

Gender Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management: Lessons from the English-Speaking Caribbean

Género y cambio climático y gestión del riesgo de desastres: lecciones del Caribe de habla inglesa

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ABSTRACT: This paper shares personal and professional experiences of mainstreaming gender in climate change and disaster risk management in the Caribbean. It is based on an invited keynote presentation at the International Seminar organised by the Gender Responsive Resilience and Intersectionality in Policies and Practices (GRRIPP) Latin America and Caribbean project and FLACSO Cuba and was held in Varadero, Cuba from July 27-29, 2023. The paper uses an autoethnographic methodology of self-reflection of personal memories, work experiences from a 25-year career in teaching, research, and publications to promote gender mainstreaming in climate change and disaster risk management, and secondary sources. These provide insights on factors that shaped my passionate interests in the intersections between gender, climate change and disaster risk management. Recommendations seek to strengthen Caribbean partnerships to mitigate climate change and reduce disaster risks in Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

KEYWORDS: gender-mainstreaming; intersectionality; climate-change; disaster- risk-management; Caribbean-SIDS.

RESUMEN: Este documento comparte experiencias personales y profesionales sobre la incorporación de la perspectiva de género en el cambio climático y la gestión del riesgo de desastres en el Caribe. Se basa en una presentación magistral invitada en el Seminario Internacional organizado por el proyecto Resiliencia e Interseccionalidad con Resiliencia de Género en Políticas y Prácticas (GRRIPP) de América Latina y el Caribe y FLACSO Cuba y se llevó a cabo en Varadero, Cuba del 27 al 29 de julio de 2023. El artículo utiliza una metodología autoetnográfica de autorreflexión a partir de recuerdos personales, experiencias laborales de una carrera de 25 años en docencia, investigación y publicaciones para promover la transversalización de género en el cambio climático y la gestión del riesgo de desastres, y fuentes secundarias. Estas recomendaciones brindan información sobre los factores que dieron forma a mis apasionados intereses en las intersecciones entre género, cambio climático y gestión del riesgo de desastres. Las recomendaciones buscan fortalecer las asociaciones caribeñas para mitigar el cambio climático y reducir los riesgos de desastres en los Pequeños Estados Insulares en Desarrollo (PEID).

PALABRAS CLAVE: incorporación de la perspectiva de género; interseccionalidad; cambio climático; gestión del riesgo de desastres; Caribe-PEID.

Caribbean countries are Small Island Developing States (SIDS) that are very vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The sixth annual report of the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) notes that the emission of trapped greenhouse gases caused by human activity has increased global temperatures by almost 2 degrees Fahrenheit (1.1 degree Celsius) between 1850-1900 (IPCC, 2021). The report also notes that the risk of global temperatures rising or exceeding 1.5 degrees Celsius would be disastrous for countries around the world. Among the major impacts on Caribbean SIDS are disasters related to rising sea levels which pose an existential threat to the region's many small island states, with many capitals located in low-lying coastal areas and high economic dependency on tourism.

Other climate related risks relate to extremes of weather. There is ample evidence reflected in more frequent tropical storms and extreme Category 4 and 5 hurricanes in recent years. These pose a threat to lives, livelihoods and economies of the region. Increased heat waves with temperatures rising to the high 90s and prolonged and extreme droughts are also evidence of climate change. Floods and droughts threaten food security. Water resources are also increasingly scarce.

Disasters

The Sendai Framework (2017) of the United Nations Office of Disaster Risk Reduction Centre (UNDRR, 2017) defines a disaster as:

A serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society at any scale due to hazardous events interacting with conditions of exposure, vulnerability and capacity, leading to one

or more of the following: human, material, economic and environmental losses and impacts.

Most Caribbean countries have inadequate capacity to prepare for, to cope with and to recover from natural hazards, thus increasing their vulnerability to disasters. Caribbean SIDS are also still impacted by the legacy of enslavement and trafficking of millions of African men, women, and children between the 16th to the 19th century. The legacy of social and economic inequality from European colonialism are still being felt today. Climate change further exacerbates the socio-economic challenges that undermine national development in countries like Jamaica face.

Intersectionality, is a concept originally created by Black American feminist scholar and law Professor Kimberle Crenshaw, to explain how different forms of inequality can overlap and work together to exacerbate power inequalities (Crenshaw, 1991). Intersectionality remains relevant to the analysis of Caribbean feminist scholars today who examine how inequalities based on differences of gender, race, class, shade, religion, rural-urban differences, and nationalities can influence the culture of patriarchy or male rule as the norm. Gender, a social construct that determines ascribed social economic and political roles for women and men, also influences differences in people's vulnerabilities to climate change and disasters. Gender is a cross-cutting issue that can be used to understand the differential impact of development policies and programmes on males and females of different ages, abilities, and other background factors.

Gender and global commitments to equality and sustainable development

Integrating gender perspectives in climate change and disaster risk management policies and programmes also supports human rights commitments to address gender inequalities and sustainable development. These include (but are not limited to) the UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979); the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (United Nations, 1989) as well as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) (United Nations, 2006). The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2015-2030 also include commitments to use gender as a cross cutting issue to achieve all 17 SDGs which are a global commitment to people, the planet, and partnerships for sustainable development. Specific SDGs relate to climate change. For example, SDG 11 which promotes safe cities and more sustainable urban spaces; SDG 12 which relates to sustainable consumption, production, and livelihoods; SDG 13 which speaks to integrating climate change in all policies, strategies, and planning; SDG 14 which speaks to sustainable use of ocean resources and marine life and coastal eco systems; and SDG 15 which addresses life on land (United Nations, 2015).

A major challenge for many countries, including those in the Caribbean, has been, how to build capacity to effectively integrate gender perspectives in all development policies, programmes, and strategies as well as these and other SDGs. The next section focuses on my journey to support gender mainstreaming as a process and strategy to promote gender equality and sustainable development.

Reflections on early experiences

My participation in the GRRIPP/Flacso-Cuba International seminar was motivated by personal and professional reasons. As a Caribbean feminist scholar, the personal is political. My strong commitment to the people of Cuba is rooted in my family origins. I am the granddaughter of Jamaican migrants to Cuba in the 1920s to work in the agricultural sector. My mother and her siblings were born to Jamaican migrants in La Gloria, Camaguey province. Ramsay (2020) in her edited volume entitled: «The West Indian heritage and presence in Cuba» provides valuable insight into these migrants who were part of what Ramsey (2020) describes as the second wave of Jamaican migration to Cuba to work in the late 19th and early 20th century. Some worked on sugar plantations and in other agricultural sectors.

My mother frequently shared stories and memories of her childhood in Cuba living with her father who worked as a supervisor of a citrus plantation owned by a white American family. Her mother was a homemaker and dressmaker who cared for my mother, her older brother, and her younger sister. The Graham family relocated to Jamaica when my mother was approximately 10 years old (circa 1933). My maternal family's history in Cuba motivated me to learn Spanish and know Cuba's history and heritage which I also felt was my own. My late mother and I visited La Gloria in 1993, 60 years after she left. She was ecstatic! The 2023 international seminar was my first return to Cuba after 30 years.

Early family experiences taught me about the gender division on labour in the household, the economy as well as gender inequalities. On his return to Jamaica, my maternal grandfather became a farmer who raised cattle, sold fresh milk to the Nestle -owned Condensed milk factory in

Linstead St Catherine and sold fruit and other crops from his land to support his family. My grandmother had what Moser (1993) describes as triple gender roles. Her (unpaid) reproductive role was being the primary caregiver and homemaker for their three children and husband. Her productive (paid) work included sewing and selling beautiful clothing; baking and selling Easter buns, Christmas fruit cakes, donuts, plantain tarts and Jamaican meat patties. My grandmother also had a small urban farm where they lived and there, she planted coffee, cocoa, fruits, and other crops. An early childhood memory is the strong smell of black espresso Cuban-styled coffee that she parched and brewed each morning, that she and my grandfather enjoyed. My grandmother was also a community activist for her chosen political party and her church. She worked from home and contributed to the household's finances and her children's education.

My mother's life was like her mother's, but she worked outside the home. She qualified as a trained Early Childhood teacher at the Mico Teachers College in Kingston; taught in a government primary school in St Catherine and then opened her own preparatory school in the garage of our home when we migrated to Kingston while raising their four children. My dad, a government social worker and Anglican lay preacher, complemented by mother. He was not the traditional male in many ways. He did the family shopping for food, attended Parent Teachers Association (PTA) meetings at our schools and took us to the health clinic for our vaccinations.

Gender roles in Preparing for Climate Related Events

Lessons on preparing for tropical storms and extreme weather events were part of the lessons I learnt about these intergenerational gender roles, and flexibility in the gender division of labour in the household. Childhood memories include my Dad, «battering down» windows, securing property, trimming tree limbs and buying enough food, fuel and candles. My mum assigned us to collect and store water and to wrap and protect documents and books. She cooked cornmeal porridge and told stories to distract us while there were howling winds and intense rain outside. Both ensured we were warm, well-fed, safe, and dry during tropical storms that passed in October 5-7, 1963, and August 25, 1964, while we lived in Harbour View. This was a new sub-urban community near to the sea in Kingston and the Palisadoes Airport, later renamed the Norman Manley International Airport.

Harbour View houses were built of prefabricated materials with wind-resistant louvre windows which provided shelter from storms. The windows were reinforced with newspapers to keep out water when there was torrential rain. Lessons on how to prepare for tropical storms, hurricanes and floods became part of everyday life and created my keen interest in climate change and disaster management.

Professional work experiences Caribbean Conference of Churches

Not surprisingly my work experience after completing a first degree at the University of the West Indies involved working as a Project Officer with a regional ecumenical development agency, the Caribbean Conference of Churches (CCC). The CCC office based in Jamaica served the

Northern and Western Caribbean which provided opportunities to travel to Spanish-speaking countries such as Panama, Costa Rica, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, as well as Belize, Haiti, and the Bahamas. The CCC's development programmes included building capacity of member churches and communities in disaster preparedness, and response to hurricanes, floods, and other natural hazards. The CCC's Land and Food for People Programme, supported agricultural projects providing seeds, other inputs, technical advice, and small loans.

Association of Development Agencies (ADA)

My next job as Executive Director of the Association of Development Agencies (ADA) provided opportunities to share this disaster-related knowledge with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs) in Jamaica. ADA organised training workshops to learn about disaster preparation, management, and response, and partnered with specialists in the building trade to teach skills on how to reinforce roofs with hurricane straps.

Christian Aid

I was then recruited to work as a Project Analyst with Christian AID, the development arm of the British Council of Churches based in London. My portfolio as part of the Latin America and Caribbean team included Peru, Bolivia, and the Caribbean. Christian Aid's remit also included resource mobilisation to respond to natural hazards. During this period, Hurricane Gilbert hit Jamaica in 1988. As part of a visiting team, I saw first-hand, the devastation of the country's infrastructure, houses, hospitals, factories, and other buildings. The images were like scenes from

the movie, «The Day After».¹ The experience of Hurricane Gilbert provided other lessons about the importance of integrating gender in disaster risk management.

Hurricane Gilbert, 1988

The UWI's EKACDM programme² (Enhancing Knowledge and Application to integrate Gender in Comprehensive Disaster Management) provides a summary of the impact of Hurricane Gilbert a Category 5 hurricane that directly hit Jamaica on September 12, 1988. Winds ranged from 75-127 miles per hour and the eye of the hurricane passed over the entire island for 10-12 hours wreaking death and damage and destruction. The EKACDM report notes that some 45 people died and 80 % of the country's 500,000 houses lost their roofs. Of these, 100,000 could not be repaired contributing to homelessness. The Prime Minister at the time estimated the damage at J\$5,500 million (US\$1,000 million). The UNDRP's (1988) estimates of damage was US\$800 million. There was severe flooding, food shortages as crops were destroyed. The banana export sector and the tourism sector were devastated leading to loss of jobs, and foreign exchange revenue. The resulting chaos led to looting of food stores and businesses and led to the Kingston being placed under curfew under the Suppression of Crimes Act. Lack of electricity, telephone services and limited water supplies for several months created severe hardships for citizens. Women who still had jobs could be observed placing mattresses out to dry as they went to work, praying it would not rain before they returned home. Communities shared food with neighbours as there was no electricity for refrigeration.

Schools and other buildings were used as temporary shelters for thousands of persons for

extended periods. Some previously designated shelters were destroyed by the hurricane. Buildings were overcrowded and seemingly chaotic, as there was not yet sufficient awareness that gender had to be considered in planning life in temporary shelters to care for and protect the most vulnerable. Hurricane Gilbert provided many lessons on the importance of mainstreaming gender in disaster preparedness and management.

The gendered impact of Hurricane Gilbert was evident to me. The male-dominated agricultural sector suffered losses of 2.1 billion Jamaican dollars in damages with most men losing their jobs and livelihoods. Females working as household workers were without jobs as many of their employers were themselves homeless and jobless. Garment factories in Kingston's female-dominated Free Trade Zone export sector were also damaged leading to unemployment of hundreds of women. Many of the women and their children also had to seek shelter with family and friends who were themselves in overcrowded buildings.

Post-Gilbert Research on Free Zone Women Workers

Another learning experience on gender and disasters emerged in the post-Gilbert era. CUSO, a Canadian development agency recruited me to conduct a participatory action research study on the lives and working conditions of women workers in the Kingston Free Trade Zone (KFTZ) who were produced garments for export to the USA. This was a low-wage option for women who may have been former household workers or who had limited skills and employment opportunities. Housing was a major problem as many women working in the KFTZ had lost their homes because

of Hurricane Gilbert and were living with their children in very precarious conditions. Some were exposed to gender-based violence. CUSO in partnership with the St Peter Claver Roman Catholic church in a poor community of Kingston, led by a Canadian Roman Catholic priest, Father Jim Webb, developed a consortium project which raised funds from other Canadian NGOs to establish the St Peter Claver Women's Housing Cooperative. This was a positive outcome in the post-Gilbert period. Inner-city houses were purchased and renovated; a housing cooperative was formed; women were trained and became co-owners of the houses that they purchased jointly, as members of the cooperative. Women were empowered as the housing programme provided opportunities for the women to own their own house, to maintain their independence and to reduce the risk of Gender Based Violence (GBV). I later did further research to document their experiences as part of my PhD thesis in Sociology at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

The University of the West Indies: Institute for Gender and Development Studies (IGDS), Mona Unit (Jamaica)

The next significant period of my personal experience was building capacity to mainstream gender in climate change and disaster risk management through research, teaching and advocacy at the University of the West Indies Mona campus. Findings from eight research studies conducted for the UNDP in the region showed that there were varying levels of knowledge and capacity to mainstream gender in climate change and disaster risk management in government and civil society institutions. An undergraduate course was developed entitled

«Gender climate change and disaster risk management» to address knowledge gaps and build a cadre of graduates, who were equipped with these skills to support the various Caribbean countries.

In summary, the course taught concepts of gender, gender mainstreaming and gender analysis, and how to collect and analyse data disaggregated by sex and other intersecting factors. Learning about these concepts, and gender analytical skills and frameworks, were part of a new undergraduate degree programme, the BSc in Gender and Development, at the UWI Mona in 2009. Students were also taught research skills and were exposed to global and national commitments to gender equality, climate change and disaster risk management.

Promoting the mainstreaming of gender in climate change equipped students to understand the links between global human rights commitments and national gender policies. In the case of Jamaica, this was the National Policy for Gender Equality (2011). Intersectionality linkages were also noted by building awareness of how gender in combination with the rights of vulnerable groups such as children, older persons, and persons with disabilities and persons in rural and urban areas need to be considered uniquely. The courses were designed to build skills in research, how to conduct a gap analysis, in order to encourage coherence between commitments, policies, laws, programmes, and strategies. Over 200 UWI graduates have completed the BSc degree in Gender and Development between 2010-2023. These graduates work in various sectors and can support organisations and communities to mainstream gender in climate change and disaster risk management.

Caribbean vulnerabilities to climate change and natural hazards

Research studies have shown that Jamaica's vulnerabilities to climate change are the risk of coastal inundation, resulting from rising sea levels and extreme weather events. The resulting loss and damage is directly related to the livelihoods of men and women working in sectors in these areas.

Tourism for example is a major source of revenue and employment to Jamaica's economy. There is a gender division of labour in the sector. The hospitality and food sectors are female dominated. Transportation, tours and the maintenance of hotel grounds and buildings are male dominated. Hurricanes and extreme weather events impact the livelihoods of all workers in these sub-sectors.

Jamaica's two international airports lie along the country's coastlines, one at sea level and the other less than 2 metres above sea level. Smith (2017) highlights the critical economic importance and the vulnerability of the Norman Manley International Airport in Kingston on the South Coast, and the Donald Sangster International Airport in Montego Bay in Jamaica's North Coast. Both would be inundated from storm surges. Smith, 2017).³ CDEMA (2011) also highlights the possible effects of climate change in important economic sectors (see Table 3, page 83 of the CDEMA Guidance Tool on Mainstreaming Climate Change Adaptation into Comprehensive Disaster Management (CDM) Country Work Programmes).

Case Studies & Research on Gender Mainstreaming in Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management by the UWI's IGDS Mona Unit

2009: UNDP/Caribbean Risk Management Initiative Research.⁴

The IGDS Mona Unit was commissioned to conduct eight research studies in six Caribbean countries (UNDP Caribbean Risk Management Initiative (CRMI), 2009). Studies were conducted by a team of researchers and the scope included: Belize, Dominica, Guyana, Jamaica, Dominican Republic, and Suriname. These were needs assessment studies to identify knowledge gaps related to gender mainstreaming in climate change and disaster risk management. They also examined how gender impacted women's and men's access to water, housing, and agriculture. Findings from these studies guided the development of the course for the BSc in Gender and development previously mentioned.

Other consultancies and partnerships within and outside the UWI also increased knowledge and expertise. They also exposed students and staff to national, regional and global meetings such as the Committee of the Parties (COP); partnerships with the Government of Jamaica's Climate Change Division, the UWI's Disaster Risk Reduction Centre and Climate Change Specialists, the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) and funding from the Canadian government for a UWI project, entitled "Enhancing Knowledge and Application ity to integrate Gender in Comprehensive Disaster Management" (EKACDM). Partnerships with agencies also facilitated student internships and opportunities to apply knowledge and skills learnt. This also facilitated exposure to institutions

working on key issues as potential future employers.

Other IGDS Research projects with the Commonwealth Foundation promoted a series of conversations with Caribbean civil society organisations and production of the Training Manual to response to their needs for an advocacy guidance tool (Dunn & Carr-Tobias 2019).

Action research for USAID's ACDI-VOCA programme on Gender, Age and Climate Change Adaptation in 2013 provided opportunities to train their staff as well as small farmers in rural communities. The final report by Dunn, Waller and Northover (2013) was «Gender and Youth Assessment for Rural Development and Climate Change Adaptation». It reflected multidisciplinary perspectives of this UWI Mona team.

Publications also enabled students to publish their work. An IGDS Working Paper on Gender Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management was edited and published by the UWI's IGDS Mona Unit and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) office in Jamaica.⁵

Conference papers and book chapters were published to promote awareness and advocacy on gender climate change and disaster risk management. Among these were a chapter on the Caribbean in Filomena Chioma Steady's Environmental Justice in the New Millennium. This paper was entitled: «The Gendered Dimensions of Environmental Justice in the Caribbean» (Dunn 2009). Another paper was: «Integrating Men and Masculinities in Caribbean Disaster Risk Management» (Dunn, 2016), which highlighted the vulnerabilities of Caribbean men in disasters.

IGDS Research for the project «Enhancing Knowledge, and Application of Comprehensive Disaster Management» (EKACDM) Initiative. This, resulted in the development of a Generic

Training Manual⁶ and Strategy; a Training Manual and a Strategy for the Tourism sector⁷ as well as conference presentations.

IGDS Consultancy projects with the Barbados-based Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) included providing technical assistance to mainstream gender in CDEMA's Comprehensive Disaster Management Strategy & Programming Framework (2014-2024), policies, procedures, and strategies as well as training workshops for internal and external stakeholders to integrate gender in Disaster Needs Assessment (DANA).

Partnerships with organisations of Persons with Disabilities also facilitated increased awareness of the needs of men, women and children who are blind, visually impaired and deaf. Two partner agencies, PANOS Caribbean and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), developed publications in braille and organised early warning systems for the deaf and hearing impaired in a suburb of Portmore in the Kingston Metropolitan Area (KMA). Partnership with the UK-based Commonwealth Foundation resulted in the Commonwealth Gender and Climate Analysis Guidance Tool for Caribbean Civil Society Organisations. Highlights were shared at a Commonwealth Pavilion during the United Nations Climate Change Conference COP26, held in Glasgow from 31 October to 12 November 2021.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper has used an autoethnographic methodology to reflect and document personal experiences that have contributed to my ability to learn about the importance of gender analytical to promote research, teaching and capacity building

about mainstreaming gender in climate change and disaster risk management.

While subjective, I have reflected and documented early childhood memories, later adult work experiences and have drawn on my own research work as part of this reflection. What has emerged points to important milestones that have contributed to my own knowledge and insights gained through interactions with a wide range of stakeholders that equipped me to share with others. These experiences have been invaluable to my career as a university lecturer and researcher in gender and development. I am thankful for former students who have been taken the «baton» and are continuing this long journey. The self-reflections in this paper underscore the importance of gender as a cross-cutting tool to identify intersecting vulnerabilities; to reveal sources of power and inequalities that need to be challenged to transform unequal gender norms and behaviours that are exacerbated by climate change and natural disasters.

There is need to continue the process of building capacity to mainstream gender in climate change and disaster risk management policies, programmes, and strategies, especially in Caribbean Small Island Developing States (SIDS). As this work continues to expand, I am convinced that there will be a positive multiplier effect. This will help to transform approaches to climate change adaptation, improve disaster preparation, emergency response, recovery, and reconstruction. This international conference has helped to advance knowledge sharing across language groups with the Caribbean region. Long may it continue!

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Notas

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Conflict of interests

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.