“Climate change is a Life Task for us all, not just for Cuban Women!” Lessons in Gendered Climate Change Resilience from a Socialist Small Island Developing Nation

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Cuba’s high geographical susceptibility to reoccurring extreme weather events and its vulnerability to the impacts of climate change has been further exacerbated by the country’s debilitated economy, weak infrastructure and restricted food rations.

Paradoxically, these factors and the legacy of the Cuban Revolution have pushed women, often considered to be the least empowered group, to the forefront of climate action in Cuba.

Although gendered experiences of climate change have been widely addressed in other Small Island Developing Nations (SIDNs), little is known about the Cuban context due to government restrictions on research. Our project “Mujeres Tarea Vida” examined the socio-political factors that determine Cuban women’s resilience, and their contribution to the country’s plan for climate action: *Tarea Vida* (“Life Task”). An in-depth literature review, ethnographic fieldwork, and 40 interviews with female government officials and civil society representatives were conducted at three research sites in Cuba.

The results of our research showed women spearheading environmental initiatives and disaster recovery efforts after extreme weather events, in spite of the socioeconomic barriers they as Cubans and as women face. The ideological power of their identity as revolutionaries is the main driver behind their leadership, self-sufficiency and innovation mind-set.

These findings bear critical implications for the study of climate change resilience in Small Island Developing Nations. Learning from successful gender-sensitive examples of climate governance developed in different socio-political contexts is paramount to addressing the *Life Task* of climate change faced by Cuba and the global community as a whole.

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