

Further, as governments and donor agencies increasingly target women as critical agents for community adaptation to climate change; in their role as smallholders as the mainstay of sustainable food production; and through limiting their reproductive rights as the answer to population-environment problems; there is a danger of entrenching gender stereotypes and inequalities.

Policy responses that view women as “sustainability saviours” draw upon and reinforce stereotypes regarding women’s roles in relation to the family, the community and the environment. Such responses often add to women’s already heavy unpaid work burdens without conferring rights, resources and benefits. Power imbalances in gender relations determine whether women’s actions and work translate into the realization of their rights and capabilities. While the participation of women is vital, their involvement in policy interventions aimed at sustainability does not automatically mean greater gender equality, particularly when the structural foundations of gender inequality remain unchanged.