CHALLENGING ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT GENDER AND CLIMATE ADAPTATION

It's not always what, or who, you think.

As the global impacts of climate change become more clearly understood, the need for people to effectively respond and adapt to these changes becomes critical.

Home to hundreds of millions of people, the semi-arid regions of Africa and Asia already experience multiple pressures. In recent decades, the frequency and extent of climate stressors have increased, exposing people to more risks and making them more vulnerable.

Gender is one of many factors that influence how we are impacted by and respond to climate change.

Typically, women are seen to be victims but also to have power. But in many instances, they are diversifying their livelihoods which can lead to increased agency and income. But the outcomes are mixed. Sometimes, men still control income. It is rarely straightforward what decisions are made.

Interestingly, in many ASSAR countries, young men are often as or more vulnerable than women, as limited government support and persistent drought have led people, respond, and what needs to be done.

It is commonly assumed that women and men form homogeneous groups, with women at the losing end. Such divisions overlook the nuance brought on by age, household composition, ethnicity or marital status.

Women are not necessarily victims or powerless; they are often diversifying their livelihoods and increasing their agency.

How people experience and respond to climate risks, depending on factors like age, ethnicity, gender and class.

Such nuances are seldom considered, and decisions about risk reduction strategies and adaptation options are often based on assumptions about who is most vulnerable, how people respond, and what needs to be done.

It's not always what, or who, you think.

We rarely stop to consider the unintended consequences that our interventions may bring - the winners and losers, the unforeseen long-term effects, or the added pressures brought by a changing climate.

These consequences can vary among household members, and are crucial to examine.

To respond to climate change, we must consider the frequency and extent of climate stressors.

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