

FAST FACTS

United Nations
Development Programme



Gender and Environment

Dependent as they are on the environment to feed their families and eke out a living, the world's poorest people suffer the most from changes in climate and the degradation of natural resources. The world's poorest inhabitants – six out of ten of whom are female – are therefore most severely affected by increasingly longer droughts, more severe storms and flooding, species depletion, soil degradation, deforestation, and other negative alterations to the natural environment.

While changes in the environment affect everyone, they affect men and women differently. Women's and girls' traditional responsibilities as food growers, water and fuel gatherers, and caregivers connect them intimately to available natural resources and the climate, making them more vulnerable to environmental hardships.



Photo: Abbie Trayler-Smith/Panos Pictures

MATTERS OF FACT

- The degree to which countries have succeeded in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment plays an important role in determining their ability to adapt to climate change and respond to natural disasters.
- A growing literature supports the view that societies with greater gender equality may achieve better environmental outcomes.
- Civic activism and gender equity are positively associated with a more robust record of environmental governance.

Affected first and worst, poor women are rendered all the more vulnerable by longstanding inequalities that silence their voices and neglect their needs. Identifying and addressing women's needs, as well as promoting women as decision makers, are critical elements to ensure the success of environmental policy and programming.

Yet women are not only victims of climate change and environmental degradation – they also possess the knowledge and skills that are critical to finding local solutions. Environmental policies, programmes and finance, therefore, should incorporate and benefit from this know-how while supporting women in the face of today's unprecedented environmental challenges.

Given the requisite tools and the support, women are a driving force for development. Indeed, experience shows that the resiliency of households and communities depends in great part on the resiliency of women. UNDP seeks to provide women with the support they need to get their families, their communities, and nations, on the right track.

To assist poor women (and men), UNDP helps governments to:

- Include women in environmental planning, budgeting, and policy-making processes;
- Deliver energy and environment services, such as clean water and mechanized power, to poor women;

- Leverage financing for women's organizations and entrepreneurs working to mitigate and/or adapt to climate change;
- Harness women's local knowledge to protect, sustain and manage the environment and its resources.

UNDP also assists women's groups to take part in national discussions, gain decision-making power and access environmental finance.

Gender, Environment, and Sustainable Development

UNDP works on water management, energy, and sustainable development initiatives to:

- Take account of gender differences, inequalities, and access to resources into social and economic analysis;
- Ensure women's involvement in integrated water management and access to energy initiatives.

Gender and Climate Change Adaptation

Because climate change affects women and men differently, UNDP helps governments to:

- Identify gender-specific impacts and protection measures for: floods, droughts, heat waves, disease outbreaks, desertification, species change, and other existing or potential environmental threats and disasters;
- Ensure that national and local adaptation policies and actions reflect both women's and men's experience and needs.

Gender and Climate Change Finance

To ensure that climate change finance reaches poor women and men equitably, UNDP:

- Advocates with Fund Boards and Secretariats to incorporate gender dimensions into operational frameworks and decision-making processes;
- Integrates the principles of gender equality and women's empowerment into climate change policies, programmes and funding proposals.

UNDP in Action

- In **Tanzania**, a UNDP-GEF Small Grants Programme project is enabling villagers to tap solar energy to pump water for drinking and irrigation, offering improved health and food security and generating income and employment opportunities.

- UNDP is partnering with UNEP and 40 other organizations in the Global Gender and Climate Alliance, which has trained hundreds of government delegates and civil society. This is contributing to more gender-responsive climate change policies, from national adaptation programs to international negotiations.
- A UNDP-supported programme in **Iran** demonstrates that local communities can restore and sustain degraded natural resources. By setting up Village Development Groups, granting women the opportunity to play a leadership role in sustaining natural resources, the programme establishes an efficient, empowering means of distributing micro-credits to develop small businesses.
- In partnership with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, UNDP is working in **Burkina Faso, Mali** and **Senegal** to roll out 600 sustainable, rural agro-enterprises that are providing electricity for light and mechanizing laborious tasks, such as grinding grain. As a result, women in Burkina Faso are saving a remarkable two to six hours per day on domestic chores. The average literacy rate has also increased from 29 percent to 39 percent in 14 villages, as the electricity enables women and girls to study during evening hours.
- A UNDP Gender Assessment Tool was used in national budgeting and planning processes in over 20 countries. In **Kenya** this led to energy subsidies for women and in **Dominican Republic** it guided increases in health and education budgets.
- In the south of **Benin**, a UNDP programme is aiding village women to find easier access to credit and receive training on more efficient, environmentally friendly oyster farming techniques.

For more information, please visit:

www.undp.org/energyandenvironment/gender.htm

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