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BOOK REVIEWS

Gender and Climate Change Financing: Coming Out of the Margin

Marjorie Griffin Cohen

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Gender and Climate Change Financing: Coming Out of the Margin, by Mariama Williams. London: Routledge, 2016. 534 pp. ISBN: 978-0-415-68854-3 (pbk.). US$77.95.

Making gendered issues visible in any area of public policy is difficult, but dealing with major systemic issues like climate change presents particularly acute challenges. The overarching problem is that global policy to deal with climate change itself is woefully inadequate, and this deficiency, plus the habitual gender blindness inherent in the way that systemic problems are treated, means that women are simply not part of the picture. The impact of climate change on women in developing countries is not a new issue, and quite a bit has been known for some time. Still, this has not translated into vigorous attempts to include women in measures to both mitigate and adapt to climate change. As Mariama Williams argues in this book, the invisibility of women in the design of climate change policies keeps women from being part of the solutions, and the problems with the ways solutions are designed and implemented serve to further increase gender inequalities. While the unfairness of it is blatant, this gender blindness inhibits effective climate change policies as well.

Williams is the ideal person to examine these issues. She is an economist well known for her analyses of international approaches to gender in developing nations and on gender and trade agreements. As is characteristic of her previous work, she brings both analytical insights and detailed, in-depth information to the character and methods of international climate change finance. Without adequate financing for climate change initiatives, there is no effective help to those in the world who are most vulnerable to the extreme weather events it brings. As Williams points out, climate change has different implications for developing countries, although it is a gendered issue everywhere because societies are so highly structured along gendered lines. But, developing nations deserve the spotlight. According to Williams, 95 percent of the deaths from climate change occur in these countries, and women and girls are fourteen times more likely to die from natural disasters than are men.

The architecture of climate change finance is complex and involves many levels of governments and the private sector all over the world, but at the core, setting the principles and establishing funding commitments, is the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This convention, based on principles of both equity and of polluter pay, establishes the obligations of rich countries (the heavy polluters) to developing nations. Williams shows that the estimated collective promise of US$10 billion per year in voluntary contributions is both inadequate and unmet. Vastly greater sums are actually needed, and so too is the redesign

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Marjorie Griffin Cohen

Marjorie Griffin Cohen is an economist and Professor Emeritus at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada, and the author of Climate Change and Gender in Rich Countries: Work, Public Policy, and Action (Routledge, 2017).

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