



Gender and adaptation

Background

Gender mainstreaming must be an important part of the adaptation process to ensure the success and sustainability of climate projects and policies. Women bring unique capabilities to the adaptation effort. Adaptation responses, including for disaster risk reduction can be more effective if both women's and men's capabilities and strengths are incorporated.

The adverse impacts of climate change will be disproportionately harsh for the poorest countries and the most vulnerable people and groups, a large majority among them rural communities, particularly women. Recognizing the unavoidable impacts of the changing climate, international climate efforts have been steadily shifting to include a focus on adaptation. There is a growing recognition of gender-based vulnerability to climate change and the need for a gender-conscious response informed by the differences in needs, responsibilities and unique contributions of both women and men.

Gender gaps and climate change

- *Two thirds of the poorest people on the planet are women*
- *Around 45 million people — at least 6 million of them women — fish for a living and are threatened by overfishing and climate change*
- *In most countries, the share of female smallholders who can access credit is 5 to 10 percentage points lower than that of male smallholders*
- *Of 141 countries, 103 have legal differences between men and women that may hinder women's economic opportunities, including access to credit*
- *A recent study of seven low Human Development Index countries found that 56 to 86 percent of rural women fetched water, compared with 8 to 40 percent of rural men*
- *Collecting firewood and water has been linked in women to spinal damage, complications during pregnancy and maternal mortality*

Sources: (World Bank 2011, FAO 2011, UNDP HDR 2011).

water and forest resources often leads to women having to travel longer distances for a longer time to fetch water or wood, exposing them to health risks³ and limiting their prospects for engaging in high-return ventures such as education, politics, and business.⁴

Gender disparities increase vulnerability of women and girls to climatic risks

Climate change is affecting men and women differently, given their distinguished roles and responsibilities at the household and community levels. Yet women are disproportionately vulnerable than men to the effects of climate change.¹

Women are often poorer, receive less education, and are excluded from political and household decision-making processes that affect their lives.² Such economic and social inequities translate into women possessing fewer assets and meagre means to cope with the ill effects of the changing climate. In addition, women depend more on natural resources for their livelihoods, which lends itself to increased vulnerability of women and girls.

For instance, climatic stress on

Steps for gender mainstreaming in disaster risk reduction

- *Include gender perspectives into disaster reduction efforts at the national, regional and international levels, including in policies, strategies, action plans, and programmes*
- *Analyse climate change data (such as desertification, floods, drought, deforestation) from a gender-sensitive perspective*
- *Take gender-conscious steps to reduce the negative impacts of natural disasters on women, particularly in relation to their critical roles in rural areas in the provision of water, food and energy*
- *Increase the participation and representation of women at all levels of the decision-making process*
- *Include the traditional knowledge and perspectives of women in the analysis and evaluation of the characteristics of key disaster risks*
- *Ensure that women are visible agents of change at all levels of disaster preparedness, including early warning systems, education, communication, information and networking opportunities*
- *Build the capacity of national and local women's groups and provide them with a platform to be heard and to engage optimally*
- *Consider the level of a woman's access to technology and finances in times of disaster*
- *Include gender-specific indicators to monitor and track progress on gender equality targets*

Adaptation actions could have unintended effects on women

Adaptation initiatives that do not take gender perspectives into account may unintentionally replicate gender inequality. For example, diverting fresh water to areas where there is a water shortage (through dikes, water transfers or irrigation canals) may have the unintended consequence of lengthening and intensifying women's productive and reproductive working day by placing water sources in distant zones.⁵ The design of adaptation plans – such as the National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)⁶ – should recognize and effectively integrate gender considerations for efficient and sustainable outcomes.⁷ These examples underscore the need for proper consideration of the interests and contributions of all members of the society, especially women and other vulnerable groups, in the design, planning and financing of adaptation actions.

Steps for gender mainstreaming in adaptation

- Analyse the effects of climate change from both men and women's perspective
- Ensure disaggregation of qualitative and quantitative data by sex, in all assessments and stocktaking
- Incorporate a women's perspective when designing and implementing projects
- Capitalize on the talents and contributions of both women and men
- Set targets for women's participation in activities
- Ensure that women are adequately represented in all decision-making processes, at all levels
- Ensure that gender expertise is involved and consulted throughout the project implementation process
- Make women's equal access to information, economic resources and education a priority
- Address gender differences in capabilities to cope with climate change adaptation and mitigation
- Develop and apply gender-sensitive criteria and indicators for progress monitoring and evaluation of results
- Undertake a gender analysis of applicable budget lines and financial instruments to determine the differentiated impact on women and men of the budget
- Consider reallocation of resources, if relevant, to achieve gender equality outcomes from the actions planned
- Develop and apply gender-sensitive criteria and indicators

promoting women's unique capacities in adaptation would allow decision makers to pursue policies that build resilience in communities while also promoting gender equality.¹¹

Women contribute to adaptation

The Human Development Report (2011) observes that the enhanced participation of women at the national and local level leads to environmental gains, with multiplier effects across all the Millennium Development Goals.⁸ Their knowledge and experience in resource management equip them with unique skills that would benefit the adaptation effort at all levels.⁹ For example, during a drought in the small islands of the Federal States of Micronesia, the knowledge of island hydrology that the women had as a result of their land-based work enabled them to find potable water by digging a new well.¹⁰

Based on recent case studies in countries like India and South Africa, World Resources Institute's *World Resources 2010-11* report has stressed that measures taken to address the vulnerability of women can strengthen the capacity of society to act in a changing climate. In addition, recognizing, engaging and

Recommendations for action

- **Gender mainstreaming must be an important part of the adaptation process to ensure the success and sustainability of climate projects and policies.** Women bring unique capabilities to the adaptation effort. Adaptation responses, including for disaster risk reduction, can be more effective if both women's and men's capabilities and strengths are incorporated; this could lead to greater returns for environmental sustainability, the MDGs, and broader development objectives.
- **Adaptation planning and financing need to be attuned to the varied needs and interests of women and men.** It is essential to integrate gender perspectives into the planning and implementation of adaptation initiatives at all levels. The implementation of the Cancun Adaptation Framework, including the development of National Adaptation Plans, should be used as an opportunity to do so.
- **Any adaptation effort should aim to enhance women's adaptive capacity** by building up the asset base of women.
- **Adaptation is a pressing developmental and cross-cutting challenge and provides an opportunity to improve the well-being of humans and the ecosystem.** Adaptation initiatives at the programmatic and planning levels need to ensure women's greater participation and empowerment. Through pro-poor and gender-sensitive planning, poor and marginalized communities should be enabled to develop climate-resilient livelihoods.
- **Adaptation finance, whatever its source, should be used to promote climate and development objectives, including gender equality.**¹² By the same token, gender-sensitive operational frameworks need to be developed for all climate change financing mechanisms supporting adaptation.¹³
- **All stakeholders and the adaptation community should make the empowerment of women and poor and marginalized groups a strategic priority** in the fight against climate change.

Gender and adaptation

Adaptation is a pressing developmental and cross-cutting challenge and provides an opportunity to improve the well-being of humans and the ecosystem. All adaptation initiatives need to ensure women's greater participation and empowerment. Through pro-poor and gender-sensitive planning, poor and marginalized communities will be enabled to develop climate-resilient livelihoods.



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Gender and energy

Studies confirm that women's empowerment is crucial for all-round social development, environmental sustainability and ensuring efficiency and sustainability of climate change responses. Specifically, incorporating the contributions and concerns of women and men can help inform programmes and increase access to grid and off-grid electricity access.

The United Nations General Assembly has designated 2012 as the International Year of Sustainable Energy for All. To support the Year, the Secretary-General is undertaking action through a new global initiative, 'Sustainable Energy for All', which has set three interlinked objectives: to ensure universal access to modern energy services; to double the global rate of improvement in energy efficiency; and to double the share of renewable energy in the global energy mix. Given the importance of energy in climate change mitigation, reducing poverty, meeting the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), fuelling economic growth, and bridging inequality, this initiative has the potential to address three fundamental needs in line with its objectives: to spur economic growth and create jobs; to expand opportunities to those who do not have access to energy; and to move towards more efficient, lower-carbon energy options that are more sustainable.

Energy and gender challenges

- *Only 1 in 5 people in the world have access to electricity.*
- *Only 24 percent of the people in sub-Saharan Africa have access to electricity and 25 countries are in a state of power crisis.*
- *3 billion people, largely in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, rely on traditional fuels such as wood, dung, and agricultural residue for cooking, agro-processing and heating.*
- *In Ethiopia, DR Congo, Tanzania and Uganda biomass accounts for as much as 93 percent to 95 percent of the total energy consumed – a similar pattern holds true in many countries in the region.*
- *2 million people (mainly women and children) die because of the burning of biomass indoors.*
- *About 10 million people, mostly rural poor, have gained access to modern energy services through UNDP-supported projects over the past decade.*

Sources: UNDP 2011, UNDESA 2010, IEA 2011, WHO 2011.

At present, about 1.4 billion people worldwide (one in five) lack access to electricity and about 2.7 billion people (40 percent of the global population) rely on wood and charcoal as their primary source of energy.¹ Poor women, especially rural women, continually face energy-related hurdles – including having to collect wood and the time and labour this requires; scarcity of fuel; and health problems from burning and collecting wood – because they are the primary energy producers and users for the household and tend to be more reliant on small-scale agriculture and locally available resources like biomass and wood.

Improving energy access would catalyse the achievement of the MDGs

Although there is no specific MDG relating to energy, it will be impossible to achieve the MDGs without improving the quality and quantity of energy services in the developing world.

Energy is essential for everyday

household chores such as lighting, cooking and heating. Because rural women and girls are primarily responsible for the bulk of household work, access to energy will make a significant difference to their quality of life, including their health.

“Although access to more modern energy alternatives will not necessarily lead to greater equality in gender roles, it can at least relieve some of the most burdensome and unhealthy aspects of their daily lives and expand the development options available to women, their families and their communities.”² On a larger scale, energy policies can catalyse national development and play a vital role in poverty alleviation and mitigation of the ill effects of climate change.³

Women play a pivotal role in energy production

Studies confirm that women’s empowerment is crucial for all-round social development,⁴ environmental sustainability⁵ and ensuring efficiency and sustainability of climate change responses.⁶ Specifically, incorporating the contributions and concerns of women and men can help inform programmes and increase access to grid and off-grid electricity access.⁷ Failure to consider gendered interests and the different needs of men and women can limit the effectiveness of energy programmes and policies, as well as other development activities that involve energy use.

Energy has gender-differentiated aspects

Energy has significant links to gender equality. First, women and girls are often primarily responsible for collecting fuel and water at the community level. Also, poor women tend to participate in the informal economic sector (for example, the food sector), which relies strongly on biomass as its main energy source, which, in turn, does not feature heavily in national energy policies. Indoor pollution from the use of cooking stoves is also a serious health problem for women and girls. Every year, 2 million people – mainly women and children – die as a result of indoor air pollution.⁸ They carry greater loads compared to men, but have a lower intake of calories because custom usually dictates that men receive more food and water.⁹ Women’s poor nutrition vis-à-vis their work load also increases their susceptibility to health risks, including anaemia and perinatal mortality.¹⁰ Additionally, the drudgery of collecting energy products (i.e., fetching and carrying fuel wood) harms women’s health; for example, it affects peri-natal mortality and produces complications after delivery.

Second, women spend considerable time in gathering biomass for energy. Because women undertake these activities largely on foot, climate-induced scarcity of natural resources can exacerbate women’s time poverty,¹¹ as women will be forced to travel and spend more time collecting these resources, thereby causing them to lose out on other self-nurturing activities such as education.¹²

Gender audit of energy policy in Botswana

The Botswana Technology Centre, in consultation with the Energy Affairs Division of the Ministry of Minerals, Energy, Water Resources and other stakeholders, executed a gender audit of Botswana's national energy policies. Botswana is the first country where such an audit was held. The audit showed that, although there is a common understanding of the different roles of women and men in Botswana, the knowledge of the relationship among gender, energy and poverty was still limited. This has resulted in gender blindness of existing energy policies and programmes and a lack of consultation with household residents and women, in particular, in developing the energy policy. The audit also showed a lack of gender-disaggregated data and a general absence of association between energy services and the MDGs. Based on this audit and follow-up trainings, the awareness in the government and of the Botswana Power Corporation staff has increased. The corporation recently started a ground-breaking gender mainstreaming programme for rural electrification. The audit also led to a pilot project for collecting gender-disaggregated data and strengthening gender expertise in the country's energy sector.

Sources: Wright and Gueye 2009.¹⁷

Third, women generally have less access to finance and energy-related services than men. Studies from Africa, for example, show that women-headed businesses generally face more impediments than men in accessing grid electricity. Experiences in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania and Zambia suggest that women entrepreneurs also face greater discrimination than men in the form of delays in obtaining electrical connections and the expectation that they will pay bribes for these services.¹³

Finally, gender stereotypes often lead to women being excluded from discussions about energy plans and policies, resulting in the gender-blind energy planning of policies, financing and execution.¹⁴ As noted above, women play a pivotal role in energy production, distribution and utilization, especially in poor communities. Thus, the lack of recognition of their role could undermine the effectiveness and sustainability of much-needed energy projects and policies.

Recommendations for action

- **Basic services such as electricity for lighting and cleaner cooking technologies are still a luxury for many rural women and men, so access to modern energy services needs to be improved.** Access to modern energy services would go a long way towards alleviating the daily household burdens of women, giving them more time, improving their health and enhancing their livelihoods.
- **Gender-based constraints related to access to energy, finance, training, employment and entrepreneurship need to be better studied and addressed.** Policies that include both women and men in the development stage may help support more equitable access to electricity (grid and off-grid). Therefore, more efforts are needed to involve women in the design and production of locally appropriate energy technologies.¹⁵ Infrastructure projects designed to promote cleaner, more efficient forms of fossil fuels and renewable energy can offer new skills training, increased employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for women, as well as more equitable benefit sharing at the community level.
- **Investing in low-emission technologies that benefit poor communities, including women, is needed.** Properly developed and deployed sustainable energy technologies would provide the twin benefits of effective responses to climate change (mitigation and adaptation) and the betterment of livelihoods of the poor in general and rural women in particular.
- **Climate change financing focusing on the energy sector should complement broader developmental goals, including gender equality, poverty eradication and sustainable development.**¹⁶ Existing public and private mitigation financing schemes need to focus on projects that benefit poor and marginalized communities, which include women. At the very least, gender and social impact assessments need to be undertaken during programme and project design. Where feasible, carbon financing options should ensure more equitable benefits for men and women by helping expand women's access to and control over energy. This includes efforts to qualify small-scale projects (such as improved stoves) for financing and streamlining the application process.
- **Mainstreaming gender in energy policies and programming is good social policy and would enhance the efficiency of energy policies.** Incorporating gender perspectives in energy projects, policy and planning is critical in ensuring the effectiveness not just of energy programmes and policies, but of all development activities that involve energy use.

Gender and energy

Basic services such as electricity for lighting and cleaner cooking technologies are still a luxury for many rural women and men. Access to modern energy services will go a long way towards alleviating the daily household burdens of women, giving them more time, improving their health and enhancing their livelihoods.



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Gender, climate change and food security

If women farmers were given the same access to resources (such as finance) as men, women's agricultural yields could increase by 20 percent to 30 percent; national agricultural production could rise by 2.5 percent to 4 percent; the number of malnourished people could be reduced by 12 to 17 percent.

Source: FAO 2011b.

The agriculture sector is predicted to come under substantial stress from climate change-induced increases in temperature, variability in rainfall and extreme weather events that could trigger crop failures, pest and disease outbreaks, and the degradation of land and water resources.¹ These impacts will be felt more acutely in the poorest regions of the world such as sub-Saharan Africa, where agriculture is the mainstay of millions.² In Africa, for instance, agriculture supports 70 percent of the population and accounts for about 30 percent of the continent's GDP.³ Women play vital roles in ensuring food security and enhancing agricultural productivity. It is therefore important that the response to climatic stresses on the agriculture sector be not limited by gender-based constraints.

Gender-based constraints in agriculture

- *Adverse environmental factors are expected to boost world food prices 30 to 50 percent in the coming decades and to increase price volatility, with harsh repercussions for poor households. The largest risks are faced by the 1.3 billion people involved in agriculture, fishing, forestry, hunting and gathering.*
- *Between 10 to 20 percent of all land holders are women. In Africa, on average, 15 percent of landholders are women; the range is from below 5 percent (Mali) to above 30 percent (Botswana, Cape Verde and Malawi).*
- *In some countries, farms operated by female-headed households are only one half to two thirds as large as farms operated by male-headed households.*
- *Women receive only 5 percent of agricultural extension services worldwide.*
- *In most countries, the share of female smallholders who can access credit is 5 to 10 percentage points lower than that of male smallholders. This is partly attributable to the fact that women often do not have the necessary collateral.*
- *Of 141 countries, 103 (25 of 35 in Africa) have legal differences between men and women that may hinder women's economic opportunities, including access to credit.*
- *Studies in Burkina Faso, Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia show that women are much less likely to use purchased inputs such as fertilizers and improved seeds or to make use of mechanical tools and equipment.*

Sources: UNDP 2011, FAO 2011a, FAO 2011b, World Bank 2011b.

Agriculture is central to the livelihoods of women

It is now widely acknowledged that climate change impacts will not be gender-neutral. This is evident from current experiences of extreme climatic events such as droughts and floods. Men and women have different coping and adaptive capacities that translate to gender-differentiated vulnerabilities to the impacts of a changing climate.⁴ Gender-based inequalities in access to assets and gendered social roles are mainly responsible for this difference in adaptive capacities to respond to the effects of climate change. Legal and sociocultural barriers also inhibit women from effectively responding to climatic risk.⁵

These barriers notwithstanding, women do play a major role in agricultural production. Women farmers generally have valuable knowledge in seed selection, vegetative propagation and the reproduction of plants and animals. Although the roles of women in agriculture vary widely by region, age, ethnicity and social status, women are involved in agricultural production, food security as well as other related agricultural ventures.⁶ Women comprise 20 to 50 percent of the agricultural labour force in developing countries.⁷ More than three quarters (79 percent) of women in Least Developed Countries who are economically active report agriculture as their primary economic activity, which highlights the importance of the agricultural sector for women.⁸ In countries such as Lesotho, Mozambique and Sierra Leone, women constitute over 60 percent of the agricultural labour force.⁹

Gender-based constraints in agriculture

Women play a pivotal role in the three components of food security: food availability (production), food access (distribution), and food utilization.¹⁰ Women also play a role in a wide range of activities that support agricultural development, such as soil and water conservation, afforestation and crop domestication.

Men also play a crucial role in food production, although they face far fewer constraints than women (see box ‘Uganda: Closing the technology gender-gap in agriculture’). Men are more likely to have access to productive resources such as land, credit and extension services (see box ‘Gender-based constraints in agriculture’).¹¹ In cases of crop failure due to harsh climatic conditions, culture often makes it easier for men to leave their farms in search of employment elsewhere, leaving women behind to struggle to feed their families and make ends meet. In many cases, women have diminished assets and resources to help them plan for and potentially avert the next crisis. As illustrated in the box above, diverse gender-based barriers in accessing land, financial services, social capital and access to technology render women vulnerable to food insecurity.¹² Backward sociocultural inhibitions (such as customary laws on access to land) are among these barriers.¹³

Uganda: Closing the technology gender-gap in agriculture

Farmer field schools have proved to be a participatory and effective way of empowering and transferring knowledge to women farmers. This was evident in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, where women who participated in these schools were more likely to adopt major technologies, including improved crop varieties, livestock management and pest control techniques.

The sustainable rural livelihoods programme established in 2004 in eastern Uganda's Kamuli District was designed to improve food security, nutrition and health at the household and community levels. The programme employs farmer-to-farmer training and extension services to demonstrate and disseminate information on key management practices such as: planting banana or cassava in ways that ensure productivity and control diseases; enhancing soil fertility through composting with manure; and growing and using nutrient-dense crops such as amaranth grain and Vitamin A-rich sweet potatoes. It also emphasizes the establishment of multiplication gardens and seed nurseries, post-harvest management and storage, improving livestock breeding and feeding, integrating nutrition and health with agriculture, farm enterprise development, marketing, and strengthening farmer groups. Women make up the majority of farm group members, leaders and trainers. They comprise about 58 percent of community-based rural development extension workers, 75 percent of community nutrition and health workers, 76 percent of committee members and 71 percent of executive committee members.

The programme has resulted in the enhancement of women's human capital through training and experience gained in developing leadership skills, improved nutrition and health, and community-wide respect for their role as sources of valuable knowledge. The women are also involved in farm groups and emerging marketing associations. Another key reported result has been a significant increase in household food security.

Source: FAO 2011b.

Empowerment of women and girls is critical for agricultural development and food security

Empowerment of women and girls is critical for agricultural development and food security.¹⁴ There is also a strong economic rationale for this — if women farmers were given the same access to resources (such as finance) as men, women's agricultural yields could increase by 20 to 30 percent, national agricultural production could rise by 2.5 to 4 percent and the number of malnourished people could be reduced by 12 to 17 percent.¹⁵

More importantly, gender equality is a fundamental human right. It is imperative, therefore, to discard the systemic cultural and legal barriers that constrain women from making even more contributions to agricultural production.

Recommendations for action

- **Eliminate legal discrimination related to ownership and access to assets.** Improving women's access, ownership, and control over land will potentially contribute to greater investments in the land and increased productivity and welfare.
- **Integrate gender analysis and gender-sensitive tools** (such as assessment, design, monitoring and evaluation). These should be integrated into all areas of adaptation planning, including for the agriculture sector.
- **Gather sex-disaggregated data** in agriculture and food security, including on access to land and land tenure security, finance, extension services and agricultural tools. This would be helpful for gender-responsive policy design and monitoring.
- **Make sure that women benefit from access to agricultural extension services.** At present, only 5 percent of women farmers have meaningful access to extension services. The design and implementation of the gender-aware agricultural extension strategy is, therefore, essential to ensuring that women use and benefit from vital information.
- **Ensure that women's voices are heard** at all levels of governance and in all policy and decision-making processes.
- **Develop technologies and environments that address women's needs.**

Gender, climate change and food security

Improving women's access, ownership, and control over land can potentially contribute to increased investments in and productivity of land, thus improving food security, nutrition and health at household and community levels.



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Gender and climate finance

Background

Incorporating gender awareness and gender criteria into climate financing mechanisms and strategies would [...] constitute 'smart climate finance'.

Source: Schalatek 2009: 13.

The overall economic, social and environmental costs of climate change are substantial; this is particularly the case in natural-resource-dependent regions such as Africa. Women are often disproportionately vulnerable to the effects of climate change, a fact that, in turn, can exacerbate gender-based disparities. Adequate and sustainable financial resources are crucial in helping communities address the monumental challenges posed by climate change. Such resources can also foster equitable development policy, including gender equality.

Existing climate finance mechanisms have varying degrees of gender sensitivity and much remains to be done to engender the larger global climate finance regime. Furthermore, limited climate finance resources, inadequate awareness and capacity constraints have made it harder for many countries to gain access to relevant climate funds, private sector finance and carbon markets. These obstacles are greater for marginalized groups, such as poor women and men, who often face higher barriers to accessing and benefiting from such financial resources.

Gender and climate finance

- *Women's abilities to engage in climate finance or to start or scale up initiatives to respond to climate change are constrained by gender disparities at the national level.*
- *Of 4,389 registered CDM projects, only 91 went to Africa (as of July 2012). Thus far, most CDM projects executed have tended to overlook small-scale projects that would benefit women.*
- *While 48 percent of business owners in Kenya are women, they hold only 7 percent of credit and 1 percent of land.*
- *Nigerian women own 25 to 30 percent of registered businesses, but receive only 10 to 15 percent of bank credit.*
- *In Uganda, women account for 39 percent of businesses with registered premises, but receive only 9 percent of commercial bank credit.*
- *Investing in women would enhance returns on climate finance as well as the environment, achievement of the MDGs, poverty alleviation and social policy.*

Sources: UNFCCC 2012, UNDP HDR 2011, UNDP 2011, Schalteck 2009, IFC 2005.⁴

Therefore, it is crucial that climate finance mechanisms explicitly target such groups during project planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. In this process, it is pivotal to ensure that such financial systems are transparent and have accountability mechanisms that involve civil society, the public and vulnerable groups, including the poor and women, in the relevant decision-making processes.

The costs of climate impacts are huge

The price tag for climate change responses is high. Although cost estimates for adaptation and mitigation efforts vary widely, by 2030, the cost of the response to climate change will still range from \$249 billion to \$1,371 billion annually.¹ In Africa alone, the costs of the impact of climate change could be equivalent to 1.5 to 3 percent of GDP per year by 2030,² and costs of adaptation efforts could be as high as \$17 billion per year.³ Because many climate finance mechanisms are based on voluntary contributions, this is no doubt a huge resource challenge — especially given current global economic woes.

Climate finance could catalyse social development

The current climate finance architecture is complex and involves numerous private and public players. There are currently over 50 international public funds, 45 carbon markets and 6,000 private equity funds providing climate change finance.⁵ Nevertheless, given various barriers and limitations, including low institutional and technological capacity constraints, much of Africa has continuing problems accessing these climate finance structures. For example, as of July 2012, the entire African continent had managed to attract only a meager 2.07 percent of Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects.

Nevertheless, if properly managed, climate finance could enhance the climate response effort while simultaneously promoting poverty reduction, achievement of the MDGs and social development, including women's empowerment and gender equality. In this process, it is critical that women as well as men are seen as strong agents of change having unique knowledge and skills that can be harnessed to develop effective climate change responses. Targeting and involving women and men equitably in climate finance mechanisms would extend the impact and benefit — and thus the success, sustainability and efficiency — of those mechanisms.

Climate finance needs to reflect gender considerations

Gender disparities in ownership and access to resources (such as land, credit and technology), coupled with socio-cultural barriers, lower adaptive capacity and increase women's exposure to climatic risk. Further, because women's livelihoods tend to be highly climate-sensitive, climate change imperils their lives more than men's.⁶

Gender equality is not only a fundamental human right and a core development objective, but also 'smart economics'.⁷ Specifically, numerous studies show that women's empowerment leads to gains in productivity, environmental sustainability and in confronting the ill effects of climate change;⁸ hence, it follows that "incorporating gender awareness and gender criteria into climate financing mechanisms and strategies would likewise constitute 'smart climate finance'." Yet women do not have easy and adequate access to funds to cover weather-related losses or to avail themselves of adaptation technologies.¹⁰ The reasons range from cultural and social barriers in education, political participation and decision-making processes to legal restrictions on access to capital, markets and land ownership.¹¹

Suggested actions for mainstreaming gender and empowering women in climate change financing

- Ensure that projects' and programmes' broader social implications are factored into decision-making processes*
- Maximize synergies among mitigation, adaptation, poverty eradication, gender equality and women's empowerment*
- Streamline application processes and support women's and small-scale initiatives' participation in adaptation and mitigation activities*
- Improve infrastructure, public health, and disaster preparedness*
- Ease women's and girls' care burdens*
- Promote women's economic empowerment*
- Embed adaptation and mitigation strategies into gender equality projects*

count as adaptation and mitigation (such as tree planting). For example, CDM often focuses on energy and power sources, neglecting soil carbon sequestration and avoiding deforestation projects, which are vital to climate change mitigation in many African countries. The exclusion of these projects limits the participation of the poor and women in CDM and correspondingly their mitigation opportunities.¹³ Accordingly, it is critical that financing strategies target climate change mitigation and adaptation activities that benefit those most in need, including women, who often lack sufficient resources and capacities to engage with and contribute to more large-scale climate change responses.

Despite steady improvement toward greater gender sensitivity in the current climate finance regime (especially within multilateral climate funds), many existing mitigation and adaptation financing schemes have yet to systematically account for gender and effectively link climate finance to social development and gender equality. More specifically, mitigation activities and associated financing, such as those implemented through the CDM under the Kyoto Protocol, have tended to focus more on large-scale energy efficient and/or renewable energy projects.¹²

As a result, many finance programs and strategies tend to overlook typical women's activities that could

Recommendations for action

- **Gender-sensitive tools and procedures should be integrated into all areas of climate change finance.** To ensure that climate finance efforts make an equitable difference on the ground, gender equality and women's empowerment concepts should be mainstreamed within climate finance governance structures and procedures as well as within their programs during design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- **Decrease gender biases within climate finance approval and disbursement processes.** In this regard, streamlining application and approval procedures for climate funds could help reduce the time and cost for women and community groups to gain access to resources. Gender-based criteria for fund disbursement and project selection should also be developed to encourage gender mainstreaming in all funded projects and to ensure that small-scale projects — particularly those involving women — are supported and targeted for funding.
- **Financing processes must be attuned to the needs of and involve the most vulnerable groups of society, including poor women and men.** To complement broader developmental goals, including inclusive growth, gender equality, poverty eradication and sustainable development, such steps need to ensure the effective participation of vulnerable populations, such as women and women's groups, as key stakeholders in decision-making processes at all levels.
- **Engage with existing and newly developed climate finance frameworks, networks, and instruments to ensure the integration of gender perspectives within their evolving and reforming processes.** Such opportunities include vigorous engagement with the private sector and non-market (e.g., multilateral climate funds, such as the Climate Investment Funds) and market (e.g., CDM) finance mechanisms. It is critical that ongoing investment and financial support for climate change responses break the current cycle of gender-blind decision-making processes within the larger global financial structure.
- **Use national-level finance tools, such as National Climate Funds (NCF) and climate finance readiness strategies to help countries manage, coordinate, implement and account for international and domestic climate finance.** Such tools would help countries strengthen their national capacities to use climate finance effectively as well as to integrate these resources appropriately within their national development planning and sustainable development goals. In this process, it is critical that these national-level finance tools channel funds in a gender-responsive manner that catalyses low-emission, climate-resilient development for both women and men.¹⁶
- **Ensure that climate change mitigation and adaptation financial resources are managed effectively.** Issues of accountability, efficiency and good governance need to be addressed so that finance for adaptation and mitigation activities is used fairly and transparently. Gender-responsive budgeting can help in this by ensuring greater accountability over public resources and by promoting gender equality goals. Such budgeting strategies can also help address gender gaps in budgets as well as emphasize the re-prioritizing of financial resources within activities in addition to increasing overall expenditures.¹⁷

Gender and climate finance

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