

EVENT REPORT
BÖLL WORKSHOP AND LUNCH DEBATE
Gender and Climate Change¹

On October 12th 2011, the Heinrich Böll Foundation organised a workshop and lunch debate on gender and climate change. This was one day after a public hearing in the [European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality \(FEMM\)](#) that started the process of drafting a European Parliament resolution on women and climate change (rapporteur MEP Nicole Kiil-Nielsen). The lead-up to COP17 and to Rio+20 was the right moment to address the need to adopt a gender-responsive approach towards climate change.

At first glance, it might seem unintuitive to link climate change and gender issues because climate change is perceived by many as a purely scientific or technical issue. However, since societies still largely rely on gendered roles and responsibilities, women and men do not have the same impact on climate change, and perhaps more importantly, are differently affected by it. While gender inequalities worsen women's coping capacity, women are also important actors of change and holders of significant knowledge and skills related to mitigation, adaptation, and the reduction of risks in the face of climate change.

Opening the 'Black Boxes' and adopting a Gender Perspective on Climate Change

In contrast to the view of countries as black boxes, that predominates the UNFCCC process, the reality of large disparities in the carbon footprint of different strata within individual countries should be acknowledged and addressed. While women tend to have a lower carbon footprint than men, negative climate change impacts in terms of migration, health, disaster management and work burden disproportionately affect women. By looking into all climate relevant spheres of life, the importance of a focus on gender roles and relations becomes clear. The recognition of the human face of climate change thus means going beyond a technology based carbon-only perspective and taking into account human impacts and capabilities as well as risks of human rights violations through adaptation and mitigation action. In particular, women's adaptation capacity should be strengthened, gender impact assessment should be mainstreamed and gender equal participation in relevant decision-making bodies should be ensured.

A human rights based approach to climate change implies also the need to integrate a gender perspective into climate finance decisions and structures at all stages, including in the identification of sources of finance, within the governance bodies of climate finance mechanisms, during planning and implementation, and in monitoring and evaluation. Currently, climate finance is particularly focused on mitigation and large-scale projects in

¹ **Gotelind Alber**, Board Member of [GenderCC](#) and Focal Point of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change ([UNFCCC](#)) Women and Gender Observer Constituency, and **Liane Schalatek**, Associate Director of the [Heinrich Böll Foundation North America](#), led through the workshop and clarified the reasons why a gender perspective should be integrated into all aspects of climate action. Main speakers of the lunch debate included **Nicole Kiil-Nielsen**, Rapporteur on Women and Climate Change in the [European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality \(FEMM\)](#), **Paul Renier**, Acting Head of Unit Climate Change, Environment, Natural Resources, Water at the [European Commission DG Development and Cooperation – EuropeAid](#), and **Peter Truels Nielsen**, Attaché for Social Affairs and Gender Equality at the Permanent Representation of Denmark to the European Union. The lunch debate was chaired by Liane Schalatek, Associate Director of the [Heinrich Böll Foundation North America](#) and was held under Chatham House Rule. The opinions expressed do not necessarily represent the opinions of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung.

emerging economies. However, adaptation financing and small-scale projects tend to profit women much more. A gender perspective helps to increase the quality and efficiency of climate finance and leads to a more equitable, effective and successful climate action. The [Green Climate Fund](#) (GCF) that has been designed by the so-called Transitional Committee as an operating entity of the financial mechanism of the Convention, will have far-reaching consequences on the global climate finance structure. The challenge will be to integrate gender from the very outset into this important financing measure and to enable multi-stakeholder participation and a gender balance in the decision-making bodies of the GCF.



Protester in Durban, South Africa

Overall, the relevance of a gender perspective has in principle been acknowledged when it comes to adaptation. Now it is time for policy makers to implement adaptation at all levels with a gender sensitive approach and to translate this into concrete measures such as appropriate institutional settings, methodologies and gender-sensitive funding in order to enhance women's resilience to climate change. Another main challenge will be to convince decision-makers of the gender relevance of mitigation and climate finance decisions. Therefore, awareness-raising is needed to create a better understanding of the larger picture beyond the 'black boxes' and of the opportunities of a gender-sensitive approach to climate change.

The EU's potential to tackle both Gender Inequality and Climate Change

In recent years, the European Union (EU) has played a leading role in international climate negotiations and advanced with its domestic climate and energy policies. However, under the impression of the financial and economic crisis, the EU struggles to meet the expectations to help create a new dynamic in the international climate negotiations. But climate change remains high on the agenda of the EU's domestic and foreign policies. The same is true for gender equality that is one of the basic principles of the EU and as such enshrined in the EU Treaty and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The [EU Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men](#) identifies the promotion of gender equality in external and development

policies and the equal representation in decision-making as priority areas of action for gender equality. Considering the relevance for European policy-making of climate change on the one hand and gender equality on the other, the question is what the EU can do to tackle both gender inequality and climate change at the same time.

It is important to differentiate between gender and climate change in developing countries on one side and gender and climate change in developed countries on the other. When it comes to development cooperation, the EU does not fully incorporate gender considerations into climate policies and lacks an integrated approach on the implementation level. Both gender and climate issues are mainstreamed in EU development cooperation. A [Toolkit on mainstreaming gender equality in EC development cooperation](#) and [Guidelines on the Integration of Environment and Climate Change in Development Cooperation](#) are intended to facilitate the implementation of gender respective climate mainstreaming at the project level. The Guidelines on the Integration of Environment and Climate Change also take note of the importance of gender considerations for the scope and design of environmental and climate-related assessments (Chapter 2.5). However, such a parallel approach is not sufficient to guarantee a full integration of gender considerations into climate policies. Gender should rather be incorporated systematically as a fundamental and not just cross-cutting issue into every step of climate related policies: from conception to financing, implementation and evaluation. In this regard, it is important to enhance the gender awareness of the local European Commission staff, to outreach to civil society organisations that work on gender and climate change and to integrate gender indicators into budget support, amongst others.



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What is sometimes overlooked is that the link between gender and climate change also applies to developed countries' domestic policies. Major issues at stake in this regard are gender differentiated carbon footprints, gender equal representation in climate relevant decision-making bodies and gender impacts of mitigation policies on employment. For example, the extent to which women benefit from the creation of green jobs has to be assessed. In the first half of 2012, Denmark will hold the Presidency of the Council of the European Union. One priority area of the Danish Presidency will be the follow-up of the [Beijing Conference](#) with a focus on the [Area K: Women and Environment](#) and in particular the links between gender relations and climate change. The Danish Presidency intends to

concentrate on the domestic rather than the external dimension of gender and climate change with a special focus on the gender gap in climate relevant education fields (e.g. science and technology) and decision-making bodies (e.g. transport and infrastructure). In support of the Danish Presidency, the [European Institute for Gender Equality](#) (EIGE) has developed indicators for gender and climate change. The final EIGE report will be completed in February of 2012 and will provide a basis for the potential adoption of Council Conclusions on gender and climate change during the Danish Presidency.

It remains to be seen to what extent the Danish Presidency's commitment and the possible adoption of a European Parliament Resolution on women and climate change will enhance effective and coherent EU policies both within the European Union and globally in order to tackle both gender inequality *and* climate change.