

Gender mainstreaming in national adaptation planning and implementation

A submission from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

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The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) welcomes the opportunity to submit its views on how to mainstream gender considerations in the national adaptation planning and implementation process as a contribution to the ongoing work of the Adaptation Committee.

IUCN recognizes the importance of mainstreaming gender considerations within adaptation efforts. Gender gaps across sectors and spheres of society undermine resilience and adaptation capacity at all levels. The ability of communities to adapt to climate change is inextricably linked to their access and ability to exercise their basic human rights, to their socio-economic conditions, and to the health of the ecosystems they depend on for their livelihoods and wellbeing. Full and effective participation of women is vital to ensure successful integration of their diverse and unique knowledge and experience into adaptation practices, and for them to be able to realize their rights.

The Adaptation Committee, in its 2019-2021 workplan, incorporates gender in two key objectives: incorporating gender as a cross-cutting consideration into all its activities, and providing guidance with a view to enhance capacity building for adaptation action. This submission aims to support the process of advancing these goals.

• How can gender best be incorporated into adaptation action?

Adaptation efforts attempt to address the impacts of climate change, such as droughts, floods, sea level rise, and intensified natural disasters, on people, physical infrastructure and ecosystems. As the climate continues to rapidly change in unprecedented ways, adaptation response is becoming increasingly critical. Identifying appropriate adaptation strategies are especially important for those living in areas susceptible to climate change impacts and particularly for vulnerable groups, including women and poor populations, who often lack sufficient adaptive capacity. Adaptation interventions risk being less effective and efficient, or even exacerbating inequities, when gender considerations and women's unique needs and capacities are left out.

Climate change is impacted by, and will have impacts upon, nearly every sector critical to survival, from water to health to agriculture, among others. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) notes that "poverty and disadvantage are expected to increase in some populations as global warming increases; limiting global warming to 1.5°C, compared with 2°C, could reduce the number of people both exposed to climate-related risks and susceptible to poverty by up to several hundred million by 2050."¹ The following are some examples of entry points for mainstreaming gender in key adaptation sectors.ⁱ

Disaster risk reduction (DRR): Women face differentiated vulnerabilities and risks during and after disasters. Studies have shown² that in countries where the gender gaps are wider, women are more likely to die during disasters than men. Post-disaster evidence³ around the world has also shown that women often have a harder time recovering both economically and socially. However, their powerful capacity as agents of change has been increasingly tapped in DRR and resilience efforts; women have challenged and evolved gender roles in society to lead community-based

ⁱ See Chapter 7 of [Roots for the Future](#) for case studies on women leading community-based action to build disaster risk reduction and resilience in Bangladesh; empowering women through water management in Gujarat, India; gender-responsive local adaptation planning in Morocco with women farmers and entrepreneurs; women leading communities to a healthier and more sustainable environment in South Africa; mangrove restoration in Guyana; transforming food security for and by women in Benin; and a gender-inclusive approach to fisheries and coastal resources management in Micronesia.

disaster relief action and preparedness in multiple contexts.

Water: Gender-responsive adaptation actions in the water sector are essential to address the needs of both women and men in their varied roles and responsibilities. As principal collectors of water across many societies, women are often the first to face the adverse effects of climate change in relation to water. Hence, they are essential to sustainable water management⁴. Gender-responsive measures for adaptation policy and programming include: increasing efficiency and reliance of water systems, storage options, irrigation, conservation strategies and infrastructure development to support women who are responsible for managing water resources; improving gender equality in leadership, decision-making, planning, and design of water resource systems; increasing capacity for women to receive technical and professional training in the water sector; and ensuring equitable distribution of benefits and access to water resources.

Agriculture and food security: Agricultural systems are especially vulnerable to climate variability and extremes. Poverty and gender inequality underlie climate change related food and nutrition insecurity. Women are involved throughout the entire food production value chain, from managing seed banks/depositories, to sowing and harvesting, to gathering resources for food preparation, to distributing food to their families and communities. These tasks leave women vulnerable to climate change impacts, as food production and preparation become more labor intensive with uncertain inputs and variable yields as they are exposed to climatic extremes.⁵ Gender-responsive adaptation measures include: enhancing access to agricultural services and credit; enhancing access and efficiency of water and resource management strategies; including women in decision-making and leadership in agricultural systems; promoting equal food distribution; and integrating gender and value chain analyses to improve agribusiness, alleviate poverty, and improve markets (at all levels) for both women and men.

Drylands and desertification: Climate change is forcing many communities in dryland areas to rethink long-standing gender roles, as men begin to migrate to cities looking for paid work, leaving women to assume the men's household and community duties but with the additional challenges of being poorly educated, being responsible for childcare, and lacking legal authority, thus perpetuating gender inequality.⁶ As women's roles in dryland management evolve, it is important to invest in initiatives that will advance the knowledge of particularly pastoralist women on climate change and adaptive management to help build their resilience. Investing in women is potentially the most important adaptation measure in dryland areas.

Coasts, oceans, and fisheries: Climate change related impacts, such as ocean acidification and warming, threaten all aspects of life for coastal communities—from affecting fisheries, to coastal erosion and loss of storm protection.⁷ Supporting gender-responsive adaptation measures for coastal zones includes: identifying gender-differentiated risks and developing plans for shoreline protection; stabilizing shorelines through mangrove restoration and management, which can be implemented by women; establishing diversity and gender equality in coastal planning, design, decision-making, and leadership; and promoting equal access to education, resources, and employment for women in the fisheries sector.

Health: The health and wellbeing of women, men and children are intricately linked with climate change, as increasing climate-related disasters, spreading of disease, reduced air quality, availability of clean water and sanitation services, and access to sufficient and nutritious foods and adequate shelter emerge as major climate-related threats.⁸ Gender-responsive adaptive actions in the health sector include: identifying gender-differentiated health risks; developing climate and health early warning systems to prevent severe outbreaks and disease occurrence; and ensuring equal access to coping and recovery resources, as well as enhancing education and employment of women in the health sector.

- **What are good examples of lessons learned and best practices in prioritizing/incorporating gender in the process to formulate and implement national adaptation plans in your country or constituency?**

Integrated, cross-sectoral, gender-responsive action can contribute to effective and efficient adaptation planning, supporting gender equality and women's empowerment, and increasing the adaptive capacity of vulnerable communities and ecosystems. IUCN supports incorporating gender considerations in the process of formulating and implementing national adaptation plans through a variety of initiatives and measures, including via climate change and gender action plans (ccGAPs). Lessons learned from these processes include the importance of participatory, cross-sectoral planning and the value added by including women's organizations and ministries in climate change action. Outcomes include best practices for national and subnational actions to promote gender equality through climate change planning and programming.

IUCN has developed and facilitated the ccGAP methodology to support countries in their quest for identifying gender priorities within existing climate change policies and frameworks. This process aims to strengthen coherence, capacity and stakeholder networks to develop and implement climate change action in alignment with gender equality mandates. Ministries and regional bodies have chosen to establish ccGAPs when there is limited understanding of gender inequalities in the climate change context and when they need to establish avenues to address these inequalities. To date, more than two dozen ccGAPs (at national, subnational and regional levels) exist.

The most recent ccGAP process was conducted with the Dominican Republic and supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). At the official launch of their ccGAP in June 2018, leaders from across the Dominican Republic, including various ministries, embraced a multi-sectoral approach and agreed that the ccGAP would be a powerful tool towards the achievement of the country's commitments to the Paris Agreement, including of its National Determined Contribution, and the SDGs.

Developed through extensive multi-stakeholder outreach, networking, and capacity building so that women and men at all levels can meaningfully participate and contribute to solutions, the Dominican Republic's ccGAP builds on the country's existing strategies. For example, in the health sector, the ccGAP builds on the Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance's efforts by establishing the need for more sex-disaggregated data collection to better understand the impact of climate change on the health of vulnerable groups. Similarly, across other priority sectors, the importance of women's empowerment and gender equality is not just rhetoric as activities throughout the ccGAP promote sustainability and economic development for the well-being of whole communities. A water sector priority example includes an action to create a women's cooperative for the distribution and commercialization of drinking water. A marine sector example is to give women access to funds and training to add value to fish skin, scales and bones, as women lead the processing roles throughout the value chain.

Throughout the sectors covered—including health, tourism, transportation, energy, infrastructure, agriculture, food security, waste management, forestry, water, marine coastal management, and disaster risk management—the ccGAP is a blueprint and action plan to help ensure women thrive as entrepreneurs, as workforce employees, and throughout the overall economy, in a climate-constrained world. It emphasizes the various pathways towards increasing women's economic empowerment that aim to be groundbreaking for increasing the roles of women in sectors that have been typically male dominated.

Donors and implementing agencies can support countries to apply more integrated, gender-responsive approaches to adaptation action, such as through ccGAPs, and can support efforts to conduct and apply relevant research in project development and implementation.

Forthcoming research: Advancing Gender in the Environment (AGENT): The triple nexus of gender inequality, state fragility, and climate vulnerability

Additionally, IUCN is undertaking a new research initiative to explore the connections among gender inequality, state fragility, and climate vulnerability. These are global challenges that can threaten the well-being of communities and nations, as well as future generations and the ecosystems upon which they depend. IUCN, in partnership with USAID, conducted research to determine where the triple nexus of gender inequality, state fragility, and climate vulnerability is most prevalent, identifying strategic opportunities to implement integrated activities on all three challenges. The research included a literature review and the development of a framework consisting of 27 indicators, sourced from reputable, internationally recognized databases, to map the prevalence of triple nexus issues in 122 countries where USAID operates. This research found strong evidence for the direct connections among gender inequality, state fragility, and climate vulnerability, demonstrating that those countries with high prevalence scores for one of the three issue areas tend to also be characterized by high scores for the other two. The need to address the three issues in tandem was found to be particularly urgent in Africa and the Middle East, though integrated action is expected to be beneficial in all countries. Ensuring women's rights and agency is not only a moral obligation from a human-rights perspective, but also contributes to effective, equitable and sustainable ways to achieve more resilient, legitimate, stable, prosperous, and climate-smart societies.

- **In your experience, what are remaining gaps related to incorporating gender considerations into adaptation planning and implementation?**

Opportunities to incorporate gender considerations into adaptation planning and implementation should be fully embraced. Remaining challenges include data and knowledge gaps—IUCN prioritizes work in this area through research initiatives such as the previously mentioned study on the triple nexus of gender inequality, state fragility, and climate vulnerability, as well as a recent partnership with UN Environment on gender and environment statistics. Building capacity on the gender-environment nexus for policymakers and practitioners working on climate change adaptation is a key aspect of advancing gender-responsive adaptation planning and implementation. Integrated approaches that incorporate a cross-sectoral approach, such as the ccGAP methodology, can promote knowledge-sharing and capacity building. Additionally, National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) are currently required to be gender-sensitive; this can be advanced further to support gender-responsive plans.

- **What are useful sources relevant to this topic?**

- Roots for the Future: The landscape and way forward on gender and climate change. <https://genderandenvironment.org/roots-for-the-future/>
- Roots for the Future: Adaptation brief: https://portals.iucn.org/union/sites/union/files/doc/rftf_adaptation_brief.pdf
- Climate Change Gender Action Plans: <https://genderandenvironment.org/works/ccgaps/>
- Draft Guidelines to Mainstreaming Gender in the Development of National Adaptation Plans (NAPs): <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2011/smsn/ngo/306.pdf>
- Gender and environment statistics: Unlocking information for action and measuring the SDGs: <https://genderandenvironment.org/resource/gender-and-environment-statistics-unlocking-information-for-action-and-measuring-the-sdgs/>

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¹ https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/sites/2/2019/05/SR15_SPM_version_report_LR.pdf

² UNISDR. (2015). *Issue Brief. Mobilizing women's leadership in disaster risk reduction high level multi-stakeholder partnership dialogue*; Pirard, P., et al. (2005). *Summary of the mortality impact: Assessment of the 2003 heat wave in France*. Euro Surveill, 10(7), 153-156.; Ikeda, K. (1995). Gender Differences in Human Loss and Vulnerability in Natural Disasters: A Case Study from Bangladesh. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies*, 2(2), 171-193. New Delhi, India: Sage Publications.; Neumayer, E. & Plümper, T. (2007, January). *The Gendered Nature of Natural Disasters: The Impact of Catastrophic Events on the Gender Gap in Life Expectancy, 1981-2002*. London: Department of Geography and Environment, LSE.

³ Mehta, M. (2007, April). *Gender matters: Lessons for disaster risk reduction in South Asia.*; Bradshaw, S. (2004). *Socio-economic Impacts of Natural Disasters: a Gender Analysis*. Santiago de Chile: United Nations.

⁴ Jalal, I. (2014, December). *ADB Briefs No. 24. Women, water, and leadership*. Asian Development Bank.

⁵ World Health Organization. (2008). *Protecting Health from Climate Change*.

⁶ Verner, D. (2012). *Adaptation to a changing climate in the Arab countries : a case for adaptation governance and leadership in building climate resilience (English)*. MENA development report. Washington, DC : World Bank Group.

⁷ IPCC. (2014). *Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report. Contribution of Working Groups I, II and III to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [Core Writing Team, R.K. Pachauri and L.A. Meyer (eds.)].

⁸⁸ WHO. (2010). *Gender, climate change, and health.*; WHO. (2012). *Atlas of climate and health*. Geneva, Switzerland: WHO & WMO.