



Gender equality is achieved when women and men, and girls and boys, have equal rights, life prospects and opportunities, and the power to shape their own lives and contribute to society.

The Gender Tool Box gathers knowledge material and method support on gender equality in the form of Tools, Briefs and Thematic Overviews.

## [ BRIEF ]

# Gender Equality, Environment & Climate Change

**Gender inequality is one of the main challenges to advance the environmental and climate change dimension of sustainable development, as it has negative impacts on access, sustainable use and control of natural resources, as well as the right to a clean, safe and healthy environment for all.<sup>1</sup> When gender equality is duly taken into consideration in environmental and climate change policies, programmes and organisations, gender equality gaps are addressed and the specific knowledge, needs and priorities of women, men, girls and boys contribute to reaching environmental goals and strengthening resilience to climate change impacts while simultaneously reaching gender equality objectives.**

This brief explains the linkages between environment, climate change and gender equality and other related areas. It aims to support programme officers mainly working in the field of environment and climate change to better understand the gender dimension with the end to improving their contribution management and design and implementation and results of the programmes.

### WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHALLENGES IN ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONTRIBUTION MANAGEMENT?

Our bio-physical environment with well-functioning ecosystems and a stable climate is the foundation for development and all human life. Sustainable management of the earth's resources is therefore a prerequisite for reduced poverty and sustainable societies – for current and future



Photo: Yuichi Ishida/UNDP

generations. People living in poverty are often most affected by environmental degradation, pollution and climate change due to their vulnerability and high dependence on natural resources such as forests, land, waterways and seas for sustaining their livelihood. They often have low capacity to cope with external shocks, such as floods and droughts.

Climate change, increasing loss of biodiversity and ecosystems services, land degradation, pollution of air, water and soil are some of the most urgent issues of our time. All these negative trends undermine the development in all sectors and for everyone.

Environmental sustainability and gender equality is therefore the key to development and needs to be addressed in all contributions and from a poverty, human rights and conflict perspective.

### WHY IS GENDER EQUALITY RELEVANT FOR ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE?

#### REPRESENTATION and RESOURCES

From national governments to local community groups, women are still vastly under-represented in environmental

<sup>1</sup> UNEP (2016) Global Gender and Environment Outlook; UN Women (2020) Gender, Climate and Security

and climate change decision-making. The unequal participation in decision-making processes in all spheres at all levels in society also exacerbates inequalities and often prevents women and discriminated groups from fully contributing to environment and climate-related planning, policy-making and implementation.

Equal representation and participation can improve the effectiveness and sustainability of environmental programmes and policies. Studies have shown that a higher proportion of women in positions of political authority is associated with less carbon dioxide emissions, more land protection, and higher possibility of the ratification of environmental treaties.<sup>2</sup> For all thematic examples provided in this brief it is important to recognise the paid and unpaid work done by women,<sup>3</sup> and promote an equal distribution of unpaid care work as part of contributions, when possible.

As a result of unequal power structures and gender discrimination, women face more barriers than men in accessing land,<sup>4</sup> markets, capital,<sup>5</sup> financial services,<sup>6</sup> training, information and technologies.<sup>7, 8</sup> Many female-headed households are among the poorest households with a relatively low purchasing power due to limited economic opportunities related to lower educational levels, wage gaps and overall income insecurity. Women spend 2.5 times more time on unpaid care and domestic work than men.<sup>9</sup> This makes women more susceptible to the negative impact of environmental degradation and climate change risks as they have less means and resources to withstand shocks than men.

#### GBV FACT BOX

Gender-based violence (GBV) is, inter alia, used to maintain and promote unequal and gendered power dynamics in relation to the ownership, access, use and benefits from natural resources. GBV can both be driven by and impact power imbalances in control over land and natural resources, especially when resources are scarce or under stress. The struggle to access natural resources can consequently be a driver for sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.<sup>10</sup>

Sida recognises that women and girls are not the only groups who are/can be negatively affected by environmental and climate change impacts or have limited access to decision-making; men and boys as well as people with other gender identities are also impacted or excluded

2 UNDP & UN Women (2018) Gender equality as an accelerator for achieving the SDGs; compiling studies on inter alia env/climate

3 UN Water: Adjusted from Women for Water Partnership (2019)

4 According to World Economic Forum (2017), approximately 80% of all land worldwide is owned by men, and 20% by women (in some countries this % may be as low as 1%)

5 Gender pay gap 2020 is reported to be 81% (women earn 81% of what men earn on a global scale)

6 IFC (2017). Global Index report Globally, 67 percent of men and 59 percent of women have a bank account

7 EIGE (2018) Study shows that only 17% of the 8 million ICT specialists in the European Union are women

8 See also Sida's brief on gender equality and trade

9 UN Women (2018)

10 IUCN (2020)

(in particular men and boys living in poverty and people from marginalised groups), albeit in different ways. Nonetheless, the literature and examples that inform this brief have a strong focus on women which explains its predominantly women-focused nature.

#### Intersectionality

Women, men, girls and boys do not constitute homogeneous groups and consequently their ability to shape their lives, their experiences and needs are also affected by other social variables such as age, gender identity and gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity and religion or other beliefs. Taking this diversity and risk of many-fold layers of discrimination into account is a central part of contribution management. Also referred to as an intersectional perspective.

#### RIGHTS and FRAMEWORKS

There are many global conventions and frameworks striving for an improved environment and climate and for gender equality; and agreements which commit and some which obligate states to engage in transformative change for gender equality. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and agreements reached under the UNFCCC such as the Paris Agreement are key frameworks. The gender perspective in climate policy and participation has been incorporated in UNFCCC's processes with the adoption of the Lima Work Program on Gender (LWPG) and the first gender action plan (GAP). Furthermore, gender equality is safeguarded by the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing+25) and promoted by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It is a Swedish priority evidenced by the Swedish Government's Policy Framework (2016) and the Feminist Foreign Policy.<sup>11</sup>

#### CLIMATE CHANGE



Women and girls commonly face higher risks and greater burdens from the impacts of climate change than men and boys, due to high dependence on natural resources, in conjunction with their roles and responsibilities and the fact that women and girls face higher levels of poverty (predisposing factors are e.g. lack of own source of income and ownership and control of assets, unpaid work, etc).<sup>12,13</sup>

Displacement and mass migration as a result of climate change may increase unsafe living conditions, poverty and exposure to violence and abuse for discriminated and marginalised groups in particular. In the first half

11 Swedish Government (2017)

12 UN Women & World Bank (2017)

13 UNDP (2010)

of 2020 alone, disasters displaced 9.8 million people.<sup>14</sup> These types of vulnerable situations present a higher risk for women and girls.<sup>15,16</sup> During disasters, such as droughts or floods, and in case of conflict over natural resources, women and girls are also more at risk of GBV and organised criminal traffickers as a result of communities being scattered, and protective patterns in families and society becoming disrupted. The risk of early, forced and child marriage may also increase during conflicts and disasters when poor families who have lost livelihoods, land and homes see marrying their daughter as the only option to alleviate economic hardship. In fact, several countries with high vulnerability to climate change also show high rates of child marriage.<sup>17</sup> Disasters also elevate the risk for men and boys to experience GBV; and boys risk exposure to harmful child labour.

Systematically addressing gender gaps in responding to climate change is one of the most effective mechanisms to build climate resilience of households, communities and nations. The growing recognition of the disproportionate impact of climate change on women and girls is now better reflected in the climate negotiations, climate planning and climate action.

Studies also show that communities often perform better during natural disasters when women play a leadership role in early warning systems and reconstruction. Because of the roles women frequently have in their communities, they have often proven to be effective at mobilising communities in the event of disasters and disaster risk management and reduction, and may have a clearer understanding of what strategies are needed.<sup>18</sup>

### Gender mainstreaming in the World Food Programme's (WFP) resilience programme in Kenya

In 2016, WFP Kenya received support from a Sida gender adviser and undertook gender analyses of their capacity strengthening activities related to disaster risk management. The analyses found that the draft disaster risk management policies developed were either gender-neutral or gender-blind, and that there was low participation of women in decision-making processes. The broadly disseminated results were discussed at local level; this led to a gender baseline and raised awareness on gender challenges that were previously unspoken of. In one area the analysis led to a doubling of the annual budgetary allocation to this department. Another county adopted gender responsive budgeting and has since then received continuous capacity strengthening from UN Women. At the policy and legislative level, trainings together with UN Women and the Kenya Law Reform Commission resulted in a commitment to support participating counties in developing gender responsive policies and legislation.<sup>19</sup>

### Learn more:

[ECBI – Pocket guide to gender equality under the UNFCCC](#)

[UNFCCC – Gender and climate change guidelines & tools](#)

[UNDP – Gender equality in national climate action](#)

[NAP Global Network & UNFCCC – Toolkit for a gender-responsive process to formulate and implement National Adaptation Plans \(NAPs\)](#)

[UNDP – Gender, climate change and community-based adaptation guidebook](#)

### Below you will find some sector specific challenges and opportunities.

#### ECOSYSTEMS AND BIODIVERSITY



Women's and men's particular roles and responsibilities within household, community and society lead to unique knowledge related to biodiversity, shaped by their specific needs and priorities. Women's "biodiversity values" are generally overlooked in national policy and programming. In some settings women play an important role in seed selection and management, particularly indigenous and women in local communities. For instance, women farmers in Jordan and Lebanon are responsible for 75% and 100% of the seed selection, respectively.

Inequalities between women and men in access, control and ownership of land and natural resources, as well as social norms creating barriers to economic opportunities for women, increase women's dependency on well-functioning ecosystems. This subsequently increases their vulnerability to ecosystem degradation and access restrictions as a result of conservation schemes. In Uganda, women were found to be more impacted from wetland degradation than men due to their use of wetlands for firewood, handicraft materials, water and herbal medicine.<sup>20</sup>

With a land title, women can have access to agricultural extension workers that could enhance their capacity to manage the land in a sustainable way. That could also contribute to the conservation of biodiversity and ecosystems services and improved land management, including tree planting and sustainable soil management.<sup>21,22</sup>

Women's and men's different and often specialised knowledge can play an important role in preserving biodiversity and in offering diverse solutions.<sup>23</sup> Supporting active involvement of women and men in all aspects of restoration and conservation efforts is consequently important.

<sup>14</sup> [Migration data portal \(2020\)](#) (funded by IOM member states)

<sup>15</sup> [UNDP \(2020\)](#)

<sup>16</sup> [UN Women \(2020\)](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Girls not Brides \(2018\)](#)

<sup>18</sup> Routledge Handbook of Climate Justice (2018)

<sup>19</sup> [Social policy reports \(2019\)](#) Enhancing complementarity and strengthening capacity for sustainable resilience building in Kenya's arid and semi-arid lands 2015-2017

<sup>20</sup> [CBD](#)

<sup>21</sup> [CBD](#)

<sup>22</sup> [IPCC \(2019\)](#)

<sup>23</sup> [CBD](#)

### Gender at core of ocean and coastal governance

The Sida-supported Pacific-European Union Marine Partnership (PEUMP) programme supports sound ocean and coastal governance with a focus on biodiversity protection and the sustainable use of fisheries and other marine resources. Women make up some 80% of the employees in the tuna processing industry, and a number of initiatives are envisaged to improve their working conditions and opportunities for advancement. The programme addresses the need to put gender equality at the core of sustainable development to ensure equal benefits for women and men in accessing marine resources, while acknowledging the different roles, needs and barriers faced by women and men. Training opportunities will, for instance, be specifically targeted to empower and increase participation of women and youth in fisheries careers and biodiversity conservation (with potential ecotourism opportunities) and data on beneficiaries are gender disaggregated.<sup>24</sup>

#### Learn more:

[CBD – Addressing gender issues and actions in biodiversity objectives](#)

[CBD – 2015-2020 Gender Plan of Action](#)

### AGRICULTURE



Women farmers account for 45–80% of all food production in developing countries, depending on the region.<sup>25</sup> Globally, less than 15% of all landholders are women.<sup>26</sup>

Women and girls' contributions to agricultural work and production, happen to a large extent unrecognised or within the informal sector (casual day labourers, “helpers” within family farming and/or own subsistence production). In many countries women have informal customary rights, rather than formal legal rights to the land they cultivate. This keeps women in the informal sector and also makes securing credit difficult as land deeds often are used as collaterals. Investments in agriculture are needed that specifically target women farmers.

Women and men may have particular knowledge about plants and agricultural techniques that might help e.g. food security strategies, wild foods, medical plants, adaptation strategies. As key players in the agricultural system, women need equal access to resources and inputs such as agricultural credit, extension and training, and new agricultural technologies.<sup>27</sup> FAO estimates that if women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20–30%, raising total agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5–4%, which is estimated to lift 100–150 million people out of hunger.<sup>28</sup> Improving access to assets

<sup>24</sup> For more information: <https://openaid.se/activity/SE-0-SE-6-5102017701-OOC-31320>

<sup>25</sup> [UN WomenWatch \(2009\)](#)

<sup>26</sup> [FAO \(2018\)](#)

<sup>27</sup> [UNEP \(2016\)](#)

<sup>28</sup> [UNEP \(2016\)](#)

and resources must be accompanied by measures to strengthen in particular women's voices and agency along with substantive changes in gender norms, relations and power structures. Changes which are best supported by the engagement of men.

#### Learn more:

[FAO infographics](#)

[FAO – Gender in agriculture: Closing the knowledge gap](#)

### FORESTRY



In the forest sector, men are often responsible for legal as well as illegal logging, while women and children to a higher degree collect firewood and materials such as herbs and leaves for medical purposes, and berries and honey for alimentation to a larger extent than men. In many places, men dominate community forest management and the lack of women's representation results in less attention to gendered differences when formulating different forest conservation programmes.<sup>29</sup> The essence of conducting gender mainstreaming is to ensure that the different knowledge, skills and activities of both men and women of indigenous peoples, local communities and other marginalised groups whose livelihoods depend on forest resources are taken into account in forest decision-making processes. Gender mainstreaming also serves to ensure that forest stakeholders can access, control and derive equitable benefits from forest-related policies and interventions.

### Women and leadership

For 20 years, Sida has supported the regional organization “Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific” (RECOFTC). The organization works to ensure that rural communities, in and near forests, have the legal right to use it. In recent years, RECOFTC has had an extra strong focus on the rights of women and minorities. This has contributed to more women participating in governing forestry and several interest groups have been created where women who work with forestry have organized themselves. A successful example is Nepal, where 30 per cent of the members of the village forestry committees are women. But social norms and women's lack of education often make them “silent” participants. They attend meetings and are given formal responsibility but rarely raise their voices and let the men make the decisions. But after RECOFTC trained women on their rights and trained them in leadership, they have become more active in their committees and in local decision-making. Confidence in local government has also increased as more women participate, which has made it easier to organize more villagers.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup> [Swedish Society for Natural Conservation \(2015\)](#)

<sup>30</sup> [Välskötta skogar när lokalbefolkningen får bestämma | Sida](#)

**Learn more:**

[PROFOR – Gender in forest landscape projects – actions and indicators](#)

**FISHERIES<sup>31</sup> and AQUACULTURE**

Fisheries is often considered a male-dominated sector, and the contribution of women is often either not well understood or undervalued. Women play an important role in every stage of the value chain in small-scale fisheries and fish farming, yet the widespread perception remains that men alone are responsible for fishing, and that women are only processors and marketers of fishery products. For example, women's roles in preparing and harvesting aquatic species such as seafood from shorelines ("gleaning") and riverbanks are rarely considered "fishing" by male fishers, and instead is regarded as 'gathering' for food provisions. Women often harvest different species than men, and tend to use distinct fishing gear and methods, and focus on specific eco-zones, such as sea grass beds and mangroves, which are often zones critical for juvenile fish as well as carbon sequestration. This means that men and women often have different sets of environmental knowledge and experiences in fisheries. Management of coastal and marine ecosystems, riverbanks, fishponds, rice paddies etc. should therefore be based on a comprehensive understanding of the full range of fishing practices undertaken by both women and men in order to be effective and equitable.

**Learn more:**

[FAO – Promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in fisheries and aquaculture](#)

[IUCN – Gender-based violence and environment linkages](#)

**WATER MANAGEMENT**

Women and men, boys and girls may play different roles in the provision, management and safeguarding of water. Women and girls are often responsible for sanitation and for maintaining a hygienic home,

and they often have knowledge of existing waterborne diseases.<sup>32</sup> Women are also more affected by the lack of wastewater treatment and responsible management than men are, since they normally handle wastewater in the homes.<sup>33</sup> In developing countries, men are primarily involved in securing water for larger livestock or other forms of production of goods and services.

It is important not to reduce women's role in water management to domestic tasks but recognise that women also require water for economic production, including microenterprises and agriculture. Tailored gender-sensitive

capacity development in the field of monitoring, assessing and reporting on water and gender issues is essential.<sup>34</sup>

Actions could include supporting women to become leaders in the water sector by applying a human resource and equal opportunity employment procedure to women's work within water management; adjusting working conditions in such a way that it is encouraging for women to pursue a career; and adhering to the Women Empowerment Principles (UN).<sup>35</sup>

Please also see the [Sida's brief on Gender Equality, Water and Sanitation and Hygiene for further inspiration](#).

**Learn more:**

[SIWI – Gender practice in water governance programmes](#)

**ENERGY**

Often women bear the main responsibility for ensuring energy to the household, but can lack access to technologies such as efficient stoves, grinders and pumps that could ease the burdens.<sup>36</sup> When expanding

energy supply and access, it is important to address needs of different groups to ensure energy investments do not only target large-scale energy solutions serving industry (where mainly men tend to work) but also support decentralised energy solutions to, for instance, rural communities where both women and men are in need of energy for domestic, agricultural and small-scale businesses. The sector traditionally employs fewer women than men, and mostly in administrative jobs. There is, however, a growing engagement of women in the delivery of mainly decentralised renewable energy technologies, including the dissemination of solar home systems and lanterns, improved cook stoves and the management of community-based off-grid systems.<sup>37</sup> It is important to consider and guarantee women's access to technical knowledge and skills needed in the transition towards more sustainable energy systems, promoting gender transformative knowledge management.

**Learn more:**

[ENERGIA: International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy](#)

[G-REEN: The Gender and Renewable Energy Platform](#)

<sup>31</sup> Includes both inland and coastal fisheries

<sup>32</sup> Sida's brief for gender equality, water, sanitation and hygiene

<sup>33</sup> [Women for Water Partnership \(2017\)](#)

<sup>34</sup> [SIWI \(2019\)](#)

<sup>35</sup> [Women's Empowerment Principles](#)

<sup>36</sup> [UNESCAP \(2017\)](#)

<sup>37</sup> [ENERGIA \(2010\)](#)

## WASTE MANAGEMENT



Throughout the formal waste economy, women are typically excluded from higher-income, decision-making and policy-making positions. Women are often working in the public sector or informally, while men tend to work more often in the private sector, indicating that gender norms and opportunities clearly shape people's livelihood options within the waste sector.

Studies show that women are often limited to lower-income tasks, such as waste picking, street sweeping and waste separation, whereas men are able to assume positions of higher authority e.g. dealing with the buying and reselling of recyclables.<sup>38</sup> When waste management is formalised and sorting machinery is introduced, men usually take over the tasks that women previously carried out. Women's valuable insights on waste management then risk being overlooked and women may lose income. Lastly, women and men are exposed to different health risks and hazards depending on what roles they have in waste management.<sup>39</sup>

The past few decades have seen a rise in the formation of cooperatives, movements and initiatives working on waste management in the informal sector, some of which also focus on gender equality. Gender equality and greater participation of women working in the waste sector and economic development is also important for the circular economy. The transition from a linear to a circular economy needs to be inclusive and collaborative in all its aspects and with the participation of women and men. With small investments in awareness-raising and skills related to responsible patterns of production and consumption, women can be, as many of them already are, the drivers and engines of the circular economy and circular culture.

### Learn more:

[WIEGO – Women waste pickers](#)

## HOW CAN ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE CONTRIBUTIONS, AND CONTRIBUTIONS IN OTHER RELATED AREAS BE GENDER EQUAL AND SUPPORT WOMEN'S AND GIRL'S HUMAN RIGHTS?

To ensure a strong gender perspective in environmental and climate change contributions and to understand, see and act on the problem, it is essential to mainstream gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment in all phases of the contribution cycle. To get a more comprehensive guide for gender mainstreaming, please read How Sida works with Gender Equality brief.<sup>40</sup>

## Carry out a gender analysis

The gender analysis highlights the differences between and among women, men, girls and boys in terms of their relative distribution of resources, opportunities and choice, power and voice and human security. Making use of the multidimensional poverty analysis (MDPA)<sup>41</sup> can support a gender analysis. In the dialogue between Sida and partners the following can be considered (examples only):

- Are there inequalities in the rights and access to land, natural resources, knowledge, information, technologies and techniques, finance, etc. between women and men, girls and boys? How does the programme plan to address these inequalities?
- Are the different needs and priorities of women and men regarding natural resources management, ecosystem services and disaster risk reduction properly recognised and accounted for?
- What kind of gender and social norms hinder or provide opportunities for gender equality, for equal participation in political processes, organisational work and activism related to environment and climate change?
- What relevant national and international frameworks inform and influence the programme?

## Design for a gender equal contribution

- Are women's and men's different knowledge and experiences considered? Are contributions from women, girls, men and boys equally valued?
- Does the contribution account for the intersecting identities that people have, not only in terms of their sex but also gender identity (e.g. non-binary) and gender expression, sexual orientation, age, disability, ethnicity, and religion or other beliefs?
- What are the risks of vulnerable situations (including GBV) for women, girls, men or boys in the area of the contribution? How are these risks being considered?

## Monitor and evaluate

- Is there a clear results framework and budget which can be followed up? This should clearly state expected change/results in relation to gender equality and how this change should be tracked (e.g. with gender- and age-disaggregated indicators).

<sup>38</sup> [Dias & Ogando \(2015\)](#)

<sup>39</sup> [Climate Technology Centre & Network \(2017\)](#)

<sup>40</sup> [Sida \(2020\)](#)

<sup>41</sup> [Sida \(2019\) MDPA](#)

**TAKE-AWAYS**

- Ensure a gender analysis is carried out, with a broad approach considering sex, age, gender identity and gender expression, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity and religion or other beliefs (intersectionality). Pay special attention to risks such as GBV.
- Ensure adequate gender expertise and budget is included in contributions.
- Support gender sensitive engagement and consultations throughout the contribution.
- Involve men and boys in gender equality efforts as part of the env/climate contribution.
- Support gender equality perspectives in environment and climate change contributions and vice versa.