

Beyond a seat at the table

Pathways for gender-equitable participation in climate adaptation decision-making



Setting the scene

The year 2023 was the warmest year on record, by a vast margin (WMO, 2024) and May 2024 was the twelfth month in a row to break monthly temperature records (Copernicus Climate Change Service/ECMWF, 2024). Climate change is accelerating, and its consequences—such as floods, droughts and sea level rise—are increasing in frequency and severity. Countries in the Global South, and people from already marginalized gender and socio-economic groups, including women and girls, are bearing the brunt of the impacts.

Disproportionate impacts of climate change on women and girls

Around the world, climate-induced shocks and stresses unequally affect women and girls, compared to men and boys. These inequities stem from underlying discriminatory gender and social norms and practices, including an unequal access to education and training, unpaid care work, hierarchies within households, gender-based violence, limited decision-making power and unequal access to and control over resources by women and girls. Some facts and figures highlighted in recent studies are evidence of these inequalities in front of climate change:

- Women's domestic workload increases when extreme weather events happen, as women often have a disproportionate responsibility to secure resources such as food, water, and fuel for their families, also contributing to time poverty (UN Women, 2022a).
- On average, women work 55 minutes more than men on a weekly basis as a result of global warming, while their crop value decreases more, because their capacity to react and adapt to extreme weather events is unequal (FAO, 2024).
- There are 84.2 million more women and girls who are food insecure, compared to men and boys, partially due to climate change impacts (CARE, 2023).
- Rates of gender-based violence increase alongside climate-related displacement and/or longer walking distances to collect water, use toilets, etc. (OHCHR, 2022).
- Constraining social norms and unequal access to resources mean that women have a higher likelihood of living in poverty which is correlated with increased vulnerability to climate change(UN Women, 2022b).

Key Recommendations



Strengthen the individual and collective capacities of women and gender minorities

- Ensure that women and girls have full and equal access to education, knowledge and trainings, including vocational and soft skill trainings, related to climate change and adaptation.
- Develop or strengthen collective action platforms on climate justice, where women, including those from minorities and marginalized groups, are at the forefront of knowledge sharing.
- Increase the amount of gender-transformative climate finance available, and the accessibility of climate finance to women's rights organizations and gender minorities.



Promote gender-transformative policies and governance systems

- Establish multi-stakeholder taskforces to carry out gender analysis of local and national climaterelated policies and develop cross-sectoral response strategies with clear indicators and targets.
- Support and invest in the systematic collection, analysis and dissemination of gender-disaggregated climate adaptation-related data to inform policy-making.
- Ensure that official documents, information and consultation processes relevant to climate adaptation are available in languages and delivery channels suitable to different ethnic groups.



Address constraining gender and social norms

- Ensure that individuals of all genders, especially those from minorities and marginalized groups, not only participate in decision making on climate adaptation, but also understand, contribute, are valued, and have influence over decisions.
- Design processes and engage with individuals of all genders (especially men) and at different life stages, as agents of change, to challenge constraining gender norms as well as stereotypes, hidden biases, microaggressions, harassment, gender-based violence.

These recommandations are further detailed in the last section of this document (starting page 8)

CARE and la Fondation L'Oréal, through the *She Grows the Future* program, have been empowering more than 6,400 women farmers in Ecuador,
Madagascar, India and Vietnam, supporting their transition to sustainable, resilient and equitable agricultural practices while increasing their share of voice on climate adaptation within their communities. From 2021 to 2024, CARE and its local partners have established farmer field business schools, supported women entrepreneurship, and established spaces for dialogue between marginalized groups and authorities on climate adaptation practices and policies.

In parallel to these field level interventions, CARE commissioned the Stockholm Environment Institute's Asia Center to undertake a study on gender-equitable participation in climate adaptation decision-making, applying an intersectional gender lens. The study gleaned insights at the global level and on the 4 countries of the program, with an in-depth country case study of Vietnam.

The full report (available here) surfaces the current state, perceptions regarding benefits, and associated formal and informal barriers and enablers of gender-equitable participation in climate adaptation decision-making. This Brief synthesizes key points from the full report.

"Climate impacts further exacerbate vulnerabilities for women and girls already facing compounding marginalization."

It is also crucial to note that climate impacts further exacerbate vulnerabilities for women and girls already facing compounding marginalization (such as Indigenous, ethnic minority or migrant women and girls, elderly women, women and girls living with disabilities) as well as for LGBTIQ+ people, and those living in conflict and disaster-prone areas (UN Women, 2022a). These marginalized groups and individuals tend to be all the more excluded from positions of power and decision-making opportunities, which limits their long-term adaptation capacity and resilience (UNFCCC, 2022).

Why gender-equitable participation in climate adaptation decision-making matters

Gender-equitable participation in climate adaptation decision-making is important, not only intrinsically, but also as an instrument to achieve just, inclusive and effective climate outcomes.

The intrinsic value of gender-equitable decision-making is based on the principle that gender equity is a fundamental human right. Gender-equitable and socially inclusive climate decision-making is a necessary manifestation of rights-based principles applied to development, which require that affected individuals and communities participate, without discrimination, in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects that affect them.

The instrumental value of gender-equitable participation in climate adaptation decision-making refers to the fact that gender-equitable participation is a necessary means to ensure that climate adaptation is effective. Climate adaptation policies and programme would benefit from their expertise and specific knowledge, prevent the reinforcement of gender and social inequalities—as well as avoiding or minimizing maladaptive responses (Kameri-Mbote, 2013). Besides, engaging women in a full and meaningful way helps to ensure that the needs of women and girls are met.



Gender-equitable participation is defined as

Key findings from the study



Women have less influence on climate adaptation decisions at all scales

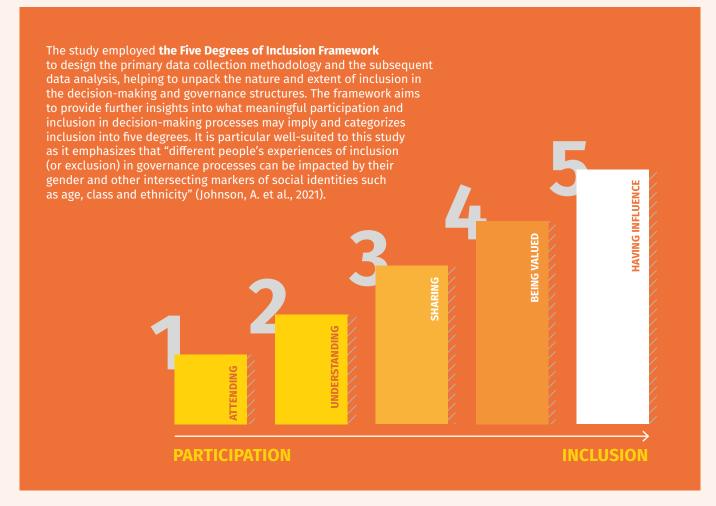
At the global level, despite recognition in key policy discourse that gender equity and social inclusion are essential to progress on adaptation, significant gender imbalances in participation in climate adaptation decision-making not only remain—but they have, in some cases, worsened compared to the pre-pandemic period. Specifically, data from COP28 in 2023 show that women delegates accounted for only 34% of all national Party delegates to the conference, the same percentage as at COP18, 10 years prior (WEDO, 2024). Women made up only 19% of the Head of delegations, a decline from an already low percentage of 20% at COP27. With regards to women's participation in constituted bodies of the UNFCCC, out of 17 bodies, only 3 were found to have more than 50% women's participation (WEDO, 2023).

Analysis conducted in this study at the international, national and local levels, and across different geographies, confirms a common pattern of gender-inequitable participation in climate adaptation decision-making processes. Women are underrepresented in leadership positions at all scales and

"Even when a meeting attendance is gender-balanced, men dominate discussions and have more influence on decisions."

therefore have less influence on decisions. More specifically, the research demonstrated that, at local level, even when a meeting attendance is relatively gender-balanced, men still dominate discussions and have more influence on decision-making processes. This illustrates that exclusions exist even when women are represented, e.g. they are present but undervalued and without equitable influence.

The in-depth case study on Vietnam further surfaces that inclusion and exclusion are also impacted by other intersecting markers of identity, beyond gender—such as age, class, or ethnicity—resulting in women from minority ethnic groups experiencing the lowest degree of meaningful participation to decision-making.





she grows the future care Identification of Villages & Farmers for Demonstration of Improved Agricultural Practices

, Narla, Kalahand

The study identified a multitude of barriers to women's participation in climate adaptation decision-making, as shown in overview table below, which are a combination of visible and tangible barriers and invisible and intangible ones. The visible barriers include lack of education and information, language and literacy constraints, while the more invisible barriers include biased individual and collective attitudes, low confidence and agency, and discriminatory gender and social norms.

Community meeting, India, 2021

It also emerged that these barriers are interconnected, both directly limiting women's participation in their own right and indirectly limiting participation by driving other barriers. For example, early marriage has been highlighted not only as a barrier to gender equity and gender-equitable participation in climate adaptation decision-making in its own rights, but also as a main driver behind the barrier related to education,

knowledge, and language skills. Some of these barriers are particularly constraining for women along intersectional lines. For example, low literacy rates and limited national language skills can be a major issue among ethnic minority groups, feeding into other barriers, such as the limited access to education and employment opportunities, or lack of self-confidence and public speaking skills.

Overall, the findings underline the potency of the underlying structural elements in driving the persistence of gender inequity in climate adaptation decision-making, including and especially gender attitudes, norms and social value systems.

"Interventions around promoting social change and initiating transformative measures to address discriminatory gender and social norms are still lagging behind."

Potential enabling factors are still lagging behind in practice

Considering these barriers, the study sought to identify potential entry points for generating insights and recommendations in support for gender-equitable and meaningful decision making on climate adaptation.

At the global scale, these entry points include the Parties to the Paris Agreement promoting women's participation in climate mitigation and adaptation efforts at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), particularly following the enhanced UNFCCC Lima Work Programme and its Gender Action Plan agreed at COP25, introducing initiatives to enhance women's leadership in climate change processes at national and international levels. At a more local scale, an increasing number of interventions by development practitioners have been aiming at fostering women's voice and leadership in climate adaptation (CARE, 2019).

More specifically, in the four countries of the *She Grows the Future* programme, common enablers identified include: the increasing recognition of the value of women's participation on climate adaptation; the improving women's access to knowledge, capacity building and vocational trainings including through digital solutions and social media; improving institutional coordination and gender mainstreaming; and ongoing progress in collection, analysis and dissemination of gender-disaggregated data.

Despite these promising elements, the study found that actions around promoting social change and initiating transformative measures to address discriminatory gender and social norms are still lagging behind, at all scales, with much less evidence of this lever for change having been invested in or operationalized.

Climate vulnerability and capacity analysis,



From barriers to levers through 3 key pathways

This matrix provides an overview of the three main categories of barriers observed and corresponding intervention pathways identified, leading to insights on how to lift, overcome or break the barriers, by suggesting potential levers (defined as 'what to invest in').

MAIN BARRIERS

INTERVENTION PATHWAYS

Limited access to education, information, knowledge and training

- Language and literacy constraints, in particular for minority groups
- · Limited access to education and employment
- Lack of knowledge and information related to climate actions including available climate-smart agriculture, technologies and livelihood skills.
- · Lack of confidence and agency of women and marginalized groups

Enhancing individual and collective capabilities

Genderblind policy, governance and regulatory systems

- Policies and governance systems lacking ambition regarding gender inclusion
- Lack of financial and human resources for implementing gender-sensitive and transformative
- Lack of gender-disaggregated data and indicators for robust gender-responsive monitoring, evaluation and learning frameworks

Promoting gender-responsive climate policies

Constraining aender and social norms

- resources including land, assets and finance
 Limited opportunities to access and assume
- contributions by different genders

Transforming underlying constraining gender and social norms

A critical take away from the study is that the focus in the climate discourse and programming on investing in women and marginalized groups, and enhancing their capacities, albeit vital, is too narrow, and may even entrench gender gaps by implicitly reinforcing the notion that 'women need fixing'.

Ensuring women's leadership and inclusion in driving climate change adaptation solutions requires engaging levers at the level of systems and structures in order to create enabling and just environments, and addressing the underlying negative gender and social norms that limit women's role and voice

LEVERS

Continued and refined investments in enhancing women and marginalized groups' capabilities toward climate action are needed. These should cover both technical areas of climate adaptation as well as soft skills that could contribute to confidence and agency of women and marginalized groups, such as public speaking and negotiation skills. Investing in capacity-building for women and marginalized groups is crucial and still an important pathway—albeit insufficient on its own—and is one that resonates with immediate local interests.

- Measures to ensure that women and girls have full and equal access to education, knowledge and trainings, including vocational and soft skill trainings, related to climate change and climate adaptation
- Development of climate action and adaptation knowledge exchange platforms where women are at the forefront of knowledge sharing and programs to enhance women's confidence and agency, particularly in climate adaptation decision-making processes.

Comprehensive, well-targeted and gender-responsive climate policies, governance and legal and regulatory frameworks that apply a human rights-based approach, supported by high quality gender-disaggregated data, are needed to ensure gender-equitable and effective climate adaptation decision-making processes and outcomes towards a just transition and climate resilience.

- Efforts to formulate and/or refine and implement more inclusive and gender-responsive policies and legal and regulatory frameworks and systems relating to or affecting climate adaptation and climate decisionmaking.
- Systematic collection, analysis and dissemination of gender-disaggregated climate adaptation-related data, including specific gender- disaggregated and gender data, to inform policy makers at all scales.
- Measures to ensure that all related written documents and written and spoken consultations regarding climate adaptation decision-making are in appropriate languages for each group of individuals.

Social norms and practices that sustain, reproduce or perpetuate gender stereotypes and inequity, can result in constraining social practices such as gender-based violence and early and forced marriage among certain communities and limit women and marginalized groups from equitably contributing to climate adaptation decision-making.

- Investments in gender-transformative approaches, meaning strategies and methods to address underlying constraining gender and social norms and inequitable relations in climate adaptation decision-making
- Engagement with individuals of all genders (especially men) and at different life stages, particularly in the process of redressing any discriminatory gender and social norms and practices relating to decision making at all scales, as well as those that shape underlying barriers, in particular, control over finances, division of labour, and child and forced marriage

Policy makers and Governments



Practitionners and Researchers



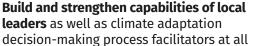
Funders and Investors

Key insights and recommendations

To guide policy development as well as programmatic initiatives implemented by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international NGOs (INGOs) and private sector engagement, here are some specific recommendations emerging from the study in connection with the three pathways and suggested levers.

Enhancing individual and collective capabilities





decision-making process facilitators at all levels regarding the effective employment of participatory and inclusive processes in climate adaptation decision-making at all levels.



Provide adequate and gender-responsive social service and protection systems, especially to ensure inclusive education for girls and gender minorities. This is critical to help low-income and rural households, especially from marginalized groups, to keep their children in school or in higher education,. This may include scholarships, free lunch schemes, and opportunities to work part-time.





Build women's organizations' capabilities related to climate adaptation, particularly in relation to effective engagement, including skills around access and use of relevant climate data and information, coalition building and communication. This may also include developing or supporting platforms for local women and gender minorities to share their knowledge and views on climate adaptation





Identify and support collective capabilities, actions and agency of women and gender minorities to engage in climate adaptation decision-making at all scales, and facilitate linkages between existing groups to establish women-led climate networks and bodies. This could encompass a wide range of stakeholders: women's rights' organizations, women's collectives, women's unions, women's groups and networks working with gender minorities.







Contribute to opportunities for increased selfefficacy, agency and economic independence of all genders by enhancing equitable access to and completion of education, access to livelihood opportunities including training and mentoring, and access to and control over resources and funding, particularly climate finance for climate adaptation initiatives.

In practice



In Ecuador, CARE contributed to the establishment of the Gender and Climate Change Working Group (Mesa Técnica de Genero y Cambio Climático del Ecuador), which brings together government entities (Ministry of Environment and Water; National Council for Gender Equality), multilateral organizations and civil society organizations. The working group serves as a space for multi-stakeholder dialogue and collaboration toward gender equality in climate action, through the promotion of inclusive and gender-transformative public policy. As an illustration of its collective outputs, the working group publicized in 2020 a declaration for greater inclusion and gender-responsiveness in post-pandemic interventions.

8

Promoting gender-responsive policies, governance systems, and legal frameworks



Raise ambitions and effectiveness of quota systems for gender-equitable climate adaptation decision-making at all scales. Set clear indicators and monitoring and evaluation frameworks and processes, with funding and capacities, to track and accelerate

the progress towards such targets.





Increase the amount of gender-transformative climate finance available, and the accessibility of climate finance for women's rights organizations and climate initiatives working with and for women and/or gender minorities. Donor countries should increase the share of climate finance addressing gender equity objectives, aiming for 88%, with 20% having significant objectives for gender equity. Governments should commit to integrating gender equity into climate action by providing financial and technical contributions to implement the Gender Action Plan (GAP). All actors should seek to remove barriers that women's rights organisations face in accessing climate finance, including administraive barriers.







Ensure that official documents, information and consultation processes relevant to climate adaptation strategies and decision-making, as well as official documents related to basic rights of all individuals including Indigenous Peoples and those from different ethnic groups, are available in suitable languages and delivery channels.



Commit to improve the nature and quality of gender-equitable participation (attending understanding, contributing, being valued and having equitable influence). Governments and inter-governmental organizations should recognize that while quotas are a step in the right direction, they alone are not sufficient to tackle gender inequity in climate adaptation decision-making. Complementary measures are needed, including designing processes for safe and enabling environments, and addressing constraining gender social norms (as well as stereotypes, hidden biases, microaggressions, harassment), and actions to reduce care burdens on women.







Accelerate progress in systematic development of gender-/sex-disaggregated climate data and gender data, particularly data on gendered participation in climate decision-making at all levels and gender-differentiated (intersectional) priorities and perceptions of risks relating to climate adaptation (i.e., to inform decision-making). These could include evidence showing what measures or actions have worked to close the gaps in decision-making.





Keep moving towards formulating and implementing gender-transformative programming in relation to climate adaptation.

Draw from past experiences and lessons learnt from mainstreaming sustainability as well as good practices from national to local levels and apply them to the process of gender-transformative approaches in promoting gender-equitable participation in the climate adaptation decision-making process at every level.

In practice

Social Accountability tools such as Community Score Cards developed by CARE can be an effective tool for community-led impact data collection and analysis. Through the process, community members can enhance their agency, and the government, development practitioners and donors can strengthen relationships with the communities as well as receiving more inclusive and gender-/sex-aggregated data to inform policies and services to be more responsive to the needs of local citizens of all genders.

2.

Transforming underlying constraining gender and social norms





Support the development of knowledge exchange platforms, in the forms of arts, cultures and/or local knowledge events, where women and marginalized groups are at the forefront of content sharing.





Fund and facilitate gender-transformative research, including participatory action research, that identifies the impacts of and ways to address discriminatory gender norms, including those that constrain equitable climate decision making. Assess and address climate decision making through locally-led, context-appropriate participatory action research from household and community, through to subnational, national and regional scales.





Support research to provide high-quality data in relation to how the gendered impacts of climate change on physical, mental, social and economic well-being of individuals and communities can be cost-effectively and accurately monitored, analyzed and systematically (routinely) used to inform climate-related decision making and policy.



Generate and share evidence and case studies (what works/what does not, why, where) to inform transformative policies and measures.

This involves researching how gendertransformative methods and strategies can be adapted, engaging men and boys as active agents of change, and investing in:

- the uptakes of successful gendertransformative models and strategies from one community to others in a contextspecific manner;
- the adoption of these models or strategies at higher levels such as national and regional;
- the application of these models and strategies within implementing agencies or projects.

In practice



In 2023, CARE conducted a learning review of its experiences of integrating approaches for Engaging Men and Boys (EMB) in climate justice programming. The study shows that EMB has consistently contributed to building women's agency and changing relations and structures, directly contributing to greater climate justice. It also found men engaging proactively as supporters of more equitable gender dynamics within and beyond their own households, including examples of engagement men supporting women's leadership in community institutions and engaged men speaking out against gender-based violence (CARE, 2023).







Establish multi-stakeholder taskforces to carry out national assessments of gender and social norms and associated barriers within all policies and institutions related to climate change and to develop cross-sectoral response strategies with clear indicators and targets aiming at structural changes.



Recruit and resource expertise to build the capacity of public, private and voluntary sector partners on how to achieve gender and social norms' change at household, community, institutional and policy levels.





Ensure that efforts towards gender transformative climate action recognize and address harmful social norms including those that drive gender-based violence. For example, integrate approaches to prevent gender-based violence into climate adaptation programming and community engagement.







Promote tools and models to engage all genders, particularly including men and boys in all relevant protocols and interventions in the climate change sphere to enhance men's responsibility in gender equitable decision-making and to advance the elimination of discrimination and gender-based violence. Collaborate with youth, traditional and religious leadership, civil society, the private sector and research and government partners, as brokers and role models.





CARE International, CCAFS, FANRPAN, FAO, IFAD, WECF, WWF, UN Women (2019) Gender-Transformative Adaptation: From Good Practice to Better Policy: https://careclimatechange.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Gender-Transformative-Adaptation_Publication_FINAL.pdf

CARE International (2021). Report Card – Where is gender equality in National Climate Plans (NDCs)? https://careclimatechange.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/CARE-Gender-Quality-and-NDCs-v1.4.pdf

CARE International (2023). Gender Food Gap. https://www.care.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Gender-Food-Gap-July-2023.pdf

Craig Leisher et al (2016). Does the gender composition of forest and fishery management groups affect resource governance and conservation outcomes? A systematic map. Environmental Evidence, vol. 5, No. 6. https://environmentalevidencejournal.biomedcentral.com/ articles/10.1186/s13750-016-0057-8

FAO. 2024. The unjust climate – Measuring the impacts of climate change on rural poor, women and youth. Rome. https://doi.org/10.4060/cc9680en

Kameri-Mbote, P. (2013). Climate Change and Gender Justice: In O. C. Ruppel, C. Roschmann, & K. Ruppel-Schlichting (Eds.), Climate Change: International Law and Global Governance (1st ed., pp. 323–348). Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft mbH; JSTOR. http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv941w8s.16

Johnson, A., Kleiber, D. L., Gomese, C., Sukulu, M., Saeni-Oeta, J., Giron-Nava, A., Cohen, P. J., & McDougall, C. (2021). Assessing inclusion in community-based natural resource management: A framework and methodology. CGIAR Research Program on Fish Agri-Food Systems. https://digitalarchive.worldfishcenter.org/handle/20.500.12348/4997

McDougall, C., Elias, M., Zwanck, Diop, K., Simao, J., Galie, A., Fischer, G., Jumba, H., & Najjar, D. (2023). Fostering gender-transformative change for equality in food systems: A review of methods and strategies at multiple levels. (Gender Impact Platform Working Group Working paper 15; CGIAR GENDER Impact Platform). CGIAR. https://cgspace.cgiar.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/a0964c70-620a-416e-a8f2-8712f45fa3d6/content

Overseas Development Insitute (2023) Gender Equality Targeting in Climate Finance. https://odi.cdn.ngo/media/documents/ODI_2023_Gender_equality_targeting_in_adaptation_finance.pdf

Schipper, E. L. F. (2020). Maladaptation-When Adaptation to Climate Change Goes Very Wrong. One Earth, 3(4), 409–414. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2020.09.014

United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (2022a). Dimensions and examples of the gender-differentiated impacts of climate change, the role of women as agents of change and opportunities for women: synthesis report by the secretariat. FCCC/SBI/2022/7. Available at https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/sbi2022_07.pdf.

UN Women (2022). Explainer: How gender inequality and climate change are interconnected. https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/explainer/2022/02/explainer-how-gender-inequality-and-climate-change-are-interconnected







CARE FRANCE

71, RUE ARCHEREAU 75019 PARIS +331 53 19 89 89 INFO-CARE@CAREFRANCE.ORG WWW.CAREFRANCE.ORG **Authors:** Clémentine Gouranton, Marie Leroy, Fanny Petitbon (CARE France), Wilatluk Sinswat, Cynthia McDougall (Stockholm Environment Institute)

Publication: September 2024

Design: Agence Intrépide

This policy brief has been developed based on the following publication by the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), Asia Center: Sinswat, W., Pross, C., McDougall, C. and Nguyen, J. P. (2024). Beyond a seat at the table: Pathways for gender-equitable participation in climate adaptation decision-making. CARE France.

For more information, please contact:
Marie Leroy, Senior Climate Advisor, CARE France leroy@carefrance.org