

Social challenges and climate action #6:

Climate action and transition to a low-carbon society must incorporate women's perspective

By Kevin Li

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Since the CarbonCare InnoLab's Paris Watch Programme was launched, six community dialogues have been held so far. The first six dialogues were focused on the residents of subdivided housing, the welfare and the community health care sectors, outdoor workers, and the persons with disabilities and mental illness. This time, together with the participants, we examine, from women's perspective, the impact of climate change and the opportunities and challenges brought about by the transition to a low-carbon society. Gender

inequality is a long-standing but neglected issue, and debates are generally taboo in society, especially in East Asian society, which is deeply influenced by Confucian culture, and the discussion of women's perspectives has long been suppressed. Therefore, the organising of this community dialogue in Hong Kong is also of special significance, creating a precedent for this type of event. All the participants believed that this community dialogue inspired us to start thinking about the relationship with climate change, and agreed that climate action and the transition of a low-carbon society must incorporate the perspective of women in order to be considered a just transition.

An important part of the CarbonCare InnoLab's Paris Watch programme is to, through community dialogues, promote a deeper understanding of all walks of life and enhance their ability to deal with climate crisis. These dialogues put the concept of "just transition" at the core, and advocate that the interests of citizens who may be affected by unemployment, economic restructuring and rising prices must be taken into account during the transition. The principle of "just transition" also emphasizes the participatory and inclusive climate adaptation process. The participation and voices of various stakeholders, who are facing the impacts of climate change, must be guaranteed and respected.

Adhering to the principle of "just transition" throughout the first six community dialogues, CarbonCare InnoLab held the seventh community dialogue on 24 May 2022, with a total of 16 people from 11 organizations, including women's groups, policy think tanks, social enterprises and environmental groups.¹ From their own experiences, social roles to policy formulation, participants with different background and professions examined the impacts of climate change and the opportunities and challenges brought about by the transition to a low-carbon society from women's perspective.

Climate impacts on women linked to career and family roles

Ordinary people may not notice the impacts of climate change on women, and may not consider it an issue. So, we started with career and family roles to explore the impact of climate change on women. Participants started with occupational and domestic roles common to women, such as outdoor cleaners, occupational and home caregivers, and farmers, and some discussions may have

¹ For the full list of participants, please refer to the Annex at the end of the article.

already occurred in previous community dialogues on community care workers² and outdoor workers.³ But the climate impact on women as home caregivers seems to go unnoticed. Participants also mentioned that in extreme weather, caregivers face possible food shortages and inflation, additional medical expenses, and psychological stress during treatment. Many caregivers in Hong Kong are domestic helpers from Southeast and South Asia, and their voices are often ignored. In addition, women as farmers also worried that extreme weather will affect their harvests and even make them unable to plant crops and cause unemployment.



Therefore, in addition to regulating outdoor work under high temperature as mentioned above, how to protect and support women caregivers and self-employed persons should further be studied and followed up, including legal and policy, financial and medical support.

² CarbonCare Innolab, *Social challenges and climate action #2: Extreme weather hit hard welfare and health care workers and the vulnerable people*. <https://www.ccinnolab.org/en/AhTanBlogPost/ahtanblog23>

³ CarbonCare Innolab, *Social challenges and climate action #3: Legislation is the only way to relieve outdoor workers' suffering from extreme weather*. <https://www.ccinnolab.org/en/AhTanBlogPost/ahtanblog26>

Women are also leaders and active participants in climate action

In fact, the impact of women's gender roles is ultimately caused by gender inequality and role stereotypes. Even so, women should not be just passive influencers, but leaders and active participants in climate action. Women are actively involved in climate policies from law to public administration, to industry and companies, and women's perspective should also be incorporated into relevant policy formulations.



For example, through public participation, how can policy makers encourage the reduction of single-use menstrual products, and research and introduce alternative products? In addition, how can policy makers facilitate home caregivers to participate in waste sorting and recycling and carbon footprint reduction? How can policy makers strengthen community health care and childcare services to reduce the pressure on caregivers? Women cleaners also play a major role in waste recycling industry, but their rights are often not guaranteed. How to make waste recycling a professional sector is also worth exploring. Throughout the international negotiation process, women's participation in policy formulation and decision-making is also an issue that has received widespread attention. Key local policies, including the government budget, school curriculum and climate action plans, have not reflected women's perspectives, which need to be integrated.

Women are also the organizers and educators of community-level climate action. At present, many women are actively teaching low-carbon knowledge, organize groups to buy organic and low-carbon products, and run workshops, second-hand goods trading and educational platforms. This will encourage each other to understand and implement details of low-carbon life. Furthermore, many women have already made great contributions in promoting climate research and low-carbon economy, so I won't repeat them here.

Finally, the current Hong Kong Climate Action Plan does not discuss relations with women, and we expect groups participating in the dialogue to continue to explore the role of women in climate change and low-carbon transition. Participants agreed that the content of this community dialogue was enriching and inspiring. They have started thinking about the relationship with climate change. They also agreed that climate action and the transition to a low-carbon society must incorporate the perspective of women in order to be considered a just transition.

Project Team (in no specific order)

Dialogue Designer and Chief Facilitator: Thierry Leung (Senior Social Worker, Programme Manager)

Deputy Facilitator: Blaire Ho (Programme Officer), Kylie Lai (Programme Officer), Natalie Sum (Senior Programme Officer), Alissa Tung (Programme Director)

Facilitation Advisor: Lilian Wang

Project Advisor: Chong Chan Yau (Co-founder and CEO)

Author's Profile

Mr. Kevin Li is the Researcher for CarbonCare InnoLab.

Annex

CarbonCare InnoLab invited different groups and experts in Hong Kong to participate in the sixth community dialogue (in no specific order):

- Hong Kong Federation of Women's Centres
- Hong Kong Women Workers' Association
- Hong Kong Food & Environment Hygiene Department Staff Rights Union
- Globalization Monitor
- HER Fund

- Center for Social Innovation Studies, Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, Chinese University of Hong Kong
- EatALL
- HATCH
- Hong Kong Momtrepreneurs
- Civic Exchange
- Fair Lady Hong Kong

Links

1. [Social challenges and climate action #1: Empowering residents of subdivided houses in Hong Kong](#)
2. [Social challenges and climate action #2: Extreme weather hit hard welfare and health care workers and the vulnerable people](#)
3. [Social challenges and climate action #3: Legislation is the only way to relieve outdoor workers' suffering from extreme weather](#)
4. [Social challenges and climate action #4: Our society must include persons with disabilities in tackling climate change](#)
5. [Social challenges and climate action #5: Combining research and community action to support people with mental illness in tackling climate change](#)