Issues of Mountain Women and Climate Change in Nepal

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Climate change is not only a technical but also a human rights issue. From a gender perspective, the intensity of climate change impacts is higher on women. Climate change has been affecting the lives and livelihoods of the mountain population in the Himalayan region, but it also offers opportunities for economic development. Mountain people suffer more from climate change because of the diverse topography, ecological zones, limited assets, prevailing food insecurity, and greater dependence on climate sensitive sources of income. Mountain women are rarely considered at the policy making level. They have limited access to resources and information, and decision making positions. Mountain women bear a greater burden, as men are forced to find alternative ways of generating income, often through outmigration. They are further limited by a lack of education and assets. Nepal is already vulnerable to a range of natural disasters, and the situation is being compounded by climate change. As yet, government strategies for Nepal’s remote mountain districts are lacking, as is support for the development of infrastructure and services. The resilience of mountain people to climate change needs to be strengthened and awareness raised with regard to climate change and environmental disasters. Gender approaches need to be mainstreamed in all aspects of strategies for adaptation including mountain infrastructure, sustainable livelihoods, food security, awareness, good governance, land and water management, agriculture extension, health care, behaviour change, new farming practices, clean energy development, and poverty alleviation programmes. Transparency and accountability of financial resources needs to be enhanced, employment generated for mountain women, and women empowered at the decision making level in all institutions.