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Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women through Climate Change Adaptation

United Nations Development Programme



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This brief discusses the nexus between climate change and the third Millennium Development Goal: to promote gender equality and empower women (MDG 3). It describes how initiatives financed by the Global Environment Facility have integrated gender perspectives into climate change adaptation and highlight examples from the current EEG/GEF portfolio.

Achieving MDG3

Progress, gaps, and lessons learned

The millennium development goal 3 sets out target to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education by 2005, and at all levels by 2015. Targets include removing disparity in share of women and men in wage employment in non-agricultural sector and representation in the government.

Significant progress has been made in narrowing the gender gap in primary and secondary schooling. Globally, by 2008, 96 girls per 100 boys were enrolled in schools compared with 91 in 1999¹. However, progress does not reflect the disparities in completion rates and improvements due to higher drop-out rates among boys. In terms of employment, women lag behind men in securing jobs in non-agricultural sectors and equitable wages. Progress in representation in the parliament has been slow; on average, proportion of seats held by women in parliament is about 18% globally.

Beyond the targets set out in MDG 3, gender equality is recognized as an important driver to tackle poverty, hunger, diseases, and achieve the other goals. Investments in expanding opportunities, legal rights, and participation of women and girls have helped progress across the MDGs. For instance, increased female school enrolment is associated with better health and nutrition for families. Constitutional and legal reforms including quotas for representation and access to land enhance women's economic empowerment and increase their political participation. Investing in energy sources for households reduces the burden of domestic activities and frees girls and women to engage in education and employment opportunities².

Despite the crucial linkages between gender equality and other development goals, gender equality has not yet been integrated fully into most national policies and plans. Where they have been in principle, implementation is not enforced and legal protection is lacking. Cultural barriers and conflicts continue to propagate inequality for women and girls threatening their health and safety, limiting their decision making power, and leading to inequitable access to resources, education, and employment opportunities³.

The Climate Change MDG 3 Nexus⁴

Climate change has gender specific characteristics attributed to differentiated effects of climate change and extreme events on women; insufficient representation of women in climate change strategies; and role of women as agents of change in tackling climate change⁵.

Women and men both face risks relating to climate and vulnerability. Existing inequalities manifesting in differentiated capacities, knowledge, and rights can however lead to accentuated vulnerabilities to climate change for women. Climate change can also magnify the inequalities as resources and access to goods and services become constrained in a changing climate.

Women in many parts of the world are responsible for agricultural production and collection, storage, and use of natural resources such as water, firewood, fodder for livestock, forestry products for medicine and food. Climate change impacts on natural resources for food, subsistence, and livelihoods can not only impact women's food security and safety but increase the burden on women and limit education and employment opportunities.

Climate change including increased severity and frequency of extreme events put women and girls especially at risk of loss of life and livelihoods, exploitation, and further marginalization. Inequitable access to food, shelter, and medicines increase gender impacts post-disaster.

Health-related burdens for women and girls and infant mortality can also rise significantly as a result of increased incidence of vector- and water-borne diseases in a changing climate. Reduced capacity and resources to combat diseases can lead to increased prevalence of existing diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

Finally, limited participation in decision-making and representation at national, sub-national, and local levels can lead to climate change policies and plans that do not reflect the differential effects of climate change on women and their needs and priorities as strategies are put in place to address climate change risks and opportunities.

It is also important to note that women are strong agents of change, and their leadership is critical. Across the developing world, women's leadership in natural resource management is well recognized. For centuries, women have passed on their skills in water management, forest management and management of biodiversity.

Mainstreaming gender in climate change adaptation ensures that the differentiated capacities and impacts are considered and women are involved in the design and implementation of policies, planning and programming initiatives, not just as beneficiaries, but as drivers in climate change adaptation.

¹ UNESCO

² "What will it take to achieve the Millennium Development Goals?", UNDP, 2010

³ MDG Synthesis report

⁴ "Resource Guide on Gender and Climate Change", UNDP, 2009

⁵ Women's Major Group, Commission on Sustainable Development, 2006

UNDP mandates gender mainstreaming in all its programming through a gender marker that rates the projects for gender relevance. Projects are required to assess how they are addressing differences in roles and needs of women and men. Quantitative data on number of women in project staff, on project boards, and in jobs generated by the project are also to be reported.

Some of the operational approaches used to facilitate integration of gender perspectives into adaptation strategies and programming include:

1 Carrying out gender-sensitive assessments of vulnerabilities, capacities, priorities for adaptation: A number of UNDP/GEF adaptation projects carry out vulnerability and socio-economic assessments that facilitate identification of gender-specific vulnerabilities, impacts, and needs with focus on capacity requirements to assimilate adaptation measures.

Tanzania | In Tanzania, the environmental, social, and economic implications of different water flow scenarios in the Pangani River Basin are being collected and assessed to facilitate equitable provision of freshwater for the environment and livelihoods.

Morocco | In Morocco, vulnerability assessments are conducted in the context of social conventions, with men separated from women. Women are given an opportunity to express themselves in comfortable settings where they traditionally engage. This approach helps to reveal enabling factors for women's inclusion in the project process.

2 Engaging women stakeholders at all levels in project planning and implementation: In order to facilitate integration of gender perspectives into policies, plans, and adaptation activities, UNDP seeks engagement of women at national, sub-national, and community levels through stakeholder consultations, focus groups, and representation in project planning and implementation.

Samoa | In Samoa, UNDP is engaging the Village Councils of Chiefs through the Internal Affairs Division of Ministry of Women, Community and Social Development (MWCSD), to facilitate gender-sensitive project implementation. The Women in Business Development group is also involved in disaster preparedness and response planning for agriculture-based livelihoods.

Niger | In Niger, management committees comprised of 50% women are being established and trained to plan and implement project interventions to enhance resilience of food production systems and/or food insecure communities. An example involves a committee to manage construction and maintenance of cereal banks.

3 *Increasing benefits of adaptation strategies and measures to women: Recognizing the differentiated impacts of climate change on women, UNDP initiatives endeavor to increase the benefits of adaptation to women by targeting them as participants in adaptation measures and capacity building activities. Projects also aim to understand and work with gender-differentiated patterns of using natural resources.*

Burkina Faso

In Burkina Faso, project is targeting families for developing 'vegetable gardens' and providing credit for stock and inputs to women goat and sheep farmers to promote adoption of adaptation measures in the agro-sylvo-pastoral sectors.

Namibia

In the semi arid areas of northern Namibia, the CBA project is training women in eight villages in the adoption of adaptation measures to reduce women dependence on rainfed agriculture. The project promotes dry land crops, natural resources and livestock rearing to increase household nutrition and income levels.



Case Box 1: In Zimbabwe, an adaptation initiative aims to develop and pilot a range of effective coping mechanisms for reducing the vulnerability of farmers and pastoralists, targeting 50% women, in Chiredzi District to drought shocks. Some ways the project is mainstreaming gender include:

- *Vulnerability and Adaptation Analysis undertaken for the project gathered and assessed the views, experiences, and needs of men and women.*
- *Financial and technical support is being provided for vulnerable communities, 50% of which will be women groups, for the design and implementation of a range of small to medium scale livelihood improvement projects.*
- *In collaboration with men and women, the project conducted a mapping of the natural resources perceived to be of value (physical and bio-physical) and identified gender-differentiated NRM benefits and training needs.*
- *Business, marketing and management skills are being developed for community groups, 50% of which are womens', in value addition and marketing of dryland products.*

Current adaptation efforts can be augmented to promote gender equality by incorporating the following considerations:

- ▶ *Increase participation of women in designing adaptation strategies taking into account their traditional and existing knowledge;*
- ▶ *Promote the inclusion of gender considerations in policy and planning influenced by adaptation programming;*
- ▶ *Promote equitable access to, distribution of, and control of benefits from resources, such as land, water;*
- ▶ *Focus on women for livelihood diversification opportunities and provide training on jobs generated by projects;*
- ▶ *Enable equitable access to and allocation of technological and financial resources for climate change adaptation*

To facilitate these gender-sensitive strategies in adaptation programming, monitoring, reporting, and evaluation should be strengthened. Attention should be paid to developing gender sensitive indicators; collecting gender-disaggregated data to inform project planning and implementation; and evaluating the impact of adaptation policies and programmes on gender using both quantitative and qualitative data.

Conclusion

Gender is a cross-cutting dimension of the various MDGs. A gender approach enables us to safeguard the MDGs as involving women as beneficiaries and agents of change can significantly enhance the effectiveness of various policies and plans addressing climate change. Moreover, adaptation can also be a means and an opportunity to promote gender equality and empower women.





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