



DEVELOPING RADIO PARTNERS

**Focus:****Climate Change and Girls**

Climate change has effects on both males and females – and they are affected differently.

The changing of the weather patterns has brought with it changes in living standards. Climate change has brought with it floods and droughts in many parts of the country, especially those areas that have experienced extensive deforestation. We are talking specifically of the southern province.

Climate change affects women and men differently because of political, social and economic inequalities. In many instances, it is girls and women who are affected most – particularly when there are food shortages.

Some women and girls may be forced by their families to resort to prostitution for food.

This exposes them to a variety of risks – including unplanned pregnancies which could lead to dropping out of school. It also exposes them to sexually transmitted diseases – including HIV/AIDS.

In this bulletin, we will look at how climate change affects adolescent girls.

## The Weekly Information Resource Bulletin

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- Bring listeners in the project area the latest information on natural resources, the environment and agriculture
- Focus on solutions, what works and what people can do
- Encourage listeners to share both their questions and solutions (African solutions for African problems)
- Raise awareness of issues that need to be discussed to affect public policy.
- Bring the latest solutions and practices that have relevance to this region from around the world
- Identify and link other NGOs working in the region share the project interests and goals
- Give the participating journalists guidance and tips on their reporting on these issues

### The Problem: Climate Change Impact on Adolescents Girls

A study by the London School of Economics (LSE) analyzed disasters in 141 countries and concluded that when natural disasters strike – it is women and children who are affected the most – leading to a lifetime of consequences for them.

The LSE study found that boys are likely to receive preferential treatment in rescue efforts in the aftermath of disasters. It also found that both women and girls suffer more from food shortages, a lack of privacy, access to adequate toilet and bathing facilities and sleeping arrangements following disasters.

In some cases, girls are forced into prostitution, particularly those from the poorest families.

The LSE study also found that those households headed by women experience much more hardship during disasters.

At the household level, girls are expected to take up domestic chores and to support income generation. In many cases, if a mother goes out to work, it is the older daughters who are taken out of school to take her place at home.

When a natural disaster strikes, there can be tremendous pressure placed on a family to survive. Girls are particularly vulnerable. They are often called on to do extra chores and that makes it more and more difficult for them to stay in school. For instance, women and children, traditionally, collect water. In a drought situation, they may have to walk very long distances to find safe water to drink. This leaves little time for school.

This lack of education is a direct result of the impact of climate change on individual households – and it will have a detrimental effect on the rest of their lives.

It means that girls are disadvantaged in attaining a quality education and lifting themselves into a better life.

## Activities for Journalists

There are over half a billion adolescent girls (aged 10-19) in the developing world. Adolescence is a time of key transitions: from girlhood to womanhood; from primary to secondary education; from education to work and family life. Too often these transitions go wrong: with high drop-out rates from secondary school; poor quality and inappropriate education; early and forced marriage; exposure to violence, abuse and to HIV infection and high maternal mortality. ([www.plan-uk.org](http://www.plan-uk.org))

According to a report produce by Plan International, (2001) one in every three girls in the developing world is married by the age of 18. This severely limits girls' rights and decision-making power within her household. ([www.plan-uk.org](http://www.plan-uk.org))

Pregnancy is the leading cause of death among 15 to 19 year old girls, and girls under the age of 15 are more likely to die in childbirth than women in their twenties. In sub-Saharan Africa, 76% of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 years old who are living with HIV are female. These problems can be addressed through education.

Climate change has different impacts on girls and boys, both directly and indirectly. For instance, early pregnancy, lack of education and limited decision-making in the home often lead to greater vulnerable during disasters brought on by climate change.

As a result, compared to boys, girls' chances of survival are lower, as is their capacity to pursue a healthy quality of life and to realize their hopes and dreams.

Adolescent girls should be given access to relevant quality education and this should be a major priority of society and government. Adolescent girls who have access to a better education and have the support of those around them to realize their rights are more likely to challenge gender discrimination. They are also more likely to complete their education, find employment, support the education of their own children and potentially build more resilient families. This in turn

helps to reduce vulnerability to disaster and climate risks. Quality education also fosters a better understanding and knowledge of climate change and its impact on our social and economic lives.

In the aftermath of disasters caused by drought and floods many families are left in poverty, homeless or destitute due to loss of their crops, livestock and other family assets. Changing climate patterns such as rainfall variations may also mean less money coming in -- resulting in girls being called on to contribute to the household income.

Encourage listeners to keep their girls in school. Do a program featuring parents who believe their daughters must get a good education. Interview some girls who have stayed in school. Why did they do so? What are their future plans? Do they plan to go to university?

Interview a young mother who, as a girl, was forced to drop out of school. What were her dreams when she was in school? What regrets does she have? Does she have any advice to young girls? Also, interview a young woman who completed university. How is her life different from a young woman who didn't get an education?

What impact has climate change had on women and girls? Do they have to carry water long distances? How has women throughout the community been affected by climate change? Is the government doing anything to encourage girls to stay in school? If so, are the programs working?

### Useful Link

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[www.plan-uk.org](http://www.plan-uk.org)