



## POLICY BRIEF:

# Gender and the Revision of the National Determined Contributions

**Commissioned by: United Nations Development Program**

**Consultants : HEAT (Habitat, Energy Application & Technology)**



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(could we please try to align the recommendations to the challenges above. Some of them are not aligned, and may be misplaced)

### **Key messages**

*Lesotho has established the framework for mainstreaming gender in climate action but faces several challenges, including:*

- *Lack of sufficient guidance on implementation*
- *Insufficient research on impacts of climate change on local communities*
- *Limited availability of dedicated gender experts*
- *Limited awareness and expertise on gender inclusion*
- *Lack of gender inclusive budgeting*
- *Time constraints in planning and implementation of projects.*

*To address these challenges, the following recommendations have been made:*

- *Develop detailed guidelines and an easy-to-use checklist for gender mainstreaming in implementation and mandate adoption of minimum standards for gender mainstreaming in all climate action.*
- *Encourage partnership with local community groups and promote success stories of gender inclusion*
- *Create a gender working group for climate action with decision-making and encourage participatory approaches to consultation and decision-making.*
- *Enhance awareness and skills through training and integration into all courses.*
- *Ensure realistic timelines for planning and project implementation*

Figure 1 - Policy brief key messages.

## **1 Introduction**

Lesotho is a lower-middle-income country, where over 70% of the population resides in rural areas largely dependent on subsistence livelihoods. The fragile ecosystem of Lesotho has increasingly experienced extreme weather events like droughts, floods, hailstorms, cyclones, snowstorms, in addition to continued rainfall variability and increasing temperatures. The unpredictable weather patterns have led to reduced farming and food insecurity, land degradation, and depletion of the country's natural resources, including loss of biodiversity, with differentiated impact on the population, especially the poor and vulnerable populations of the country. Thus, Lesotho is currently ranked 127 out of 182 in the ND-GAIN index score; which is composed of a Vulnerability score and a Readiness score. The country is ranked as highly vulnerable among countries on climate change impacts.

Women and vulnerable populations are more dependent on natural resources for survival and sustenance yet have limited access to these resources due to prevailing inequality in economic, political, and legal influence, which then impacts their ability to cope with the changing climate further increasing their vulnerability. It is evident as per the finding of the SADC Gender Protocol Barometer of 2020 that climate change and its impacts are not gender neutral within the SADC Region. Policy and actions implemented to address climate change are therefore also not gender neutral. Creation of an enabling environment where women and vulnerable populations are integral to the decision making and consultative process while also being enhancing the capacity for engagement through appropriately designed measures are essential for a truly successful outcome of minimizing the impacts of climate change on women and vulnerable groups.

Awareness of these challenges has spurred various initiatives in policy and programmes. For example, the Lesotho National Adaptation Programme for Action, National Climate Change Policy 2017-2027, Climate Change Implementation Strategy, the draft National Determined Contribution to Climate Change Commitment II and various programme initiatives supported by the UN and other donor agencies all aimed at addressing the impacts of climate change.

## 2 Objective

The purpose of this policy brief on gender mainstreaming in the context of climate action for Lesotho, is to outline the steps that need to be taken by all stakeholders to promote gender equality in the country's efforts to address climate change. This includes identifying and addressing the barriers to opportunities related to climate policies and programmes, thus promoting the empowerment of all individuals regardless of their gender to participate in and benefit from climate related activities.

Such actions would foster alignment of Lesotho's climate actions to the country's Gender and Development Policy 2018- 2030, which aims to create a society in which all individuals, regardless of their gender, can fully participate and thrive. By mainstreaming a gender perspective into climate action, Lesotho can ensure that its climate action is inclusive and benefits all members of society. This is particularly important given that women and girls are often disproportionately affected by the negative impacts of climate change, and therefore must be actively involved in finding solutions.

This brief is meant for policy makers at the national and provincial level, legislative authorities, project planners and designers from government, donors, NGOs, private entities, and any other entity involved in planning, conceptualizing, drafting, implementing and/or monitoring initiatives to address climate change.

What is meant by...

**Gender** means the roles, duties and responsibilities which are culturally or socially ascribed to women, men, girls, and boys.

**Vulnerable groups** not limited to boys, girls; older women and men; gay lesbian bisexual, transgender, and intersex people; disabled persons, sex workers, people living with HIV and AIDS.

**Gender equality** means the equal enjoyment of rights and access to opportunities and outcomes, including control of resources, by women, men, girls and boys and other marginalised groups.

**Gender mainstreaming** means the process of identifying gender gaps and making women's men's, girls and boys concerns and experiences integral to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all spheres so that they benefit equally.

Figure 2 - Policy brief key concepts.

### 3 Gender and climate linkages

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Lesotho's population of approximately 2.2 million is near equally distributed between women (50.8%) and men (49%) in 2021. However, 70% of this population resides in rural areas largely dependent on agriculture (crop farming and livestock) and underserved. Rainfed, non-mechanised traditional farming practices dominate. Majority of agricultural labour is done by women in Lesotho in addition to other household chores that of cooking, cleaning, minding children, taking care of the elderly and infirm.. There are also approximately 35% of female headed households where women are solely responsible for the subsistence of themselves and their dependents. With increased frequency of extreme weather like droughts and floods, crop production and livestock rearing, which is the mainstay of the rural population, gets negatively affected leading to food insecurity. It is estimated that over 70% of the rural population experiences food insecurity. Over half the children under the age of 5 years and quarter of the women in the country are found to be anaemic, a testament to the inadequacy of the nutrition levels among women and children in the country.

The customary practices of land and livestock ownership favours male members of a family, further marginalizing the women who are already economically disadvantaged with limited income earning opportunities. The lack of control and decision powers over their resources hampers women's ability to access credit, make improvements or changes to their holdings or adopt new practices that could reduce their vulnerability.

Access to clean and safe water, another crucial resource required for household needs as well as agriculture, is only available to 29% of the population. Open water sources remain the main source of water for the people and is the domain of women and children who are responsible for collecting it. Reduced availability of water due to reduced rainfall, puts an additional strain on the women and children (mainly the girl child) needing to walk longer distances, increasing their vulnerability to gender-based violence (GBV). Disasters like floods on the other hand has globally been found to cause death and injury to women and men.

According to the Gender Based Violence Indicators Study by Gender Links (2015), 86% of women in Lesotho experienced some form of violence in their lifetime and most of these are never reported. The reasons for this high prevalence of GBV in society are myriad, the patriarchal society and widespread poverty are contributing factors among others. The climate crisis increases overall vulnerability of the already marginalised women and vulnerable populations exposing them to violence and exploitation. Mainstreaming gender into climate action would lead to their empowerment and ultimately enhance safety and security for women.

Climate change also endangers health of women and vulnerable groups. Already HIV is feminized in Lesotho with prevalence rates of 27% and 18% among young women and young men respectively. When climate disasters strike, it can often limit access to health care for the people (i.e., access to ARV treatments for people living with HIV and AIDS) as well as increasing risks to maternal and child health. Extreme heat can increase miscarriages among pregnant women and increase vector borne diseases like malaria and dengue fever.

Lesotho does well on the education levels, with both women and men are equally educated. However, this has not been reflected in higher incomes for women largely because of prevailing societal norms that prevent women from having access and control of productive resources like land and restricts them from acquiring skills they need to improve their lives. Although women are responsible for most of the farming in the country, enrolment of women in agricultural courses in

limited. Women are found in rural development courses but not in Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) courses. New innovative green technologies are the future providing an opportunity for greater participation of women in this technology transition and it is the need of the hour that more women become a part of this transition through acquisition of necessary skills.

There is sufficient evidence to show that climate change increases the vulnerability of the already marginalised women and other vulnerable groups and thus climate change action must be mindful of this vulnerability and aim to alleviate this by adopting appropriate gender inclusive approaches to planning and implementation.

## 4 Legislative Framework

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The Constitution of Lesotho states “...every person in Lesotho is entitled, whatever his race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status to fundamental human rights and freedoms...” laying the framework for gender equality in society.

Lesotho developed its first Gender and Development Policy (GAD 2003- 2013) recognising the importance of gender equality and gender inclusion into all spheres of development to create a better society for all people in the country. Many regulatory frameworks were created, for example the Enactment of Legal Capacity of Married Persons Act, the Education Act, the Children’s Welfare and Protection act, the Companies Act and several other such acts were approved during this time espousing the tenets of gender equality. However, challenges remained, and the GAD 2018- 2030 was developed following extensive consultations among stakeholders. The new GAD policy has been designed to consider the changing scenarios, regional and global commitments, and new challenges that women and vulnerable communities are experiencing. The African Union Agenda 2063 and the SADC Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan and the Agenda 2030 principle of “Leave No One Behind” are integral to the GAD policy. Overall, a robust policy that strives to promote and provide national guidelines for institutionalizing gender equity and equality as an integral component of social, economic and political development. The GAD 2018-2030 also specifically highlights “Gender Climate Change Sustainable Development and Disaster Risk Management” as a priority area, acknowledging the negative impacts of climate change on gender as well as the crucial role of gender in environmental management that can contribute towards making communities more resilient.

Lesotho’s National Climate Change Policy Implementation Strategy (NCCPIS 2017) and the National Determined Contributions (NDC 2017) both include gender as a cross cutting thematic area where focus is primarily on awareness creation, capacity building and inclusion in policies and programmes. The Guidelines for Climate Change Policy and Plan Implementation (2018) while also mentioning gender as a cross cutting issue, delves further into specifics of gender inclusion in different areas like traditional medicines, water management, livestock management etc thus providing more concrete guidance on gender inclusion into implementation efforts.

## 5 Overview of ongoing climate action projects

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The 1st NDC created the basis for several individual programmes and projects to be developed and implemented in Lesotho to address the issues of climate change.

Based on the available project documents, it is evident that all reviewed projects do mention gender, some mention gender over 100 times like the projects “Improving adaptive capacity of vulnerable & food insecure populations (IACOV)”, “ReNOKA” and “Regeneration of Landscapes and Livelihoods (ROLL)”. These projects are also the ones that have incorporated gender in a systematic fashion by either conducting a gender assessment at the start or including the development of gender specific guidelines for the project as an integral component. However, this is not norm, only a few projects follow this approach. Most projects do not include a gender assessment as part of project planning or implementation.

Stakeholder consultation has been mentioned in the climate action projects. However the approach adopted for these consultations is often not clearly defined. While participant numbers, disaggregated based on gender, might be available it doesn’t necessarily translate to meaningful and inclusive consultation process. Communication in society is often governed by tradition and customs (i.e., older men are respected and thus their views are often not disputed even if it is not agreeable to others). Therefore, a participatory approach becomes essential where women are empowered to speak freely on their needs and apprehensions.

Ongoing projects and their results provide the basis for future action assisting decision makers with planning future policies and interventions, for this gender indicators are an important tool. Projects’ gender indicators tend to be restricted to collecting quantitative data in the form of gender disaggregated information without sufficient qualitative explanation about the data sets. Thus, learnings from these data sets are limited and the potential to have an in-depth understanding of gender issues surrounding a project are lost.

## 6 Challenges

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It is evident that Lesotho has established the framework for incorporating gender mainstreaming in climate action. However some specific challenges clearly remain.

- Inclusion of gender as a cross-cutting issue in climate change regulatory frameworks, acknowledges the need for gender inclusion into climate action, but fails to provide sufficient guidance on how gender inclusion is to be implemented at the institutional and/or programme and project level to have a meaningful impact.
- There is insufficient research and understanding of the interlinkages of the myriad impacts of climate change on local communities including coping strategies.
- Given the acceptance of cross cutting nature of gender in climate change, dedicated gender experts are not frequently assigned to institutions or projects.
- There is still limited awareness and expertise on how to incorporate gender.
- While funding is provided for projects and programmes, gender inclusive budgeting is not evident. Without appropriate funds, justice cannot be done on incorporating tenets of gender mainstreaming.
- There are often time constraints related to planning and implementation of programmes and projects, which inevitably leads to gender being addressed often in a cursory fashion due to the time required in undertaking a comprehensive consultative and participatory approach, hallmarks of a gender inclusive process.
- Often inadequate data and information is available on initiatives to evaluate level of gender inclusion and its success.



## 7 Recommendations

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A series of recommendations are proposed to support the integration of gender issues in climate change policy and actions supporting gender equality over time.

- **Remove regulatory hurdles:** There is no doubt that the conflict between the Customary Law and Statutory and Common law with respect to ownership of resources, needs to be addressed as it remains a significant hurdle towards equality and empowering women to improve their overall wellbeing through equitable access to resources.
- **Use of terminology:** It is evident that inclusion of the phrases like “gender is a cross cutting” issue in policy documents is inadequate for project planners and/or implementors, who might not be well versed with gender issues, on what or how gender concerns are to be included into project planning and implementation. Detailed guidelines need be developed that assist decision makers, project planners and implementors to mainstream gender in their tasks, even if gender experts are not available on hand.
- **Develop easy to use tools:** Additionally, an easy to use checklist should be developed that lists out the various steps to be followed to ensure that gender mainstreaming in climate action is adhered to. This can also then later be used for monitoring and evaluation purposes.
- **Creation of a working group on climate action:** A gender working group specifically for climate action be created under the auspices of the Ministry of Environment with support of the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports, Culture and Social protection with support from NDC, including the main stakeholders involved in developing and implementing projects in the climate change sphere.
  - Members of the working groups must decision-makers with ability to make decision on activities planned and/or conducted, allocating resources etc. This will ensure that commitments by the working group can be put to practice .
  - The working group should meet quarterly to discuss various ongoing projects and how they are integrating principles of gender mainstreaming.
  - This group could be an important forum for exchanging of information and experiences but also provide valuable guidance to addressing any hurdles experienced in the process of inclusion of gender issues in climate action.
- **Enhance awareness and skills:** There is insufficient expertise and knowledge about the interlinkages of gender and climate and how they should be incorporated and successfully addressed. Systematic and ongoing trainings on gender should be mainstay for all organisations and projects on climate including relevant government authorities covering all levels. A gender module should also be highlighted not only in the ongoing rural development courses but integrated into all courses conducted at local institutions. So that the next generation of engineers, teachers, entrepreneurs, etc are all aware of the importance of gender inclusion into their work and how they can go about implementing gender responsive action in their area of work or expertise.
- **Mandate adoption of minimum standards for gender mainstreaming in all climate action:** This would ensure the programmes and projects from the start are bound to follow basic minimum standards for incorporating gender mainstreaming into climate action. Starting with a gender assessment or analysis, leading to the development of a suitable Gender Action Plan (GAP) including a gender responsive budget, suitable indicators both quantitative and qualitative. This would then provide the framework to enable gender responsive implementation incorporating activities like capacity building and collecting gender disaggregated data from activities conducted. Finally monitoring of the implementation

through the identified indicators. This should become the norm for all aspects of project planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.

- **Consultation process:** Participatory approaches to consultation and decision making with envisaged beneficiaries, local communities and stakeholders must become integral to all aspects of climate action right from the planning to implementation and monitoring. The project time frame and budgeting must allow for this consultation.

*Process for Gender mainstreaming*

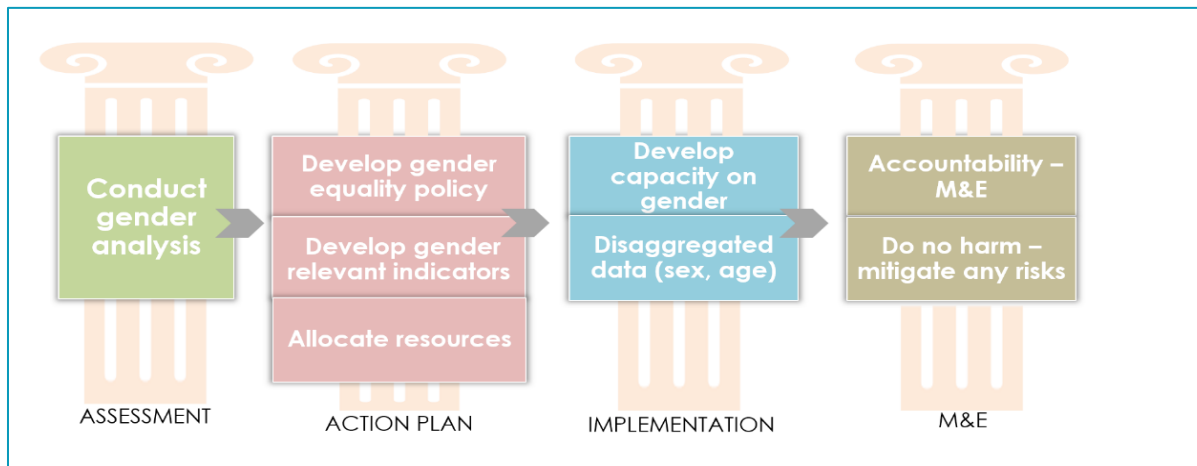


Figure 3 - Gender equality policy process.

- **Collating and promoting success stories of gender inclusion:** Good practices and experiences of promoting gender equity in climate change action should be used as evidence based information to inform policy/decision-makers in both national and local levels as well within organisations
- **Partnerships:** Creating working alliances with local formal or informal community groups must be encouraged to tap into existing networks for better outreach. Also, this facilitates more efficient implementation as these groups are already privy to in-depth knowledge of local communities they are working with and have developed a certain amount of trust within local communities.

## 8 Resources

Government of Lesotho. *Gender and development Policy 2003 – 2013*

Government of Lesotho. ***Gender and development policy 2018 – 2030***

Government of Lesotho. ***Lesotho's Constitution 1993 with amendments 2011.***  
[https://adsdatabase.ohchr.org/IssueLibrary/LESOTHO\\_Constitution.pdf](https://adsdatabase.ohchr.org/IssueLibrary/LESOTHO_Constitution.pdf)

LMS (2011). ***National Adaptation programme for Action on climate change.*** Ministry of Natural Resources. Lesotho

LMS (2017). ***National Determined Contribution under the UFCCC.*** Ministry of Energy and Meteorology, Lesotho

LMS (2017). ***Lesotho's National Climate Change Policy.*** <https://renoka.org/resources/reports/>, Lesotho.

Ministry of Agriculture and Food security. ***Agriculture productivity programme of South Africa. Environment and social management framework.***

Ministry of Energy and Meteorology (2018). Lesotho. ***Guidelines for the Implementation of climate Change in National Sectoral and Local policies, strategies and development plans.***

Ministry of Energy and Meteorology (2017). ***National Climate Change Policy Implementation strategy.***

Ministry of Energy and Meteorology; Ministry of Forestry, Range and Soil Conservation. ***Proposal Improving adaptive capacity of vulnerable and food-insecure populations in Lesotho.*** Adaptation Fund.

GEF *Regeneration of Livelihoods and Landscapes (ROLL) Project*

RENOKA <https://renoka.org/resources/reports/>

World Food Programme. ***Lesotho Annual Country report 2020. Country Strategic plan 2019-2024***

UNDP *Project Document Reducing vulnerability from climate change in the Foothills, Lowlands and the Lower Senqu River Basin.*