

## UN report points to central role women play in efforts to fight climate change



18 November 2009 – Climate change strikes its fiercest blow against the poorest, most vulnerable people around the world, according to a United Nations report **released** today, urging policymakers to heed the role of women – who make up the majority of the poor – in combating climate change.

The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) report warned that the poor depend more on agriculture for their livelihoods, risking hunger and loss of income when droughts strike, rains become unpredictable and hurricanes move with unprecedented force.

The poor also tend to live in marginal areas, vulnerable to floods, rising seas and storms, noted *The State of World Population 2009* UNFPA **report**, stressing that women bear the disproportionate burden of climate change as they make up the majority of the world's 1.5 billion people living on less than \$1 a day.

"Poor women in poor countries are among the hardest hit by climate change, even though they contributed the least to it," said UNFPA Executive Director Thoraya Ahmed Obaid.

"With the possibility of a climate catastrophe on the horizon, we cannot afford to relegate the world's 3.4 billion women and girls to the role of victim," said Ms. Obaid. "Wouldn't it make more sense to have 3.4 billion agents for change?"

The report contended that the international community's fight against climate change would be more successful if policies, programmes and treaties consider the needs, rights and potential of women.

It spotlighted studies showing women are more likely than men to die in natural disasters, with the gender mortality gap most pronounced where incomes are low and status differences between men and women are high.

The UNFPA report also demonstrated that investment in women and girls – particularly in education and health – boosts economic development, reduces poverty and benefits the environment. It said that girls with more education tend to have smaller and healthier

families as adults because access to reproductive health services – including family planning – results in lower fertility rates that contribute to slower growth in greenhouse-gas emissions in the long run.

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