their vulnerability to climate change and as part of the solution in climate change (Nhamo 2014, p. 4).

The recognition of women's vulnerability in the climate change policy is a significant improvement of policy-making but it remains insufficient. The notion of women as agents is ignored in the Cambodian national policy on climate change. Arora-Jonsson argues that generalization of women's vulnerability does not only make the invisibility of gender in the climate change debates since the problem is assumed to be understood, but it also rejects agency of women (Arora-Jonsson 2011, p. 748). To emphasize on the vulnerability seems to reinforce the negative stereotype of women being as powerless and incapable to adapt to climate change effects without assistance from others and outsiders. It also constructs a notion of only women's problems, not our problems (Arora-Jonsson 2011, p. 748; MacGregor 2010, p. 227). Additionally, a number of reports show that women and men have different and valuable knowledge and practical experience in adapting to negative impacts of environment degradation and climate change (IDS 2008, p. 12). Lahiri-Dutt draws an example of women's agency through 'Tamil Nadu's Women Collective (WC)'. She points out that the WC focuses on empowering women to be decision makers in household and to participate in local government, as well to promote multi-functionality of agriculture. By using women's knowledge, the WC creates and introduces traditional methods for adapting and coping with climate change to the farming communities for improvement of productivity and sustainability (Lahiri-Dutt 2014, p. 115). Therefore, Skinner and Terry make a suggestion that policy on climate change should move forwards to highlight women's agency in adapting and mitigation climate change rather than concentrate on simple assumptions of women's vulnerability (Skinner 2011, p. 22; Terry 2009, p. 13). Furthermore, Arora-Jonsson indicates that assumptions of women's vulnerability can undermine social relations of power in particular context in which certain groups such as men may be more vulnerable. She maintains that men represent the majority of farmer suicides in India due to mental stresses in the time of food insecurity as they are main providers for family (Arora-Jonsson 2011, p. 748).

Lack of Women's Participation in Decision Making

The national climate change policy incorporates gender into actions of climate change responses (NCCC 2013, p. 29). In 2011, the MOWA established the Gender and Climate Change (GCCC) to ensure that gender are mainstreamed into climate change policy by coordinating with all line ministries and with National Climate Change Committee (NCCC) in Ministry of Environment (MOE) (UN-REDD et al. 2013, p. 10). However, the national policy on climate change does not seem to discuss how to improve women's participation and representation in climate change policy-making. This suggests that this policy recognizes women as victims of climate change rather than an agency. Therefore, women's participation and representation is less likely to be taken into consideration in this policy. Arora-Jonsson raises the concern that the attention to women's existing knowledge and experience in relation to

environmental management and climate change adaptation can be undermined if policy makers focus on women's vulnerabilities more than on what they can do (Arora-Jonsson 2011, p. 749). In the proposal submitted to UNFCCC on improving gender balance and participation of women in UNFCCC negotiation and other bodies under the Kyoto protocol, it indicates that although there is a quota for women in civil service, both national and local committees for climate change are largely dominated by men due to the climate change field is influenced by scientific and gender and women issues are not yet fully understood in Cambodia society (UNFCCC 2012). This poor representation falls in the same trends in other sectors in Cambodia. Solar (2010) points out that women's underrepresentation is obvious in the all levels of government in Cambodia due to existing gender inequalities in all dimensions of social, economic, political and cultural (Solar 2010, pp. 22-23).

Many feminists have argued that the more women involve in decision making in relation to environmental management as well as climate change the more efficiency and equality those areas become. Lahiri-Dutt notes that the lack of women's voices and consideration of adverse impacts of climate change on women will perpetuate gender inequality and injustice (Lahiri-Dutt 2014, p. 108). The study of UN-REDD on women's inclusion in REDD¹+ projects in Cambodia draws some suggestions. A quota for women's representation and participation at least 30 per cent is needed in REDD+ technical working and in the whole management structures as well as in policy and project development. Moreover, to enable women to hold leadership role in REDD+ governance structures, mentoring program should be provided to enhance women's leadership. Thus, Skinner (2011) points out that meaningful participation of women in decision making in relation to climate change should not just focus on the presence of more women in the institutions and processes but look at social and cultural barriers that constrain women's meaningful participation (p. 22). However, Arora-Jonsson (2011) highlights very significant point that to enable women and marginalized groups to participate in decision making related to environmental management and climate change, there needs to transform unequal power relations in existing institutions (p. 749). Thus, the inclusion of women in decision making related to climate change policy and programs is very crucial in ensuring gender equitable development.

Insufficient Strategies to Address Gender Needs of Women

Despite poverty in developing countries is exacerbated by climate change impacts and the suffering will be with the rural poor and women, climate change adaptation strategies that address purely poverty may reinforce gender inequalities. The national climate change policy in Cambodia has taken careful consideration of gender into climate change responses by ensuring they are culturally appropriate, equitable, gender sensitive and transparent. The women's needs in relation to climate change adaptation and migration actions will be prioritized in this policy (CCCSP 2013, p. 15). The policy states that

¹ REDD+ (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation)

relevant ministries will develop their own action plans under the support from NCCC (CCCSP 2013, p. 17). By reviewing those action plans, this paper finds that while there is a little attention on addressing gender and women's needs in adapting and mitigating climate change in the policy and relevant sector's action plans, especially women's empowerment in decision making at different levels.

United Nations Environment Program stresses that women's livelihoods and adaptation strategies need to be enhanced through ensuring women's access and control over resources and to development resources (Nellemann et al. 2011, p. 8). Under the climate change action plans of Ministry of Agricultural, Forestry and Fishery (MOAFF), it emphasizes that women have limited capacity and resources such as land, information, technologies, knowledge and other inputs in coping with climate change impacts (MOAFF 2013, p. 15). Its strategies mainly focus on improving women's climate change awareness, encouraging women to apply adapting-agriculture to climate change adaptation, and providing micro-finance for women (MOAFF 2013, p. 26). However, the policy fails to highlight women's access to other important productive resources such as land, technological knowledge and skills as well as power inequality in managing those resources. Arora-Josson points out that to consider the village women's access to a little more land would have enabled them to increase personal incomes that can be used to address the stresses and shocks of climate change threats in Africa (Arora-Jonsson 2011, p. 746). In Cambodia, woman-headed households are often involved in agriculture and they are more likely to have smaller plots of land while men usually own quality and large plots of land (Mehrvar et al. 2008, p. 9). Moreover, Carr's study indicates that some adaptations of diversification of livelihoods strategy in some villages in Ghana have a little improvement with material outcomes while they persistently reinforce power imbalance and unequal gender relations (cited in Arora-Jonsson 2011, p. 746). Therefore, several authors suggest that the climate change policy should carefully identify and tackle gender issues and power inequalities by incorporating distinguished knowledge and experience of local women and men in more participatory ways.

V- Conclusion

Impacts of climate change on gender relations have been evident. Women and men are affected differently depending on context and other social and cultural norms. The poor, especially women are more susceptible to climate change threats and impacts not only because they have limited capacity and resources but also existing inequalities and unequal gender relations in society. In recognizing this issue, the national policy on climate change in Cambodia has taken gender into consideration. Gender is included as one of the main sections of the policy and some strategic objectives of this policy aim to reduce women's vulnerability to climate change impacts and to ensure equitable and gender sensitivity in climate change responses. However, this policy ignores to consider other significant aspects of gender equality and women's empowerment. First, women's agency seems to be overlooked in this policy because women are simply assumed as victims and more vulnerability to climate change. Thus,

women's knowledge and experience is not given attention in designing and formulating climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies. Second, the policy does not highlight how to increase women's representation and participation in policy-making processes on climate change. Setting a certain percentage of women's quotas, as suggested by some authors, in technical groups or committees involving in climate change could be a suitable measure to enable women to participate in formulating climate change policy or programs. However, several barriers for women to participate equally with their male counterparts at all levels need to be considered and addressed. Third, women's needs have been prioritized in sector's action plans of agriculture in relation to climate change. The policy considers increasing women's awareness on climate change impacts, and agricultural coping strategies for climate change, and providing micro-finance, but it includes a little attention to improve women's access and control over resources such as land, technologies, relevant skills that can enable women to maximize those resources in coping with climate change impacts. Moreover, this is not only issue of poverty but it is closely associated with unequal power and gender inequalities in managing resources within households as well as in the community.

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