

# **Gender dynamics and the challenges of adaptation and mitigation strategies to climate change and variability in South-West Zimbabwe**

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## **Abstract**

While climate change and variability is a topical issue to scholars and researchers alike, it is also of interest to ordinary people in most rural communities. Climate change impact on agriculture, the backbone of Zimbabwe's economy, has ripple effects on people's livelihoods. Given that men and women are affected differently and react differently to climate change impact, this paper sought to assess the various ways in which climate change and variability impact men and women, directly and indirectly. It also sought to explore the dynamic and complex nature of the different male and female adaptation and mitigation strategies. The research design is a qualitative-interpretive multiple case study of villages in the districts of South- West Zimbabwe. Purposive sampling was used to select districts, villages and focus groups, and was followed by the random selection of respondents from each group. Regarding the interviews, the selection of respondents was done through snowballing. In the data collection, the researcher used in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and direct observation. The first phase of data collection was in December 2013 with the second phase being in April to May 2014. Marxist-feminist, eco-feminist and human adaptation theories inform this paper as its philosophical foundation. The results of this study reveal that women are more vulnerable to climate change impact because of the nature of their economic activities, their poverty and the socio-cultural realities imposed on them by society as well as their lack of information on new agricultural technologies. The paper recommends that in the period preceding adaptation and mitigation, gender dynamics and their associated complexities be considered. Being different, men and women react differently to climate change. Accordingly, agricultural extension officers and other stakeholders in the climate change impact arena should be made aware of these gender dynamics. Education and training in the form of practical lessons and the use of local languages should be emphasised during adaptation and mitigation training.

**Key terms:** Gender; Climate change; Adaptation strategies; Rural communities