



One Planet – One Future

**EQUITY AND
RESILIENCE FOR
SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**
CARE AT RIO PLUS 20



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Foreword

Our one planet is in a precarious state. We have been at this state before – but today the picture is much more bleak. Our planet's trajectory towards sustainability is even further off track than 20 years ago, when the first UN Conference on Sustainable Development took place in Rio de Janeiro. We knew the challenges and the solutions then, and we know them today. So what is holding us back? It is not science or resources that are lacking. It is a profound failure in our political and economic systems to stop social injustice, stamp out poverty and address environmental degradation. It is a lack of political will and ambition to improve the lives of millions of poor women and men and children.

Our current model of blunt economic growth delivers prosperity primarily for the global minority – people living in developed nations. While it has lifted some of the world's most vulnerable people out of poverty, it is failing the millions who still survive in grinding poverty. Economic growth is predicated on the exploitation of natural resources and increasingly comes at a devastating cost to our natural world. Global disparities in power and access to resources, coupled with the excessive consumption of our industrialised economies, are exacerbating social and economic inequality and driving environmental degradation, both locally through resource extraction and globally through the effects of climate change and other drivers. Such a development pathway – fuelled by environmental degradation and perpetuating social injustice – is truly unsustainable.

The extent of environmental degradation is now threatening to reverse our development gains and is limiting development choices for both current and future generations. Climate change, high rates of biodiversity loss and the degradation of ecosystems are undermining the health of the planet and the natural capital that we all depend upon. This natural capital is essential to our societies and economies but especially to the world's poorest people, who still face severe challenges in surviving and meeting their daily basic needs. Clearly, we need a radical change, a transition towards equitable and resilient sustainable development. Such a transition must be rights based and prioritise the needs of the world's poor, while ensuring the sustainability of our natural environment.

The problems and solutions for delivering sustainable development are many. This report contributes to finding solutions by highlighting the condition of our planet and the choices that must be made at Rio+20 in order to transition towards truly sustainable development. Such a transition must focus on equity and building resilience while giving priority to tackling climate change, feeding a growing population and eliminating gender inequality. Delivering sustainability cannot come at the expense of the poor. For development to be truly sustainable we can no longer tolerate the injustices of poverty.

Global leaders coming to Rio+20 in June 2012 have the opportunity to signal the grave reality of the problems facing our one planet, but they also have the chance to act and collaborate on the real opportunities that are available to transition our economies to new green and sustainable pathways. The science is increasingly clear: we need an urgent change but it requires the political ambition and urgency to act collaboratively. Without sufficient action, political leaders will fail not only current generations but also future generations, who will inherit an unsustainable planet.

Ultimately, achieving a large-scale shift of the size needed requires a radical transition, signalled by unprecedented global leadership. As such, we need to put pressure on our leaders to hold them accountable and to also support them to seize new opportunities, demonstrate where solutions have been successful and formulate new ambition and cooperation to transition to a more sustainable future. We have much to lose from political inaction – at stake is the very future of our one planet and the well-being of its environment and its people. In short, we have no time to lose – the transition must start now.



Kit Vaughan
Global Climate Change
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Executive summary

Twenty years after the first sustainable development conference in Rio de Janeiro, the planet and its inhabitants are under increasing pressure. By 2030, the world will need at least 50% more food, 45% more energy and 30% more water to meet the needs of the growing population – and its increasing consumption patterns. This comes at a time when we are increasingly confronting the planet's resource limitations and globally there are still 1.3 billion people living on less than \$1.25 a day.

The world's poorest people are increasingly bearing the consequences of unsustainable development. To truly deliver upon sustainable development, any new development path must focus on ensuring equity and building resilience within the global economy, within countries and within local communities. While there are numerous challenges ahead of us, CARE believes that addressing gender inequality, and specifically women's participation in sustainable development, how we feed our growing population and how we avoid the most severe climate damage are critical for building a more equitable and resilient global community.

There is growing recognition that achieving sustainability requires truly 'greening' our economies. We must be careful of proposed solutions that fail to recognise the danger in tweaking the current economic model rather than undertaking a profound transition towards truly sustainable development. The world's poorest people have the most to gain or lose from the ways in which a new green economy is structured. Therefore, any sustainable development solutions coming out of the Rio+20 conference must fully address equity and resilience, gender equality, food security and climate change.

Gender equality and women's empowerment

Gender inequality remains a critical barrier to sustainable development and social justice. The distribution of power between men and women creates huge inequalities that continue to limit the development choices of half of the world's people and particularly those in the poorest communities. Women bear the brunt of increasing resource scarcity while providing food, water and fuel for their families and communities. Each year in Africa alone, 40 billion hours of women's time are lost carrying water, and this is likely to increase with further impacts of climate change and diminishing natural resources. Furthermore, women's lack of access to productive resources and their exclusion from owning land in certain parts of the world continue to pose significant challenges for them and for development overall.

Food security

Global food security is an issue that clearly demonstrates human reliance on natural resources and the human consequences of environmental damage. Globally, one in seven people are hungry. To feed a global population of over nine billion people in 2050, a 70% increase in food production will be required. Smallholder farmers, the majority of whom are women, provide up to 80% of the food locally consumed in some parts of the world, yet they make up a large portion of the world's hungry. In recent years, price volatility has made both smallholder farmers and poor consumers increasingly vulnerable to hunger and poverty: 130–155 million people in developing countries fell into extreme poverty between 2007 and 2008 due to increased food and fuel prices. In addition, current agricultural practices are depleting natural resources such as the water and soil needed to sustain us in the future. Agricultural practices are also significantly contributing to climate change, the impacts of which will severely limit agricultural production in the future.

WHILE CLIMATE CHANGE IS LARGELY DUE TO POLLUTION GENERATED BY WEALTHY COUNTRIES IN THE PROCESS OF INDUSTRIALISATION, DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WILL BEAR 75–80% OF THE COSTS OF CLIMATE-CHANGE DAMAGE

Climate change

No issue demonstrates the inherent inequities of the current economic system more starkly than climate change. While climate change is largely due to pollution generated by wealthy countries in the process of industrialisation, developing countries will bear 75–80% of the costs of climate-change damage. An additional three million of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people could die from malnutrition each year as a result of the increasing negative effects of climate on agriculture. Within poor countries, climate change will exacerbate existing inequities such as gender and income inequality. For instance, women and children are 14 times more likely than men to suffer direct impacts from natural disasters such as the loss of life. Despite the potential scale and severity of the impacts of climate change, current efforts are not nearly sufficient to avoid climate damage and dangerous levels of global warming.

Building resilience and fostering equity: the great transition

We are already on a pathway of severe environmental degradation, causing more shocks and stresses to our societies and economies now and for the future. The present trajectory of inequality and resource-degrading development is undermining the planet's capacity to support and care for our global population. As such, an urgent transition towards equity and resilience is required to achieve sustainable development on our one planet. Making these shifts requires global leadership, renewed commitment and dedicated action. Much of the success will depend upon key enabling factors, such as ensuring: that economic growth is inclusive and does not undermine the natural resource base; that good governance and appropriate institutions are in place; and that future development is based upon building resilient, equitable and sustainable communities.

Over 20 years ago, and ahead of the original Rio conference, the Brundtland Commission report highlighted the key links between the environment and poverty. Despite the challenges ahead, the Chair, Gro Harlem Brundtland concluded that "...never before in human history have we had greater possibilities... We need not only a new vision but political commitment and a broad mobilisation of human ingenuity." Twenty years after the first Rio conference, her words are even more relevant than ever. However, we cannot wait again another 20 years to revisit the wise voices from our past – by then it could be too late.

CARE believes that some of the first steps forward must be for global leaders to:

- **Step up their political commitment, ambition and urgency to deliver sustainable development**, while acknowledging and building upon the lessons learned from recent scientific evidence and the lack of progress against goals set out 20 years ago at Rio 1992. This commitment must prioritise early preventive action to halt escalating future costs and damages; it must also prioritise the rights of the poorest and most vulnerable people.
- **Ensure that sustainable development and a green economy focus on building equitable and resilient communities**. This should be rooted in a rights-based approach that empowers the world's poorest and most vulnerable through equal participation, universal access to basic goods and services such as food, education and housing, and decent work for current and future generations.
- **Address gender inequality and enable women to be drivers of sustainable development** by removing barriers to their full participation in key institutions and processes. Prioritise policies that advance women's rights, particularly those of the poorest and most vulnerable, that promote their participation in decision making at all levels, and that ensure their equal access to education, training and productive resources.
- **Pursue urgent and ambitious climate mitigation for developed countries, with increased support for low-carbon and climate-resilient development, climate adaptation and building resilience for the poorest and most vulnerable people and countries**. There must be global recognition that current climate mitigation commitments are insufficient to avoid climate damage and the dangers of exceeding 2°C warming. This acknowledgment of the scale of the problem should form the basis of urgent collaborative action.
- **Prioritise increased sustainable agricultural productivity for smallholder and women farmers**, by promoting rights-based approaches and agro-ecological practices that build resilience for adapting to a range of shocks such as market volatility and climate change.

The pathway to sustainable development

Today our planet is home to more than seven billion people and will be home to two billion more by 2050.¹ At the same time, economic and social inequality and environmental degradation are increasingly contributing to complex global crises. Growing global consumption and unsustainable practices are depleting our resources at an unprecedented pace, with the world's species, water supplies, soils and forests in serious decline and the climate rapidly warming. And yet the poorest 10% of the world's people consumed just 0.5% of the planet's resources and goods in 2008 while the wealthiest 10% accounted for 59%.²

These mounting challenges and the fact that the world's poorest people are increasingly bearing the consequences of unsustainable consumption, underline the urgent need for equitable global solutions. Such solutions must build resilience to the world's emerging crises and enshrine equity by addressing key challenges such as the persistent marginalisation of women, feeding our growing population and facing up to climate change.

The upcoming gathering of heads of state at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD or Rio+20) on 20–22 June in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, is an important opportunity to renew commitments to tackling the complex challenges of environmental sustainability and economic and social development. Building towards Rio+20, the solutions to many of these interconnected global challenges have been framed by governments within the notion of a new green economy.

While the concept of a green economy has not been well defined, it is broadly agreed that if crafted properly, it could revolutionise the way we approach environmental management and socio-economic development. Furthermore, it could transform the way we fuel our economies, feed our global community, and value the people and environment around us.

However, there is a danger in the temptation to tweak the current economic model rather than undertake an agenda of profound transition towards economic and social development that is truly sustainable. Because the world's poorest people have the most to gain or lose from the ways in which a green economy is structured, CARE believes that Rio+20 must deliver a new sustainable development path, with equity and resilience as its central pillars.

As explained by the UN High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability, "...sustainable development is fundamentally a question of people's opportunities to influence their future, claim their rights and voice their concerns."³ Unequal rights, opportunities and access to resources remain a serious obstacle to the economic and social well-being of many of the world's poorest people, among whom women are disproportionately represented. Without due attention to equity in the architecture of a green economy, there is a risk that the poorest people will continue to be excluded and unable to access the benefits and opportunities that a new green economy offers.

Efforts towards sustainable development are increasingly challenged by a range of economic and environmental shocks and stresses, notably the impacts of climate change. Consequently, any new development path must take these threats into account, and focus on building resilience within the global economy, countries and local communities.

Building resilience is a critical concern for the world's most vulnerable people, who tend to be most exposed to shocks and stresses such as natural disasters and price volatility, and they have the least capacity to manage risks. Discussions about sustainable development and a green economy must, therefore, explicitly address equity and resilience as fundamental to sustainable development. To do this, negotiations at Rio+20 must tackle complex and interrelated challenges of social inequalities – including gender inequality, achieving food security and tackling climate change. This paper analyses these challenges, and provides recommendations for addressing them within a broader sustainable development framework, focusing on key enablers that place equity and resilience at the forefront.



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Rio 1992: An ambitious agenda for sustainable development

The notion of sustainable development emerged in 1987 with the work of the Brundtland Commission,⁴ which highlighted the inextricable linking of environmental sustainability, human development and economic factors.

Building on this work, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) set forth an ambitious agenda, culminating in 1992 with the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, a comprehensive blueprint for action on environmental, social and economic development to be taken by governments, UN agencies and civil society at all levels. The Commission on Sustainable Development was also created to monitor and report on the effectiveness of the implementation of Agenda 21.

Rio also resulted in the adoption of three international conventions tasked with addressing some of the world's growing environmental and development challenges. This included the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), in recognition of the growing threat from global warming, as well as the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. The Convention on Biological Diversity was also created to address the alarming rate of biodiversity loss.

UNCED also shaped other UN conferences to integrate environmental concerns, opening the door to positions on the right to a healthy environment and the right to development. In addition, UNCED informed initiatives such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which set targets for tackling the most urgent development needs, bringing together social, economic and environmental concerns.

The Rio conventions and the MDGs opened up the discussions around poverty reduction and social justice and the critical links to environmental sustainability. They also presented a real opportunity to tackle these issues, as they led to new institutions, mechanisms and resources to support development activities with a stronger focus on livelihood security, sustainable management of natural resources, and disaster risk reduction. These efforts have made a demonstrable difference in the lives of many of the world's poorest people. However, there is still a long way to go. This has been highlighted this year by the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability: "Progress has been made, but it has been neither fast nor deep enough, and the need for further-reaching action is growing ever more urgent."⁵

¹ UNDESA. 2004. *World Population Until 2300*. New York. United Nations.

² World Bank. *Development Indicators 2008*.

³ United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability. 2012. *Resilient people, resilient planet: A future worth choosing, Overview*. New York.

⁴ *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development: Our Common Future (W42/427, annex)*.

⁵ United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability. 2012. *Resilient people, resilient planet: A future worth choosing, Overview*. New York.

Rio+20: Little progress, growing challenges

Twenty years after the first Rio conference, the planet and its inhabitants are under increasing pressure. By 2030, the world will need at least 50% more food, 45% more energy and 30% more water to meet the needs of the planet's growing population and its increasing consumption. This comes at a time when we are increasingly confronting the planet's limitations,⁶ and globally there are still 1.3 billion people living on less than \$1.25 a day,⁷ 925 million people undernourished⁸ and 884 million without access to clean drinking water.⁹

There is growing recognition that tackling these and other interlinked challenges and achieving sustainability requires 'greening' our economies. The concept of a green economy, while poorly defined, is now increasingly central to the debates about how we shift our economies, tackle change at the scale needed and ensure fundamental human rights for the world's poorest people. Issues such as resilience, equity (and more specifically gender equality), food security and climate change are key issues for sustainable development and, therefore, for a green economy. However, they have most importance for the poor, given the demographics of poverty and the challenges that poor people face in meeting their everyday basic needs.

The current dominant economic growth models remain wedded to undervaluing and undermining the environment, leading to environmental degradation including greenhouse gas emissions.¹⁰ The world is experiencing the fastest-ever loss of species, with estimates of ten million species possibly expected to disappear this century.¹¹ Over 250 million people are directly affected by desertification and land degradation, with some one billion people in over 100 countries at risk. These people include many of the world's poorest, most marginalised, and politically weak citizens. Hence combating desertification is an urgent priority in global efforts to ensure food security and the livelihoods of millions of people who inhabit the drylands of the world.¹² If current trends in water use persist, two-thirds of the world's population could be living in countries experiencing moderate or severe water scarcity by 2025.¹³ In addition, 1.3 billion people whose livelihoods rely on agriculture, fishing and natural resources face the most severe threats of environmental degradation, climate change and related rises in food prices.¹⁴

No issue demonstrates the inherent inequities of the current economic system more clearly than climate change. Climate change is largely caused by past carbon emissions from industrialised nations, while those least responsible – poor people in developing countries – now face the greatest impacts. Estimates predict that an additional three million of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people could die from malnutrition each year as a result of the worsening impacts of climate change on agriculture.¹⁵ This figure does not account for deaths or damage as a direct result of increasing natural disasters or from indirect impacts such as food price hikes and declining ecosystem productivity.

Gender inequality still remains a critical barrier to sustainable development and social justice and the need for women's empowerment is critical. While gender inequality places expectations and specific pressures on both women and men in the face of increasing environmental pressure and economic shocks, nowhere in the world have women achieved equal status to men,¹⁶ which places unique burdens on them. Women, who provide most of the labour that sustains households globally, bear the brunt of increasing time scarcity while providing food, water and fuel for their families and communities. Each year in Africa alone, 40 billion hours of women's time are lost carrying water,¹⁷ and this is likely to increase with pressures from climate change and environmental degradation. Women also help their families and communities cope with economic, social and environmental shocks by providing additional labour for gathering resources to meet basic needs and by caring for those who are ill.¹⁸ Women face barriers to participation in decision making at all levels, thus being denied meaningful input into key social, economic and environmental decisions that affect their lives.

Global food security is perhaps the issue that most hits home in terms of immediate and future human survival on the planet. One in seven people are hungry worldwide.¹⁹ This is a larger threat to health than AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis combined. The geographical distribution of the 925 million people who are chronically hungry²⁰ points to global inequities such as the concentration of poverty in certain regions of the world, gender inequality and the urban-rural divide. Smallholder farmers,²¹ the majority of whom are women, produce up to 80% of the food locally consumed in some parts of the world²² yet they receive only small amounts of development aid and have limited access to credit, inputs and training services. With such limited support, many smallholder farmers, who are among the world's most vulnerable, increasingly struggle to feed their families and are exposed to the impacts of climate change, market fluctuations and other shocks and risks. Furthermore, conventional agro-industrial practices are undermining the natural resources needed for feeding the world's increasing population by depleting and contaminating water, eroding soil and contributing to climate change.

The Rio+20 conference comes at a time when the world must make a choice between our current path or a sustainable one that will safeguard our planet and improve the lives of the world's poorest people. For CARE, the choice is clear: we must take radical action now to secure the future of the planet and to right the injustices that exist around the world, which keep millions of people in poverty while others consume far beyond their fair share of the earth's limited resources.

¹³ World Resources Institute website. *Water: critical shortages ahead?* Accessed on 30 May 2012.

See <http://www.wri.org/publication/content/8261>

¹⁴ UNDP. 2011. *Human Development Report 2011*.

¹⁵ World Bank. 2010. *World Development Report 2010. Development and Climate Change*. Washington DC.

¹⁶ World Bank. 2012. *World Development Report 2012. Gender equality and development*. Washington DC

¹⁷ UNICEF. 1999. *Towards Better Programming: A water handbook*. New York.

¹⁸ UN Women. 2012. *Commission on the Status of Women Backgrounder*. See www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw56/documents/en-csw-backgrounder.pdf

¹⁹ World Food Programme Hunger Statistics. Accessed on 26 March 2012. See <http://www.wfp.org/hunger>

²⁰ FAO. 2010. *Global hunger declining, but still unacceptably high*. Rome.

²¹ By smallholder we mean people who work small plots of land regardless of their land tenure status.

²² IFAD. 2011. Fuel an 'evergreen revolution' by rapid scale up of policy support and investments in sustainable smallholder agriculture. *Media Advisory*. 1 June 2011



The big sustainable development challenges

There are three fundamental challenges that must form the basis of any agenda to achieve sustainable development based upon a foundation of equity and resilience: gender inequality, food insecurity and climate change. While these are not the only challenges to be overcome, CARE's experience has shown that these are key barriers to reducing poverty and achieving social justice in the context of long-term sustainable development.

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Addressing gender inequality and women's empowerment

It has been agreed time and again by global leaders, the United Nations and numerous others that gender equality and women's empowerment are fundamental to tackling the multidimensional challenges at the heart of sustainable development. For instance, in countries where women lack land ownership rights or access to credit, there are approximately 60% and 85% more malnourished children, respectively, than in countries where these rights and access are granted to both men and women.²³ And yet many of the age-old challenges faced by women remain unchanged or with little visible progress despite commitments made in the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21 and the MDGs.

Limitations on women's decision-making powers and fundamental rights to participate in all spheres of life continue to constrain gender equality and women's empowerment while undermining the progress of sustainable development. Women make up at least half the global population but only approximately 20% of parliamentary seats.²⁴ At the same time, a study of 131 countries showed that those with greater numbers of women in parliament tended to sign more international environmental treaties.²⁵ Furthermore, women occupy only 16% of ministerial posts; 35% of these posts are in social affairs and welfare, compared to 19% in finance and trade, 7% in environment, natural resources and energy, and only 3% in science and technology.²⁶ This means that women are particularly under-represented in institutions and sectors addressing climate change and other sustainable development challenges as well as financial decisions impacting upon them.

Women still face significant social and structural barriers in local decision making more broadly and specifically in relation to key sustainable development sectors like agriculture, natural resource management and climate change. Poor women in particular have to overcome significant social barriers to participate in community decision-making bodies and consultations related to sustainable development issues such as water management,²⁷ climate change and agriculture.²⁸ Where women have not been involved in decision making, they are more negatively affected by the decisions made, such as forest enclosures, than in communities where there is greater participation by women.²⁹

Persisting inequalities in education also hinder women's contributions to sustainable development through the improved nutritional, agricultural and health outcomes of educated decision making. Being poor, female, and living in a country affected by conflict are the three most decisive factors in keeping a child out of school. Over the past decade, the proportion of girls out of school decreased from 58% to 53% of the total population of children. However, inequalities still persist, with 85 and 83 girls for every 100 boys enrolled in primary education in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia respectively.³⁰

A lack of access to modern services, such as improved water or energy services, contributes to girls' absences from school. On average, rural women and girls spend between one and four hours a day gathering fuel and carrying water needed for family meals.³¹ Therefore, additional pressures on natural resources required for household livelihoods, as well as natural disasters, also undermine children's education.

Women and girls also continue to receive less training in the sciences and other fields necessary to facilitate their participation in sustainable development planning and decision making. The UN Secretary-General has highlighted that gender expectations and stereotypes continue to strongly discourage women from entering or advancing in the sciences.³² Greater access to such training would enable women to participate in policy, programmes and decision making for creating sustainable development and communities that are resilient to environmental, economic and social changes and shocks.³³

²³ United Nations. 2011. *The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges*. A report of the Secretary-General to the fifty sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women. 27 February–9 March 2012. (E/CN.6/2012/3).

²⁴ Inter-Parliamentary Union. Accessed on 15 March 2012. See <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>

²⁵ K Norgaard and R York, 2005. Gender equality and state environmentalism. *Gender and Society*. 19: 506–522–22.

²⁶ UNIFEM. 2010. *Gender Justice: Key to Achieving the Millennium Development Goals*. New York.

²⁷ United Nations. 2004. *A Gender Perspective on Water Resources and Sanitation*. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Interagency Task Force on Gender and Water report to Commission on Sustainable Development. Twelfth Session 14–30 April 2004 (DESA/DSD/2005/2)

²⁸ United Nations. 2010. *Review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective towards the full realization of the Millennium Development Goals*. Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2010/2)

²⁹ Bina Agarwal 2009. Gender and forest conservation: the impact of women's participation in community forest governance. *Ecological Economics* 68 (11): 2785–99.

³⁰ United Nations and We Can End Poverty 2015. 2011. *Millennium Development Goals Report*. New York.

³¹ FAO. *Women, Agriculture and Food Security*. Accessed on 25 May 2012.

See <http://www.fao.org/worldfoodsummit/english/fsheets/women.pdf>

³² United Nations. 2011. *Access and participation of women and girls in education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work*. Report of the Secretary-General for the Fifty-fifth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, 22 February–4 March 2011 (E/CN.6/2011/3).

³³ Ibid

A lack of education undermines the choices women have in life as well as their productivity. For example, in areas of Kenya where women have limited amounts of education, a year of primary education provided to all women farmers would boost maize yields by 24%.³⁴

Access to productive resources such as land, as well as an ability to access employment opportunities, remain among the most persistent challenges facing poor women worldwide. Inequalities based on social status, gender, age, ethnicity and class are at the root of these challenges and have significant implications for the health of communities, nations and the global economy.

Stark disparities in women's land ownership are apparent around the world, ranging from 5% in North Africa and West Asia to 25% in Ecuador and Chile.³⁵ Furthermore, the land women do own is often of poorer quality and the land tenure is frequently insecure. Women own fewer animals needed for farming and frequently do not control the income they themselves generate. Women farmers have significantly less access to modern inputs such as improved seeds, fertilisers, pest control measures and mechanical tools. They also use less credit and often do not control the credit they obtain.³⁶ In most countries, female smallholders' access to credit is 5–10% lower than male smallholders.³⁷ Furthermore, female farmers receive only approximately 5% of agricultural extension services worldwide, leaving most of their needs unmet.³⁸ This hinders their contribution to food security and resilience in agricultural productivity, issues that are on the table at Rio+20 and beyond.

Creating resilient communities and a green economy will require building upon and maximising all the human capital available, and particularly supporting the role of women as key agents of change. It will also require a better understanding of current natural resource use and distribution as well as access to new opportunities across a range of sectors.

More equitable institutions, communities and households are needed to enable women, men, boys and girls of different social groups to support each other in working towards sustainable development as key agents of change. Furthermore, the recognition of diversity in needs, skills and priorities of women, men, boys and girls of different social groups is central to identifying existing sustainable development challenges, proposing and negotiating solutions and carrying out the necessary changes to create equitable, resilient communities and a new green economy.

Twenty years ago at Rio, world leaders made pledges to bring more women to the table and address women's empowerment, but not enough has been done to reach the lofty goals set out. Given the magnitude of the challenges we face, Rio+20 must revisit those goals and ensure that gender equality issues are included throughout the talks and seen as central to progress.

OF 131 COUNTRIES, THOSE WITH GREATER NUMBERS OF WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT SIGNED MORE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL TREATIES. YET WOMEN STILL FACE BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT DECISION MAKING AT ALL LEVELS

³⁴ IFPRI. 2000. *Women: The key to food security: Looking into the household*. Available at www.ifpri.org/sites/default/files/pubs/pubs/ib/ib3.pdf

³⁵ FAO. 2011. *The state of food and agriculture 2010-2011. Women in agriculture: closing the gender gap for development*. Rome.

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ FAO. 2011. *The state of food and agriculture 2010-2011. Women in agriculture: closing the gender gap for development*



Photo: © CARE

Feeding a growing global population

No issue is more central to human survival, sustainable development and equity than agriculture and food security. Looking ahead, it is estimated that a 70% increase in food production will be required in order to feed a world population of over nine billion people in 2050.³⁹ Ensuring food security for all requires the provision of support for smallholder farmers, who feed a large portion of the global population and yet form the majority of the world's undernourished.⁴⁰ Social safety nets are also a crucial part of building resilience to environmental and economic shocks and ensuring access to sufficient food and nutrition for the most vulnerable. However, none of this will have a sufficient impact without a shift away from agricultural practices that undermine the natural resources we rely upon to feed the growing population in coming years.

According to World Food Programme figures, the number of undernourished people worldwide exceeds the combined populations of Canada, the EU and the USA.⁴¹ In developing countries, almost one in three children are acutely or chronically undernourished, with severe impacts on under-five mortality and long-term implications for children's health and learning abilities.⁴² Furthermore, the UN Hunger Task Force has highlighted that approximately 50% of those who are hungry live on small farms, 22% are the rural landless, 20% live in urban areas and 8% are highly dependent on natural resources – pastoralists, for example.⁴³ In addition, women make up just a little over half of the world's population, but account for 60% of the world's hungry people.⁴⁴

In the face of environmental and economic challenges, the most effective way to reduce rural poverty and contribute to food security is to increase the incomes of smallholder farmers, according to recent research.⁴⁵ In non-OECD countries there are approximately 450 million small farms that have less than two hectares of land.⁴⁶ Furthermore, smallholder farmers, most of whom are women, feed up to two billion people and account for some 60% of global agriculture.⁴⁷ In Asia and sub-Saharan Africa they provide up to 80% of the food consumed.⁴⁸

Smallholders face a number of challenges in accessing land, agricultural inputs, credit and markets. These challenges are particularly significant for women farmers,⁴⁹ most of whom are smallholders cultivating traditional food crops for subsistence and sale at local markets.⁵⁰

While investment in agriculture is on the rise following years of under-investment, smallholders and women still receive limited support. Aid focused on smallholder farmers is estimated to account for only 2.2% of total global development aid.⁵¹

Despite their important role in food security, and despite the barriers they face, women have not benefited equally from increasing investments in agriculture in recent years. Only 3% of the US\$7.5 billion of overseas development assistance in 2008/09 went to agriculture programmes with gender equality as a principle objective.⁵²

SMALLHOLDER FARMERS, MOST OF WHOM ARE WOMEN, FEED UP TO 2 BILLION PEOPLE AND ACCOUNT FOR 60% OF GLOBAL AGRICULTURE YET THEY RECEIVE ONLY 2.2% OF GLOBAL AID

Furthermore, while smallholders in general have less access to resources and services, women face additional challenges. This is part of a wider trend in which women farmers have significantly less access than men to productive resources such as land, seed, fertilisers and credit.⁵³

Female agricultural productivity lags behind that of men by 20–30% due to a lack of access to credit and inputs such as seeds and fertilisers. With proper inputs for women, global agricultural productivity could be increased by 14%, and by even more by adjusting for access to land.⁵⁴ Equal access to fertilisers, seeds and tools could improve agricultural output in developing countries enough to reduce the number of undernourished people in the world 12–17%.⁵⁵

Despite the challenges smallholder women farmers face in particular, their male counterparts also experience significant pressures in the face of increasing environmental and economic challenges and pressures to feed a growing population. For example, in India, male farmers in particular suffer from emotional stress and anxiety having to feed their families under conditions of increasing drought and economic pressures, leading to increases in suicides among them.⁵⁶

³⁹ IFAD. 2010. *Rural Poverty Report 2011*. Rome.

⁴⁰ FAO. 2010. *FAO at Work 2009-2010: Growing food for 9 billion*. Rome.

⁴¹ World Food Programme. Hunger statistics. Accessed on 10 May 2012. See <http://www.wfp.org/hunger/stats>

⁴² *A Roadmap for Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN)*. Available at: http://unscon.org/files/Activities/SUN/SUN_Road_Map_english.pdf

⁴³ Devereux et al. 2012. *Social Protection for Food Security: A zero draft consultation paper*. High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition.

⁴⁴ World Food Programme. Hunger statistics. Accessed on 10 May 2012. See <http://www.wfp.org/hunger/stats>

⁴⁵ Corporate Leadership Coalition for Smallholder Farmer Livelihoods. 2010. *Smallholder Farmer Development: International Donor Funding Trends*.

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ UNEP. 2011. *Support for sustainable smallholder agriculture needed to fuel an 'evergreen revolution'*. Press Release. 31 May 2011

⁴⁸ IFAD. 2011. Fuel an 'evergreen revolution' by rapid scale up of policy support and investments in sustainable smallholder agriculture. Media Advisory. 1 June 2011

⁴⁹ FAO. 2011. *The State of food and Agriculture 2010-2011*.

⁵⁰ The World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization, and International Fund for Agricultural Development. 2009. *Gender in Agriculture Sourcebook*. World Bank, Washington, DC.

⁵¹ Corporate Leadership Coalition for Smallholder Farmer Livelihoods. 2010. *Smallholder Farmer Development: International Donor Funding Trends*.

⁵² United Nations. 2012. *The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges*.

⁵³ FAO. 2011. *The state of food and agriculture 2010-2011*.

In recent years price volatility has made both smallholder farmers and poor consumers increasingly vulnerable to hunger and poverty. Because food represents a large share of farmer income and the budget of poor households, large price rises have very negative effects on incomes and access to food.⁵⁷ From 2007 to 2008, between 130 and 155 million people in developing countries fell into extreme poverty due to food and fuel price increases.⁵⁸ This trend is predicted to worsen with climate change and, coupled with factors like soil erosion and energy price hikes, could burden smallholders and poor households with a possible 30–50% price increase in food in the coming decades.⁵⁹

In the face of increasing price volatility and the environmental challenges ahead, the UN Special Rapporteur has highlighted the importance of social safety nets and government responses that place human rights and the right to food at their heart. Among tools being effectively used are direct distribution of food, universal food subsidies, cash transfers or food vouchers, and employment-based benefits. Safety nets such as these help protect vulnerable households against livelihood risks and maintain an adequate level of food consumption. They also help vulnerable families avoid adopting unsustainable coping strategies and depleting their assets.⁶⁰

Furthermore, given the importance of agriculture in sustaining life on the planet as well as the impact of agriculture on environmental, social and economic sustainability, the UN High-Level Task Force on Global Food Security has emphasised sustainable agriculture as a key element of a healthy green economy. This means ensuring that discussions of a green economy focus on improving the ways that resources are used and distributed while seeking to ensure equitable access to nutrition and food security.⁶¹

Many current agricultural practices are placing significant pressures on and degrading the natural resources required to sustain production in the future.⁶² For instance, agriculture accounts for 70% of global water use, placing pressure on scarce water resources.⁶³ Four times more fertilisers were used in 2000 than in 1960, contributing to water pollution and climate change.⁶⁴ Agriculture alone is estimated to be responsible for 17–32% of all greenhouse gas emissions. Intensive agriculture also places great financial and energy demands on smallholder farmers, making them more vulnerable to market fluctuations and volatility as well as to damage from climate change.⁶⁵

⁵⁴ Ibid

⁵⁵ United Nations. 2012. *The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges*.

⁵⁶ Sainath 2004, quoted in Y Lambrou and S Nelson 2010. *Farmers in a changing climate. Does gender matter? Food security in Andhra Pradesh, India*. Rome: FAO. p27.

⁵⁷ FAO. 2011. *The state of food insecurity in the world 2011*. Rome.

⁵⁸ World Bank. 2009. *Global Economic Prospects 2009: Commodities at a crossroads*. Washington DC.

⁵⁹ UNDP. 2011. *Human Development Report 2011*.

⁶⁰ FAO. *Social Safety Nets and the Food Security Crisis*. Accessed 23 May 2012.

See http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/user_upload/ISFP/Social_safety_nets.pdf

⁶¹ UN System High-Level Task Force on Global Food Security. 2012. *Food and Nutrition Security for All through Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems*. 14 March 2012.

BETWEEN 130–155 MILLION PEOPLE IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES FELL INTO EXTREME POVERTY FROM 2007–2008 DUE TO FOOD AND FUEL PRICE INCREASES

As a result, more ecological practices are needed to lessen the negative impacts of agriculture and improve the resilience and sustainability of food systems for future needs. This is of particular importance given that climate change alone could reduce developing countries' agricultural production by up to 16%,⁶⁶ which would have significant impacts on food security and nutrition.

Practices that reduce tilling, protect soil and reduce the need for irrigation have proven to have positive outcomes – including less need for agricultural inputs and greater resilience to climate change.⁶⁷ Research in 57 developing countries has shown that resource-conserving, low-input agricultural practices could improve productivity on 12.6 million farms, with potential for up to 79% average crop increase.⁶⁸ Finding sustainable ways of increasing production, such as these, are more important than ever.

While there have been some gains in reducing hunger globally, it remains a critical challenge – raising questions about sustainable production and the use and distribution of food. The Millennium Development Goal to halve the proportion of people suffering from hunger by 2015 is unlikely to be met.⁶⁹ Furthermore, with the increasing shocks faced by farmers in general, and poor smallholder producers in particular, tackling the root causes of food insecurity and ensuring sustainable production is one of the most fundamental issues to act upon at Rio+20 in order to ensure equity and resilience as we set out to feed a growing global population.

⁶² Ibid

⁶³ Upmanu Lall, Tanya Heikkila, Casey Brown and Tobias Siegfried. 2008. Water in the 21st century: defining the elements of global crises and potential solutions. *Journal of International Affairs* 61(2): 1-17.

⁶⁴ UNDESA. 2010. *Trends in Sustainable Development: Towards Sustainable Consumption and Production*. United Nations. New York. 2010.

⁶⁵ Bellarby et al. 2008. *Cool Farming: Climate Impacts of Agriculture and Mitigation Potential*. Greenpeace International. Amsterdam.

⁶⁶ FAO. 2005. *Impact of Climate Change, Pests and Diseases on Food Security and Poverty Reduction*. Special event background document for the 31st Session of the Committee on World Food Security. Rome. 23–26 May 2005.

⁶⁷ FAO. 2010. *FAO at Work 2009-2010*.

⁶⁸ United Nations. 2010. *Report submitted by the Special Rapporteur on the right to food*, Olivier De Schutter to the Sixteenth Session of the Human Rights Council. 20 December 2010. (A/HRC/16/49)

⁶⁹ http://www.careclimatechange.org/files/CARE_docs/CARE_Food_Security_Brief_2011.pdf

Tackling climate change

Climate change is one of the greatest environment and development challenges of our time. As such, the approaches we take to tackling climate change will become one of the most defining factors for the future of the world's poorest and most vulnerable people. The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has warned of the telltale signs of climate change, including already significant changes in rainfall and temperature extremes.^{70a}



Photo: © CARE Pintu Saha

Droughts are likely to occur more often in large portions of the globe; extreme rain events seen every 20 years are likely to occur every five to 15 years; the intensity of hurricanes will increase; and sea levels will rise.^{70b} These climate events will have devastating consequences for human lives and livelihoods, particularly in developing countries.

Despite the scope and severity of the impacts of climate change, current efforts to mitigate emissions are not nearly sufficient for keeping global warming below the 2°C threshold deemed safe for avoiding serious climate impacts. Emission levels forecast for 2020 would likely lead to a temperature increase of between 2.5–5°C by the end of the 21st century.⁷¹ It is highly unlikely that pledges to mitigate climate-causing activities made by countries in the UNFCCC agreement in Durban in 2011 will be enough to prevent warming above 2°C, unless significant emission reductions are made immediately.⁷²

The World Bank has estimated that by 2030 \$275 billion per year will be needed for adaptation and mitigation finance.⁷³ Further estimates indicate that the cost of mitigation action needed to bring us to 2°C warming would be roughly 5.5% of global GDP in 2050.⁷⁴ While this is significant, it is small when weighed against the fact that inaction could cost 14% of average world consumption per capita.⁷⁵ Furthermore, estimates show that for every dollar spent on disaster prevention, 7 dollars are saved in emergency aid.⁷⁶ The full recognition that early action to reduce

WOMEN AND CHILDREN ARE 14 TIMES MORE LIKELY THAN MEN TO SUFFER DIRECT IMPACTS OF NATURAL DISASTERS

emissions and ensure climate adaptation is more cost effective than inaction needs to be central to discussions. Regardless of these factors, many developed countries most responsible for causing climate change have yet to step up urgent and ambitious domestic action and financial support for tackling climate change mitigation and adaptation both at home and abroad.

^{70a} UNFPA and WEDO. 2009. *Climate Change Connections: Women at the forefront*. New York

^{70b} IPCC. 2012. *Summary for policymakers. In: Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation. A Special Report of Working Groups I and II of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, and New York.

⁷¹ United Nations Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Global Sustainability. 2012.

Resilient people, resilient planet.

⁷² OECD. 2012. *OECD Environmental Outlook to 2050: The Consequences of Inaction*.

⁷³ World Bank. 2010. *World Development Report 2010*.

⁷⁴ Ibid

⁷⁵ Ibid

⁷⁶ J N Abramovitz. 2001. *Unnatural disasters, Worldwatch Paper 158*. Worldwatch Institute. Washington DC.

While climate change is largely due to pollution generated by wealthy countries in the process of industrialisation, developing countries will bear 75–80% of costs of the damages.⁷⁷ This will undermine many of the development advances made in recent years. Least Developed Countries (LDCs) are some of the most vulnerable to climate change due to their limited ability to recover from climate stresses and their economic dependence on climate-sensitive sectors.⁷⁸ Within these countries, the world's poorest and most vulnerable communities are already being hit the hardest by climate change. In the future, rice, one of the most important food staples for poor people, may decline in yields by 10% for every 1°C rise in temperature. Countries in sub-Saharan Africa could experience catastrophic declines in agricultural production of 20–30% by 2080, with some countries experiencing up to 50%.⁷⁹

Many of the changes needed to put us on a sustainable path require significant investment in programmes and technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. However, there are concerns that for some developing countries doing so may hinder their own development.⁸⁰ Until now, economic growth has been closely tied to increasing emissions in most countries around the world, with only a few exceptions.⁸¹ This emphasises the need to move towards a green economy, finding ways to decouple economic growth from polluting industries and production in the future, while at the same time increasing human development and ensuring equity.

At the same time, even with urgent action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the global community is confronted with the reality that we are already locked in to increasing climate change impacts in the coming decades. The most vulnerable people in developing countries are already bearing the brunt of carbon-intensive development; they need resources and tools to adapt to changes and make plans for climate-resilient development in the years ahead. With this in mind, Rio+20 must hammer home the message that development gains will be reversed unless urgent efforts are made to avoid irreversible climate impacts. This must be at the heart of any sustainable development and green economy policies and planning, and should take into account gender equality and inclusion of the most vulnerable communities and people.

⁷⁷ World Bank. 2010. World Development Report.

⁷⁸ UNDP. *Fast Facts: Climate Change in Least Developed Countries*. Accessed 9 April 2012. See www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/results/fast_facts/fast_facts_climatechangeinleastdevelopedcountries.html

⁷⁹ Robert Bailey. 2011. *Growing a Better Future: Food justice in a resource constrained world*. Oxfam.

⁸⁰ Christian Aid. 2009. *Community Answers to Climate Chaos: Getting climate justice from the UNFCCC*.

⁸¹ UNDP. 2011. *Human Development Report 2011*.

CLIMATE CHANGE ALONE COULD
REDUCE DEVELOPING
COUNTRIES' AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION
BY UP TO 16%
WITH SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS FOR
FOOD SECURITY
AND NUTRITION

The path forward

In order for the Rio+20 outcomes to effectively address sustainable development challenges in a way that is equitable and builds resilience, particularly for the poorest and most vulnerable people, it must put in place the appropriate objectives, mechanisms and resources to enable action by actors at all levels. However, much of the success will depend upon key enabling factors such as ensuring that economic growth is inclusive, that good governance and appropriate institutions are in place, and that future development is based on building resilient and equitable communities.



Photo: © CARE Sarah Bones

Key enablers for equitable and resilient sustainable development

Ensuring economic growth is inclusive and sustainable

Given the magnitude of the challenges faced by people and the planet, there is growing recognition that we must overhaul our economic systems to create a green economy that restores and protects the resilience of the environment while using natural resources sustainably and equitably.⁸²

This can only be done with an understanding of the root causes of the challenges we face and a focus on the role, purpose and resilience of our economic system. A green economy has the potential to make significant changes to our world's sustainability if grounded in policy, institutional and governance reforms as well as specific investments that safeguard natural capital and enable poor women and men to contribute to and benefit from the transition to a truly green economy.

At the same time, an overemphasis on the potential economic benefits of a green economy threatens to undermine its potential to deliver equitable outcomes and tackle some of the greatest development challenges for the poorest and most vulnerable. For instance, much of the green economy discussion focuses on energy and clean technologies that are currently out of reach of the poor or that are targeted at industry specifically and therefore would not meet the everyday challenges of the most needy, such as household access to energy or solutions for addressing challenges to subsistence agriculture.

Furthermore, too narrow a focus in the design of a green economy could undermine the potential for employment opportunities for low-income economies and households, which provide a way out of poverty. Ensuring broadly shared benefits requires looking beyond the potential growth of jobs in profitable green technology industries, which would likely be concentrated in a highly educated, skilled and often male workforce. To effectively provide long-term solutions, green growth will have to address ways of putting a range of skills and knowledge to productive use. In particular, this means ensuring that the poor and disadvantaged groups such as women, who receive far less education and technical training but hold invaluable experience of their local environments, are supported to participate in growing green employment as well as contributing to and benefiting from a green economy.

⁸² Green Economy Coalition. 2011. *Green, fair and productive: How the 2012 Rio Conference can move the world towards a sustainable economy.*

Recommendations:

- Commit to a rights-based approach that ensures equal participation and universal access to health services, food, water and sanitation services, energy, shelter, education and decent work for both current and future generations. This includes reaffirming the importance of gender equality and women's rights.
- Ensure participation of multiple stakeholders, particularly women and unrepresented groups such as poor and vulnerable communities, in discussions about the reforms needed for a green and equitable economy.
- Incorporate and link plans for a green economy to commitments made elsewhere to tackle specific dimensions of sustainable development challenges such as poverty, climate change, biodiversity loss, and desertification in the MDGs, UNFCCC, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and UNCCD.

Gender equality and women's empowerment

- Ensure gender equality and women's equal access to and control over productive resources through equal ownership, inheritance rights and access to credit so that they are able to contribute to equitable and resilient communities to the fullest of their ability.
- Support policies and programmes that incentivise education and training for women and girls, which they need in order to participate in sustainable development and opportunities generated by a green economy. This includes providing solutions that lift burdens off women's and girls' time to allow for their education and employment.
- Undertake analysis for and dedicate resources to closing the gender gap in policies and programmes targeted at climate change and food security issues. This should support efforts to ensure that policies, programmes and projects for agriculture and food security prioritise women farmers' participation in decision making and acknowledge their unique vulnerabilities and challenges, in part linked to their need for equal rights to access land, productive resources and services.

Food security

- Ensure that discussions of a green economy draw out essential details of a green, resilient and equitable food economy. This requires tackling issues such as the unsustainable use of natural resources in current models and how the shift towards a new model of agriculture affects livelihoods, particularly those of women and smallholder farmers.
- Prioritise sustainable and climate-resilient food production through increased investment in agro-ecological approaches, local food production, improved access to markets and services, and reduced waste – giving special attention to women, smallholders, young people and indigenous farmers.

Climate change

- Ensure that Rio+20 discussions fully and explicitly recognise that urgent action on climate change must be part of a global action plan for sustainable development.
- Prioritise adaptation and resilience to climate change in green economy discussions as essential for the poorest and most vulnerable groups most affected.
- Pursue developed country mitigation strategies, by shifting to low-carbon development pathways globally. Developed countries must increase their ambition level to more than 40% emission reduction below 1990 levels by 2020 and over 80% by 2050. They must also provide finance, technology and capacity building to help developing countries invest in adaptation and disaster risk reduction and transition their development to low-carbon and climate-resilient pathways.

INCREASING PRESSURE ON NATURAL RESOURCES INCREASES THE BURDENS OF WOMEN'S WORK. 40 BILLION HOURS OF WOMEN'S TIME ARE ALREADY LOST EACH YEAR COLLECTING WATER IN AFRICA ALONE

Promoting good governance and appropriate institutions

Based on lessons learned from sustainable development implementation over the past 20 years, we know that good governance is central to any success and must be at the heart of the problems addressed at Rio+20. Good governance requires the strengthening of practices and institutions at all levels, as they are the foundation of inclusive decision-making processes and equitable resource distribution. The Rio+20 outcomes must deliver high-level political commitment to ensuring good governance and supporting rights-based approaches as key to delivering effective sustainable development.

Because of the complex nature of the challenges we face, we should not compartmentalise our efforts into environmental, social and economic divisions. We must instead reach across disciplines, departments and ministries. Furthermore, sustainable development planning must be integrated into existing and nationally owned development, environment and economic planning processes and mechanisms.

In light of this, there is widespread concern about the emergence of new processes to create a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs) at Rio+20 before previously set goals such as the MDGs have been met. Creation of SDGs must not in any way detract from MDG efforts and must be integrated into a global overarching agenda.

However, if addressed properly, the MDG review process, a post-2015 development agenda and the setting of SDGs can create synergies in work towards equitable and resilient communities by pooling expertise, information and resources. In addition, they can amplify the efforts and achievements of one another.

Alignment and good governance of initiatives such as these to tackle the heart of the sustainable development challenges must form the backbone of a significant reform agenda that guides policies, programmes and participation of key stakeholders to ensure effective and equitable outcomes.

The private sector can play an important role in delivering these changes. However, many of the players who are placing themselves at the heart of a green economy agenda have previously been the drivers of unsustainable production and consumption patterns. Therefore, there is a need for strong social safeguards, equal participation of civil society and affected communities, and an exploration of the extent to which profit is becoming the driver for achieving widespread change.

While governments and large businesses may be hesitant to give stronger rights to local people, evidence shows that there are numerous opportunities for profitable enterprise, job creation and sustainable natural resource management. In addition, local control of natural assets is the surest route to increasing investment in, and sustainable use of, many of our natural resources.⁸³

Lack of investment has been one of the largest barriers to implementing sustainable development and putting in place governing structures and institutions for driving greener economies. A shift to truly green economies will require investment globally. However, dedicated finance from developed countries is particularly needed, in order to create appropriate institutions and governance structures, enable the transfer of green technologies and techniques, provide good education and training, and develop green skills and jobs in countries where financial resources are most scarce. But this investment should not come at the cost of providing for basic needs, many of which are not currently being met. Therefore, finance such as Overseas Development Assistance should complement sustainable development efforts without diverting necessary development funds.

These fundamental issues are key to successful implementation of sustainable development and genuine shifts towards a green economy. Twenty years after the first Rio commitments were made; very few have been carried out. This makes tackling critical operational issues such as good governance and adequate finance essential for solutions to the urgent problems we face as well as making the outcomes of Rio+20 effective in putting us on the right path.

⁸³ Camilla Toulmin. 2012. *A three-point action plan for a fair, sustainable world*. The International Institute for Environment and Development.

Recommendations:

- Recognise that solutions to these crises must be based on principles of good governance and equity, including common but different responsibility for developed and developing countries based on their historic responsibilities and current capabilities.
- Create a set of universal sustainable development goals (SDGs) that address all three (economic, environmental, social) dimensions of sustainable development alongside the drivers of poverty and inequality. SDGs must be fully integrated into an overarching post-2015 development agenda and should prioritise cross-cutting issues such as gender equality and climate change as part of indicators for issues like agriculture, health and water.
- Ensure that plans for a green economy link to existing governance structures and resources in order to tackle specific dimensions of sustainable development challenges such as poverty, climate change, biodiversity loss, and desertification in the MDGs, UNFCCC, the CBD and UNCCD.

Gender equality and women's empowerment

- Remove all barriers that prevent women's full societal and economic participation to enable them to be equal drivers of sustainable development. Gender-responsive sustainable development institutions and policies should be promoted, such as quotas that advance women's participation and leadership at all levels.
- Undertake gender budgeting and ensure that resources are dedicated to policies and programmes that support women's ability to equally participate in sustainable development decision making, tackle sustainable development challenges they face, and contribute to solutions to the fullest of their capacity.

Food security

- Establish national structures for addressing food security and following up the implementation of the findings of key bodies such as the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD). Such structures should operate with the full participation of women, small-scale farmers, peasants, pastoralists, fishers and other small-scale food providers.
- Create mechanisms to regulate the root causes of price volatility, such as market speculation, and design safety nets to reduce food insecurity and the impacts of price volatility on long-term development. These mechanisms should be designed in advance of crisis and in consultation with the most vulnerable people, such as smallholder farmers, poor households and women farmers.
- Increase investment in initiatives and governance mechanisms that improve access by smallholder farmers, particularly women, to land, resources, information and extension services, with the aim of increasing productivity and food security and increasing the use of climate-resilient agro-ecological farming practices.

Climate change

- Commit new and additional long-term finance for developing countries to reduce their emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change, with a particular focus on addressing adaptation needs.
- Incorporate a special focus on prioritising the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable people and countries as recipients of support.
- Ensure that governments include a gender perspective in their climate change policies and programmes, and that they strengthen mechanisms and dedicate resources to ensure women's full and equal participation in climate change and environmental decision making at all levels.

**SOLUTIONS TO THESE CRISES
MUST BE BASED
ON PRINCIPLES OF
GOOD GOVERNANCE
AND EQUITY**

Managing risks and building resilience

The world has seen an increasing number of interconnected crises – including the financial crisis, the food crisis and increasing climate change crisis. Vulnerability to such shocks is rooted in poverty, gender inequality, a lack of fulfilment of basic human rights, and reliance upon increasingly degraded environments.

Without adequate response and proper resilience strategies, ongoing shocks have the potential to undermine the development gains of past decades.

Strategies for responding to shocks can affect how many people will live in poverty. They can also influence the extent and impact of natural disasters, health and community well-being, the sustainability of housing and food supplies, educational ambitions and the likelihood of meaningful work opportunities, among others.⁸⁴ Governments can build resilience to such shocks with policies that build long-term adaptive capacity and that promote diverse economic activities and climate-resilient growth.⁸⁵

However, thus far a significant amount of economic growth has not only been volatile and led to economic and social shocks but also been based on undermining natural resources and the environment we rely upon. This is reflected in the fact that countries that have grown the most and that have advanced the most quickly in improving human development are those where carbon emissions per capita have also grown the fastest, contributing to future crises.⁸⁶

Natural disasters, many of which are related to climate change, are on the rise and are some of the leading sources of economic shocks in addition to having lasting social and environmental impacts. The world's poorest are bearing the brunt of the impacts and yet are least able to deal with the consequences: 85% of people exposed are in developing countries.⁸⁷ Within those countries, groups that are already marginalised, such as the ultra-poor, women and children, are most affected and least resilient to these shocks.

Inequitable distribution of fatalities is one of the most immediate impacts of natural disasters. Over 95% of deaths from natural disasters occurred in developing countries from 1970 to 2008.⁸⁸ In addition, gender inequalities and socio-economic status account for the fact that disasters, on average, kill more women at an earlier age than men according to data from 141 countries between 1981 and 2002.⁸⁹ As a result, women in developing countries are significantly more at risk in the face of increasing extreme weather events from climate change and other disasters.

Many families are left in poverty following natural disasters due to loss of assets and property. Fluctuating incomes due to changes in rainfall and crop productivity may also put additional strain on poor families. In the face of increasing challenges such as these, families often send girls to work outside the home while boys are more likely to be kept in school.⁹⁰

**1.3 BILLION PEOPLE
WORKING IN AGRICULTURE, FISHING,
AND NATURAL RESOURCE RELIANT LIVELIHOODS FACE THE
MOST SEVERE THREATS
OF ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION, DROUGHT,
CLIMATE CHANGE**

Extreme weather events also compromise food security, nutrition and ultimately earning potential. These shocks can be compounded by economic pressures as well as political upheaval and conflict. For instance, a study found that children who were exposed to shocks from drought and war in Zimbabwe received .85 grades less of schooling, were 3.4cm shorter and earned 14% less over their lifetime.⁹¹

Finally, natural disasters undermine public infrastructure investments and human capital vital to countries' economic and social development. For instance, natural disasters have taken a significant toll on health systems in developing countries. In the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, 61% of health facilities in Aceh, Indonesia were damaged and 30% of midwives were killed or lost their practices, leading to a public health crisis in an area where midwives provide 80–90% of neonatal care.⁹²

Governments have become increasingly aware that economic, environmental and social shocks pose an increasing risk to the world's growing population and that our communities must be built to be resilient to the changes taking place around us. However, organisations such as the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction have emphasised how little progress has been made over the past two decades on implementation of commitments; this is reflected in the increasing vulnerability and exposure of communities and their assets to disaster risks. The recent financial crisis and the ongoing volatility in food prices are yet further reminders of how much further we have to go in building a resilient, equitable and sustainable future.

⁸⁴ UNDP. 2011. *Towards Human Resilience: Sustaining MDG Progress in an Age of Economic Uncertainty*.

⁸⁵ Camilla Toulmin. 2012. *A three-point action plan for a fair, sustainable world*. The International Institute for Environment and Development.

⁸⁶ UNDP. 2011. *Human Development Report 2011*.

⁸⁷ Inter-Parliamentary Union and ISDR. 2010. *Disaster Risk Reduction: An Instrument for Achieving the Millennium Development Goals*. Geneva.

⁸⁸ IPCC. 2012. *Summary for Policymakers*.

⁸⁹ The gendered nature of natural disasters: the impact of catastrophic events on the gender gap in life expectancy, 1981–2002. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 97 (3). pp 551–66.

⁹⁰ Plan International. 2011. *Weathering the Storm: Adolescent girls and climate change*.

⁹¹ UNDP. 2011. *Human Development Report 2011*.

⁹² Inter-Parliamentary Union and ISDR. 2010. *Disaster Risk Reduction: An Instrument for Achieving the Millennium Development Goals*. Geneva.

Recommendations:

- Use Rio+20 as an opportunity to acknowledge the lack of delivery on previous commitments agreed at Rio in 1992 and the continuing risks to economic and social stability and environmental integrity.
- Ensure climate change mitigation and adaptation goals and commitments are central in discussions about a green economy as well as how they can be integrated into national and international environmental, social and economic development goals and planning processes to build resilient communities.

Gender equality and women's empowerment

- Ensure that analysis of and response to economic shocks and natural disasters include a gender dimension. In addition, the participation of women and the most vulnerable must be ensured in disaster risk management planning to properly identify gender-specific risks and appropriate responses.

Food security

- Prioritise increased agricultural productivity, climate resilience and sustainability, particularly for smallholder farmers for example, by supporting and promoting conservation agriculture practices, restoration of degraded soils, and agricultural biodiversity.
- Ensure that increased agricultural productivity is based on approaches that build resilience of the poorest and ensure adequate nutrient-rich and diverse food that goes beyond the measure of calorie values.
- Enhance government capacity to implement social protection schemes and link emergency food assistance to longer-term food security responses and ensure communities' nutrition needs are met.

Climate change

- Refocus attention on the need for deep, urgent and legally binding emission reductions by developed nations, and also on the need for adequate and predictable funding to enable developing countries to undertake low-carbon development and implement adaptation options.
- Redesign existing approaches and scale up resources to address vulnerability and build resilience and adaptive capacity, particularly of the most vulnerable people, communities and ecosystems.
- Prepare for loss and damage from climate impacts and devise proposals for mechanisms that can address rehabilitation and compensation, given that there are limits to the extent to which people, communities and ecosystems can adapt.

FOR EVERY DOLLAR
SPENT ON
DISASTER PREVENTION,
7 DOLLARS
ARE SAVED IN
EMERGENCY AID



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Towards the great transition

We now live in an increasingly interdependent globalised society – sharing the resources, benefits and challenges this poses. Twenty years after the first Rio UNCED conference, the world is facing an increasing number of interdependent global and local crises that are becoming increasingly interconnected and complex. At the same time, the science is increasingly clear that if we fail to act with urgency and ambition, the costs and impacts for all will be much higher. What we choose to do over the next few years will dictate whether or not we reach a point of no return, or whether we achieve true sustainability to the extent needed in order to continue to call this one planet our home.

This transition requires unprecedented global leadership in government, multilateral agencies and civil society to renew commitments to tackling challenges such as gender inequality, food security and climate change. But commitments alone are not enough. They must be met with a sense of immediate urgency and political will at a level greater than what we have seen in the past decades and must be based on coordination, fulfilment of existing promises and a shared vision for sustainable development.

The path ahead of us is rife with many challenges – challenges that require building equitable and resilient communities. We have the resources and much of the know-how to tackle them. However, we need a new kind of solution, one that is demonstrated by tangible action rather than words, that provides dedicated resources and measurable efforts, and that offers an opportunity for everyone to participate in and benefit from our common future. There has never been a more urgent time for action to right glaring social and environmental injustices of our current society and to chart a new course for a truly sustainable, equitable and resilient future for our one planet.

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