

## Theme: Climate change adaptation (CCA)

# Platforms for the inclusion of non-normative genders and sexualities (NNGS) in CCA policy and action

### 1. Rationale

The Sustainable Development Goals specifically mandated stakeholders to “leave no one behind”, and in doing so began a movement for marginalized and disadvantaged people and groups to be included in development work. These groups have been termed “vulnerable”, and often encompass women, children and youth, people living in poverty, the elderly, people with disabilities, ethnic minorities, Indigenous People, and displaced people. However, a group that is often left out in these discussions is that of people who identify as non-normative genders and sexualities (NNGS), more widely understood as people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and other (LGBT+). Acknowledgement of the needs and capacities of NNGS is absent in global policy reports such as those by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, and regional reports such as those by the Asia Pacific Adaptation Network. While gender is mentioned in both, context and references show that it is used with the tacit assumption that it refers to women.

NNGS are prevalent in Asia and the Pacific in form of culturally specific gender identities such as *fa'afafine* in Samoa, *bakla* in the Philippines and *waria* in Indonesia among others. They are also prevalent in the form of many ‘Western’ gender identities (transgender, non-binary etc.) and sexualities (lesbian, gay, bisexual, asexual etc.). The marginalized position of NNGS in societies in Asia is arguably more devastating than that of other marginalized groups, because they are the least recognized and their rights respected. In order for countries to appropriately adapt to the impacts of climate change, and to ensure an inclusive response to the challenges it poses, it is crucial to include NNGS in these discussions to learn about how they experience climate change, and the impacts it has on their social, political and economic welfare. They need to be part of the decision-making processes that influence their ability to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Livelihood strategies are significant due to their role in defining the adaptive capacities of households. The marginalized and sometimes criminalized status of NNGS in different societies provides a useful frame of reference to understand how and why people who identify as NNGS can be limited in their access to livelihood strategies. Many societies not only do not accept NNGS, but also stigmatize and discriminate against them. In some regions, their existence and sexual practices are criminalized. This has limited their opportunities in terms of political participation and access to economic activities, which is reflected in current policy interventions on climate change. NNGS have not historically been included in the category of ‘vulnerable’ and so have not been well supported by external organizations or climate finance institutions in enabling their adaptive capacities. NNGS have been rendered invisible in discussions on CCA to date and have only recently been researched by a handful

of authors in Asia and the Pacific. Rights-based perspectives of equality and non-discrimination are starting to gain ground in legislation but not necessarily in implementation.

## 2. Description

We invite submissions of concept notes for participatory regional events in Asia and the Pacific that explore the experiences and identities of NNGS in the context of CCA. These events should bring to surface the roles of NNGS in societies in Asia and the Pacific and provide a justification for the inclusion of people who identify as NNGS in CCA decision-making. We are keen to see originality and creativity in these events to encourage sharing and learning, and believe that storytelling is one powerful way to do so. Some examples (not exhaustive) of activities and subtopics that we consider of interest are:

- The **intersectionality of NNGS** with other social relations such as race, disability and economic status.
- **Body-map storytelling** which requires participants to create drawings of their human body to visually represent the relationship between their lived experiences, body and environment. Using participants who identify as NNGS could enable real NNGS experiences to supersede typical spokespersons such as government officials, NGOs and academics, and cut across diverse cultural experiences.
- **Oral storytelling** led by people who identify as NNGS offers a way to understand aspects of CCA that have been overlooked. Stories provide an opportunity for different stakeholders from across the region to discuss embedded topics such as climate justice in a more apolitical way.
- **Regional discussions** on the need to deconstruct the gender binary and to incorporate sexuality.
- **Regional policy dialogues** on how to foster CCA actions, policies and processes that are truly inclusive of the needs of NNGS and engage the participation of NNGS from inception. The storytelling techniques can be used to complement more mainstream formats of these discussions.

If possible, proposed events should link with relevant policy processes in the region, for instance the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Asia-Pacific Climate Week (APCW) 2020 (date to be confirmed). They should also propose potential regional partners such as UNDRR, UNDP, ASEAN as well as national NNGS partners such as the Blue Diamond Society in Nepal and GALANG in the Philippines.

## 3. Expected results

We expect proposed events to set a research agenda for future research-to-policy action and to induce change in organizations' awareness and actions by drawing attention to the capacities of NNGS to contribute to CCA. The proposed event should lead to advocacy for CCA policies to be inclusive of all genders and sexualities. This would entail a deep understanding of what gender and sexuality are and how they impact people's ability to prepare for, manage and adapt to the effects of climate change. We hope to see long-term impacts of the event(s) in the proactiveness of organizations to reformulate popular and misunderstood conceptions of 'gender' in their programmes. We also want policy platforms to be truly gender responsive, where gender is understood to include NNGS.

#### 4. Theme-specific criteria

We would like to see the following aspects clearly articulated in all proposals:

- Comprehension of the need to incorporate the experiences, lessons and knowledge from NNGS actors to ensure inclusivity and advocacy
- Reference to human rights frameworks or other rights-based approaches
- Demonstration of a willingness to build and foster new relationships at a national and regional level
- Propositions for collaboration with local NNGS organizations, academic institutions and researchers