

WeProsper Research Salon Brief: Women's Economic Empowerment and Climate Action

WeProsper's Research Salons offer an opportunity for coalition members to share research on thematic areas of joint interest in order to expand the knowledge base and inform coalition advocacy on women's economic empowerment, justice, and rights.

On June 29, 2023, WeProsper hosted our third Research Salon on the nexus of women's economic empowerment (WEE) and climate action. The session featured research presentations from SEWA Bharat, Solar Sister, University of Nairobi WEE Hub, and Oxfam. Following the presentations, two advocacy discussants from Landesa and WEDO reflected on the research and discussed connections to ongoing global advocacy and policy dialogues. Below, key takeaways from research presented by each organization is outlined, followed by policy and advocacy implications shared by the discussants.



Research Takeaways and Policy Insights

Care and Climate Research – Foundations and Upcoming Plans

Alex Bush, Oxfam

- Care work is fundamentally linked with climate change.¹ The amount of unpaid care work is particularly impacted, as well as the distribution and conditions of such work.
- Climate crises can exacerbate care responsibilities by increasing rates of disability, limiting access to resources necessary for care (water, fuel, or land) through climate damage or forced migration, and disrupting family and community level support networks.
- Caregivers are on the frontline of the climate crisis and are key agents of change in organizing around these issues in both formal and informal community networks.^{2,3}

- Forthcoming research in Pakistan, the Philippines, and Bangladesh will explore economic and non-economic Loss and Damage (L&D) with respect to the impacts of climate change on marginalized women. This will span the issues of care responsibilities, food security, livelihoods, migration, safety and security, education, health, and access to resources and decision-making spaces.

Policy implications:

- It's vital that climate justice work takes a systemic approach around integrating gender to promote sustainability and climate resilience.⁴
- Gender inequalities perpetuated by unpaid and underpaid care work, must be urgently addressed through increased investments and tax policy.⁵
- The transformative potential of investments in the care economy should be centered in narratives around the climate crisis, and just energy and economic transitions. This should highlight care jobs as green jobs, care work as regenerative work, and care work as integral for environmental protection and restoration.



Locally-Led Climate Actions and Women's Economic Empowerment – The Case of County Climate Change Funds in Kenya⁶

Elvin Nyukuri, University of Nairobi WEE Hub

- Locally-led climate funds and investments in climate actions are gaining recognition within the climate finance landscape in Kenya. Positive outcomes in county contexts have been achieved, with enactment of legislation, budgeting for climate change mainstreaming, and investments in public goods.
- The County Climate Change Fund (CCCF) mechanism in Kenya piloted from 2011-18 was designed to facilitate the flow of climate finance to county governments and simultaneously empower women and local communities through strengthening public participation and management of the funds. The CCCF uses the principle of investing in public goods, such as water infrastructure and means of distribution (e.g. kiosks, troughs, boreholes, rock catchment areas, earth or sand dams, pipelines), climate information services, or human resources, plus supports the development of legislation, strengthening of institutions, and research.
- The CCCF in Kenya is anchored on strong participation and inclusion of all groups to help determine what to fund, and strongly encouraged the inclusion of the local community including those with disabilities, youth, and women.
- After establishing and implementing these funds, women experienced positive outcomes as a result of knowledge and skills acquired throughout the process, such as determining the best crops suitable to various seasons.

- Locally-led climate funds support resilience building among women, as they provide a means for them to absorb some of the impacts of climate-related shocks and stresses, such as floods or droughts. There is a positive and statistically significant (though small) relationship between the utilization of County Climate Change Fund (CCCF) investments and subjective resilience among women. The increase and greater diversity of income streams generated through the fund reduces the reliance of some people on one source of income, which may be impacted by climate-related shocks and stresses.

Policy implications:

- Given the success of the CCCF investment model in Kenya, this provides a model which can be replicated in other counties and countries to support resilience building and investments in public goods. A strong focus on community-run projects should be an integral component in other contexts.
- However, the fund in and of itself is not enough to provide sufficient social protections for most women to prevent poverty or impact their wellbeing. Sustainability of the fund is yet to be addressed, and barriers to women's participation in the CCCF investments are a factor that should be resolved before being replicated.



Photo: Paula Bronstein/Getty Images/Images of Empowerment

Support for Women Clean Energy Entrepreneurship: Findings from Solar Sister's Innovation Hub

Kathryn Farley, Solar Sister

- With the right support, women clean energy entrepreneurs can excel, build, and grow profitable clean energy businesses, even in challenging, volatile, and emerging markets.
- For advanced women clean energy entrepreneurs, Solar Sister found that access to product credit, one-on-one training/coaching, and quality marketing materials were most effective in helping these women grow their businesses.
- Through a pilot Business Booster project, out of 660 [Solar Sister](#) Entrepreneurs who received this comprehensive growth package, 227 reached their goal of doubling their businesses within one year, with some growing it over four times.⁷
- Additionally, this support proved to be an unexpected resilience booster during COVID-19, counterbalancing the economic effects of the pandemic.
- The [experience of Solar Sister](#) found that digitization opens up new markets, fosters innovation, builds connectedness, and is the key to future business growth for female entrepreneurs, including those in the clean energy sector.⁸

Policy implications:

- Governments and other funders should work together to ensure that women entrepreneurs in the clean energy space have the hardware, software, training, and ongoing mentorship and support they need to effectively digitize their businesses.

- Consumer financing is critical to getting bigger, more expensive clean energy products into the marketplace, allowing female entrepreneurs to significantly increase their income. To support these efforts, lenders should focus on creating loan products tailored for female, last-mile customers, and both funders and technology suppliers should work together to create products that meet customer demand and to ensure a strong, reliable, and affordable supply chain (see example [here](#)).⁹
- The capacity and confidence of women clean energy entrepreneurs should be fostered so that they can advocate on their own behalf.

The Many Faces of Sustainable Employment in India¹⁰

Paromita Sen, SEWA Bharat

- There is no language for sustainability at the grassroots level, which means policies are being made *for* the vulnerable as opposed to being constructed *with* them. The lived experiences of those most vulnerable to climate change are least considered when imagining a climate-sustainable world.
- When discussing sustainability with informal economy women workers (the most vulnerable to climate change in the South Asian context) in a vocabulary of their own, we find that women consider time and space as scarce resources equal to water.
- Pollution is not a concept that informal economy women workers follow, as their settlements never experienced clean sanitation facilities in the first place. However, it is apparent to these women that vegetables have fewer nutrients than they did in the past, as they see the impact on their children. This is a lived reality they engage with every day and where they are critically cognizant of the quality of food they can procure with their limited earnings.

- Technology is seen as the great panacea for battling climate change, but it just provides measures to combat existing challenges and does not transform the system in sustainable ways.
- As everyday challenges increase, women at the grassroots level have to increasingly do more with less available to them. For example, women reuse plastic milk packets as grocery bags, which extends and repurposes the life of a non-biodegradable good. Roofs made with mud allow for natural rooftop gardens, and the growth of creepers over tin roofs provides for cooler homes in summer while also utilizing space more efficiently.
- of world where it was allowed to get so bad. Thus, sustainability in policy dialogues should be rethought to include the vocabulary of those most affected.
- Climate-related policy dialogues should be expanded to include solutions beyond technology and ensure those most impacted by climate change are meaningfully included.
- The climate change solutions of informal women workers should be scaled to bring about transformational systemic change and both accountability and progress towards the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs).¹¹

Policy implications:

- Climate change is a result of action and decisions made in contexts far removed from where informal women workers live, be it the global North or corporations that pollute en masse. Sustainability conversations do not exist in this local space as informal women have not caused any of these systemic issues and cannot comprehend the kind



Research to Advocacy – Connections and Insights

Katie Tobin, WEDO

- **The confluence of the gender and economic justice / women's economic empowerment agenda and climate justice is becoming increasingly recognized across movement and policy spaces.** [Feminist systemic analysis](#) points out that the root causes of gender inequality and climate crisis are shared: primarily the lack of fiscal space for spending on national priorities, due to the extractive, patriarchal, colonial, fossil-fuel based global economy.¹²
- **Some of the solutions required to simultaneously advance gender, climate, and economic justice include increased awareness, policy, data, and financing.** The first one seems to be happening, especially in recent years. Strongly linking this new influx of research and attention to advocacy, including through data, will be important to support policy and financing for the rights of women and gender-diverse peoples and to protect the planet.
- **Increasing the collection, compilation, analysis, and use of data at the intersection of gender and the environment is fundamental to inform more targeted policy-making and financing decisions.** One new initiative with this aim is the [Gender and Environment Data Alliance](#) (GEDA), which seeks to promote feminist methodologies of data collection to fill the gender-environment data gap and encourage uptake of the gender-environment data that does exist.¹³ GEDA's membership includes Data2x and about 20 other founding members, including WEDO as co-convenor, and its [membership drive](#) has just begun, particularly focusing on global South orgs and data practitioners.¹⁴

- [Gender-just climate solutions](#) already exist, and they need to be supported, especially at the local level.¹⁵ While promoting women's entrepreneurship and access to green energy and jobs will be key, it is essential that collective feminist analysis and advocacy pushes for a true feminist just transition, away from both fossil fuels and other types of extraction that disproportionately affect women, indigenous peoples, and our environment. We must use the opportunity of a global reckoning with the "polycrisis" (of climate, cost-of-living, COVID-19, conflict, etc) to advance a shared vision of climate, economic, and gender justice, prioritizing care for both people and planet.

Beth Roberts, Landesa

- **Land rights serve as a foundation for gender equality and climate action.** Globally, gender norms related to land are tied to identity and are associated with a concentration of wealth and power for men. Land rights help women to increase their economic status and household decision making. While women in LMICs who most rely on land and natural resources for their livelihoods [bear the brunt of climate change](#), women often do not have use or control of these resources.¹⁶ This can be a difficult intersection to convey, so it is important to communicate the available evidence and gaps in evidence clearly.
- **Global coalitions and partnerships are critical to elevate this issue and support advocacy.** The [Stand for Her Land](#) campaign is working to expand and gain cohesion for the land rights movement, with a focus on the 2.5 billion people that live and depend

directly on land in rural areas and 1 billion people living in informal settlements.¹⁷ Partnerships like the [United Nations Convention to Combat Discrimination \(UNCCD\)](#) are helpful to emphasize this intersection, raise awareness, and provide support on how to push forward this agenda and garner political will.¹⁸

- **Innovative solutions can help women to share their stories and bridge the nexus of gender equality and climate change.** Landesa is launching the Women's Land Rights (WLR) platform, a [new storytelling platform](#) on women's land rates to increase visibility and voice to grassroots leaders.¹⁹ The platform will capture, crowdsource, and feature stories so that women can share what is happening to them with regard to land and natural resource rates and to call for action and resources pertaining to their needs. The platform will also help to improve visibility for stakeholders in the space and women's ability to connect with one another.



Photo: Paula Bronstein/Getty Images/Images of Empowerment

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Acknowledgements

WeProsper would like to express its appreciation to our partners at SEWA Bharat, Solar Sister, University of Nairobi WEE Hub, Oxfam, WEDO, and Landesa for their willingness to share research and analysis for this session. We also extend special thanks to Megan Morris, Policy Manager at the Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL) and Co-Chair of the Technical Working Group for her leadership in organizing this session, as well as for the support of Mary Borrowman, Technical Lead for WeProsper, and Kelsey Harris, WeProsper Coalition Coordinator.

About WeProsper

WeProsper is a global coalition that promotes women's economic empowerment (WEE) by engaging in strategic advocacy to advance gender equality, address structural barriers, and foster women's and girls' voices and power as economic actors. Together, we work to build and utilize the global evidence base on women's economic empowerment using a feminist and intersectional approach to meaningfully inform global policy, increase funding for WEE, and support prosperity for women and girls in all their diversity.

Please scan to view our ever-growing member base:





September 2023