

The Weekly

Information Resource Bulletin

FOCUS: Climate Change and Girls

Rising temperatures and changing weather patterns have led to drought and flooding in Malawi for many years.

The result: shorter growing seasons, poor crop yields, food shortages, hunger and the spread of disease.

According to an Oxfam report released in 2009, on climate change and gender, climate change affects women and men differently because of political, social and economic inequalities.

For instance, the Oxfam report warns that, in the absence of food, some women and girls become vulnerable and may be forced to resort to prostitution for food, which could lead to an increased vulnerability to HIV/AIDS and other diseases.

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

The goals of the Weekly Bulletin are:

- To discuss how girls are being affected by climate change
- To discuss how parents and the whole community can support women, so that they are not severely affected by climate change
- To give the journalists guidance and tips on their reporting on climate change and the effects climate change has on adolescent girls

The Problem: Climate Change has a huge Impact on adolescent girls

More women die than men as the direct and indirect result of natural disasters, according to research in 2006 by the London School of Economics. This effect is strongest in countries with very low social and economic rights for women.

The research also found that both women and girls suffer more from shortages of food, than men and boys.

Women and girls make up 70% of the world's poor and the combination of poverty and prescribed gender roles mean that women are increasingly being affected by climate risks. (UNDP, 1995)

The UNDP study found that compared to men and boys, women and girls are differently – and disproportionately –

affected by the consequences of climate change.

For example, when a country faces natural disasters such as floods, girls are often more vulnerable to sexual exploitation especially if they are separated from their parents or if their parents have died in the disaster.

Furthermore, girls in desperate circumstances are sometimes forced to resort to prostitution for food and survival, which can lead to risks of sexually transmitted infections and unplanned pregnancy. This could also lead to early marriages.

As families struggle to survive in natural disasters, they may force their girls to get married so that the parents have fewer children to look after.

Activities for Journalists

Use your radio station to help your community understand how girls are being affected by climate change.

Climate Change is having a great negative impact on adolescent girls worldwide.

For instance, food crises associated with climate change have been linked to higher rates of early marriage for girls.

According to Human Rights Watch, during a food crisis girls are pressured to marry by family members who are interested in receiving dowry payments, or because they were pregnant, or the girls themselves saw marriage as a route to escape poverty.

Early and forced marriage limits a girl's educational opportunities, and can severely affect her health and her overall well-being. Once married, girls are unlikely to continue going to school. Instead, they are expected to take on marital duties in their new household

Early pregnancy is the leading cause of death among 15-19 year old girls. Those under 15 are five times as likely to die during childbirth as those in their 20's. These findings are from Human Rights Watch-Malawi

In addition, Human Rights Watch-Malawi found that, between 2010 and 2013, more than 27,000 girls in primary and just over four-thousand girls in secondary schools dropped out due to marriage. During the same period, another 14,000 primary school girls and nearly 6,000 secondary school

girls dropped out because they were pregnant.

Increased poverty associated with drought (caused by climate change) affects school attendance, with girls being more likely to leave school than boys.

Encourage listeners to keep their girls in school. Do a program featuring parents who believe their daughters should 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?

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?

Have a vox pop with parents on the impact climate change has on the lives of their girls.

Interview the Minister of Gender, Patricia Kaliati and find out what measures government has put in place to protect girls from early marriages and dropping out of school. Also ask her what communities can do to protect these girls.

Collect SMS messages on this issue during a radio program and share the feedback with your listeners.

Useful Contacts

- Minister of Gender Children and Community Development , Patricia Kaliati +265 1 770 411 / 736
- The Director; Women's voice +265 995 480 941
- NGO, Gender Coordination network; +265 1 771 171
- http://www.wpf.org/reproductive_rights_article/facts

