Gender Stories

Positive experiences in gender mainstreaming: cases from projects evaluated by the Evaluation Office of UNEP

Evaluation Office of UNEP

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Introduction

The UN System-Wide Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (GEEW) was endorsed by the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) in October 2006. In response, UNEP committed to the integration of gender equality and equity in all its policies, programmes, and projects and within its institutional structures in its Medium-Term Strategy (MTS) 2010-2013. In 2015, UNEP developed a comprehensive policy and strategy for gender equality and the environment to guide its projects (e.g., ensuring women's and men's equal participation) and operations (e.g., via staff recruitment practices) in becoming more gender sensitive. The gender mainstreaming approach ensures that women's as well as men's concerns and experiences are an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated – in essence, no UNEP project can be considered gender blind.

By 2011, the Evaluation Office of UNEP had begun to include an assessment of gender mainstreaming in projects as a cross-cutting issue affecting project performance, and from 2018 it was given the status of a stand-alone evaluation criterion termed *"Responsiveness to human rights and gender equality".*

In general, project evaluations are expected to consider to what extent project implementation has taken into consideration: (i) possible inequalities (especially those related to gender) in access to, and the control over, natural resources; (ii) specific vulnerabilities of disadvantaged groups (especially women and children) to environmental degradation or disasters; and (iii) the role of disadvantaged groups (especially those related to gender) in mitigating or adapting to environmental changes and engaging in environmental protection and rehabilitation.

Through this paper and using examples from projects evaluated in the past (between 2018 – 2023) in which the projects' performance in gender responsiveness was rated as 'Satisfactory' or higher, the Evaluation Office seeks to share good examples of gender responsiveness in projects, to increase awareness and provide guidance on different strategies. By sharing these stories, we hope to encourage further improvements in gender mainstreaming, specifically among colleagues engaged in project design, Project Review Committees (PRCs), project management units, the Gender Unit in the Policy and Programme Division (PPD), etc. This is in keeping with the UNEP Gender Policy and Strategy Evaluation (2015-2020) which notes that *"systematic sharing of lessons learned on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (GEEW) for use by programme designers, managers and evaluators could help improve programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation across UNEP programming."*

Gender consideration in evaluations

Aside from assessing projects' performance in responding to gender concerns, the Evaluation Office continues to ensure that a gender perspective is integrated throughout the evaluation process, including through the evaluation approach and methods, and by including strategic evaluation questions that help to provoke a more contextual analysis of gender-related data. This is made easier when projects are intentional about collection of gender-related data during project implementation.

The designs of some interventions do not lend themselves well to criteria assessing adherence to gender and human rights issues, however. While in some cases gender issues are well integrated into the project's results framework, in others gender issues may have to be introduced during

implementation through good project management and/or adaptive management or following recommendations from a formal mid-point assessment. Existing mechanisms for UNEP projects to include gender issues is through, for instance, monitoring and/or reporting requirements included in the templates used for CEO Endorsement Requests to the GEF, Project Documents, GEF Project Implementation Reports (PIRs), annual progress reports, reporting on GEF Core Indicators and Environment and Social Safeguards, UNEP's annual Programme Performance Report, etc.

Examples from past projects

In this section we have highlighted cases on gender integration in projects, presented under five categories as follows:

A. Projects where gender aspects have been considered [almost] across the entire life of the project (design, implementation, monitoring and reporting).
B. Projects where gender was not adequately addressed (if at all) in the design but retrofitted later during project implementation through adaptive management.
C. Demonstration of monitoring of gender during project implementation
D. Gender considerations in projects that work with marginalized groups
E. Integrating considerations in projects operating in conflict-prone areas

A. General integration of gender in project design & implementation

From the sample that was used (i.e. projects evaluated between 2018 and 2023) there was a limited number of examples of projects that had explicitly integrated gender throughout the project cycle, implying that there is still a need for greater gender consideration in UNEP projects. As demonstrated by the briefs below, it is indeed to integrate gender across the different phases of a project.

> *Case 1. Promoting Peace over Natural Resources in Darfur and Kordofan*
> *Project ID 223.4. Terminal Evaluation 2019*
> *https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/30728/223.4_te_unep_regional_spdc_promoting_peace_nat_res_Darfur%20and%20Kordofan.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y*
> *Objective: The project's overall development goal was to reduce the incidence of local conflict over natural resources through improved natural resource management (NRM) and strengthened institutions for dispute resolution. It worked towards strengthening inter-communal relationships and relations between communities and authorities over natural resources in the three targeted areas.*
> *Participating country: Sudan*

This UNEP project was implemented between 2015 and 2018 in Darfur and Kordofan, Sudan. The success of the project regarding inclusion of women and marginalized groups was evident from all sources of data during its evaluation.

The project design documents addressed the need to ensure that women meaningfully participate in project activities and share in the benefits arising from the project, in particular benefits from agriculture, livestock and livelihoods-related extension work conducted by the project, which too often accrue mainly to male participants. The document emphasized the use of Participatory

Impact Assessment (PIA) to ensure that men and women would be able to define their own indicators of improved livelihood.

The project design had a basic Monitoring Plan that included gender-specific indicators. Monitoring data included a compilation of data and activities by village and disaggregated by gender and vulnerable/marginalized groups. From a budgeting perspective, the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) budget included a line item for international consultants who included a gender specialist. Monitoring data were available on three levels: (i) Conflicts in communities, their types, locations and resolution status; (ii) Infrastructure facilities numbers, conditions and use by beneficiaries (disaggregated by gender and pastoralists/farmers); (iii) Project services and activities such as training workshops and committee meetings (disaggregated by gender and pastoralists/farmers).

The use of the monitoring reports for adaptive management was evident, for example, the December 2016 progress report noted that gender mainstreaming was facing challenges due to cultural and traditional obstacles, and as consequence, a gender specialist was sought to assess the situation and offer alternatives in order to ensure that gender issues would be meaningfully addressed.

Integrating women at all levels of the project was evident despite cultural hurdles. The evaluation points to the success of the project in: a) engaging women in all committees; b) ensuring that their participation was active and effective; c) addressing their needs and interests; and, d) providing them with opportunities for growth.

Picture 1: A scene from a townhall meeting in the community centre built by the project in Ashamara, West Darfur.
The fact that women went out to the public space and were well-received was a big step. Women's participation in the project led to their engagement in new activities such as recycling local products and offering them for sale, which contributed to their income. In addition, they had the opportunity to learn about new areas such as managing projects.

Women were present in all village development committees and were part of decision-making (with few exceptions in some localities in Kordofan where cultural and traditional barriers continued to hinder their participation). Although traditional and patriarchal customs sometimes hinder meaningful women representation in committees, flexible and informal spaces were encouraged and supported for women to sit separately and discuss their priorities before meeting as wider committees. This enabled more meaningful and organized inputs by women in communities where previously they had little influence.

The project raised awareness through meetings and training sessions, that women must be part of development committees; one Implementing Partner staff who was a woman also helped in this by being a role model of a woman engaged in village development committees and by speaking up. A Perception Survey conducted between April-July 2018 (in the last six months of the project) confirmed an increase in women and youth participation in village development committees and the effectiveness of their participation in decision-making.

One project staff expressed how deliberate the effort for engaging women was since the inception of the project, and how their presence was effective and not just nominal. It was stated in interviews and focus groups that women attended meetings, shared their opinions, and expressed their needs in committees.

"We are proud of how we engaged women committees; it was not nominal but really active. What helped was that since the mobilization stage we stressed that women will have to be represented and that it was a pre-requisite for forming committees. Women became involved from the beginning. Also the training of committee members was important as we had to do trainings to specific committees related to their work. We insisted that women must be present in those trainings such as trainings on water resource management for the water committees."

The project has been commended for its efforts in acknowledging gender roles and having several targeted activities based on the varying needs of women, men, boys and girls. It was reported that women recognised that their interests were different from those of men and were able to voice their issues and seek more opportunities through their own work, including engaging in gainful activities and managing their own funds.

Through this project, women were able to attend meetings with men and even across tribal lines or farmer/pastoralist lines. The income they generated from the revolving fund models led to bettering their lives and those of their families. Women also became more aware of environmental issues, and it is reported that some women shifted their professions away from those that caused environmental harm.

The evaluation found that the project used lessons learned from the Sudan Integrated Environment Program (SIEP) and the Sudan Post Conflict Environmental Assessment (PCEA), about methodologies of applying gender components in the portfolio of Sudan work. One main lesson was that, despite the reluctance of development agencies and NGOs regarding community participation and issues of gender and minority inclusion in Sudan, success is possible with patience and persistence.

Case 2. Enhancing the Conservation Effectiveness of Seagrass Ecosystems Supporting Globally Significant Populations of Dugongs Across the Indian and Pacific Ocean Basins
https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/33507/4930_2020_te_unep-gef_global_bd_seagrass_eocystems_of_dugongs_Indian_and%20pacific%20oceans.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
GEF ID 4930. Terminal Evaluation 2020
Objective: The Project's overall objective is stated in the Project Document as "to enhance the effectiveness of conservation of dugongs and their seagrass ecosystems across the Indian and Pacific Ocean basins". Specifically, the project sought to deliver actions specific to the eight countries, as well as regional and global activities.
Participating countries: Indonesia, Malaysia, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Timor Leste, Sri Lanka, Mozambique and Madagascar

The Project used incentive mechanisms to improve fisheries management practices and more broadly reducing impacts to dugong and seagrass at pilot sites. These incentives pilot projects had high levels of engagement with women and youth in all countries where they operated. Gender

equality training was also undertaken with all participating families whereby the women trained in mapping and monitoring of seagrass, as well as becoming dive masters (in Timor Leste).

The monitoring plan was adapted over the life of the project as implementation occurred, and issues were identified relating to vulnerable and marginalised groups to help improve project execution. Monitoring of participation and representation in project activities by vulnerable and marginalized groups such as women and youth were undertaken by each national project partner, with the results consolidated at the end of each year as a part of Project reporting. This included information relating to the outcomes achieved against each component, in relation to gender balance and marginalized groups. Improvement in economic status, as well as gender equality and engagement of women and youth, were therefore monitored for each country and then consolidated at the project level.

The Terminal Reports for each country as well as the Project Terminal Report contained dedicated sections on the project's gender dimensions. The evaluation includes an important recommendation relating to monitoring projects for gendered results. It states that, projects with a community engagement focus should establish indicators for measuring gender outcomes with respect to women empowerment, engagement and capacity building; without clear and appropriate outcome-level indicators, reporting on gender mainstreaming can be piecemeal – i.e. quantifying the number of women involved in activities without measuring if there was a gender-related result arising from this engagement.

Case 3. Global Coral Partnership: Towards an Ecosystem Approach to Coral Reef Management
PIMS ID 01820. Terminal Evaluation 2021
https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/37329/01820_2021-unep_spem_global_coral_reef_management.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
Objective: The Project's overall objective is to "develop and test methods, tools and policy frameworks for ecosystem-based management of coral reefs and facilitate their regional and national adoption through provision of technical and policy support, implementation of demonstration projects and capacity development".
Participating countries: Kenya, New Caledonia, Seychelles, Malaysia and Mesoamerica

This was a global project in which gender was reflected in the context, implementation, results framework and the budget. Consideration of gender dimensions was evident throughout the project, through deliberate steps taken to understand the socio-economic factors within communities that help drive change. Training and capacity building was undertaken, and deliberate steps taken to understand the socio-economic factors within communities that help drive change for the small grants programmes.

To ensure engagement of minority and disadvantaged groups, the project incorporated gender perspectives in the development of demonstration pilot projects. The Project, which supported the UNEP Green Fins initiative on sustainable tourism, had specific targets for gender ratios of stakeholders engaging with the project, whether through employment, consultations, or training of Green Fins certifiers. For example, in Kenya where the project focused on development of a carbon offset facility run by the community, 40% of the participants were women.

There was clear reference to gender and marginalised groups in the monitoring strategy, in fact each project partner was asked to monitor and provide gender-disaggregated data on participation in project activities of vulnerable and marginalised groups including women and youth. There were also dedicated sections in the PIMS reports on gender dimensions. The results were analysed and discussed, with examples provided in the project's Final Report.

Gender and minority group considerations were well described in the Project Document, especially in the context of site-level interventions, whereby the intention to promote inclusive conservation and respect the rights of women and local communities was made explicit. The Results Framework also contained two Outcome indicators to account for the equitable engagement of women, men and disadvantaged social groups, taking into account their different roles and their different concerns.

Gender was mainstreamed in project implementation. Work at the main project sites involved marginalised communities in Madagascar and Chile who are dependent on the natural resources in and around the AZE sites; these interventions entailed building trust and a gender-sensitive bottom-up approach to landscape management. Though not measured through sex-disaggregated data or by degree of vulnerability or marginalisation, the project promoted the conscientious involvement of women in reforestation activities and running agroforestry (cacao) nurseries in Brazil, craftwork in Chile and Madagascar as a livelihood option, and mobilizing communities in Chile to learn about protecting a uniquely local AZE frog. In addition, women had a prominent role in project management teams at both the global and national levels.

Gender issues were often linked to stakeholder participation, as highlighted during the Mid-Term Review, which recognised the role of women in project management and partnerships. The project's Final Report (2019) notes the strong involvement of women and good incorporation of gender aspects in all levels of project implementation as a strength of the project. Women were not only involved in the project management teams of executing entities, but also in organizing reforestation activities in Brazil, craftwork production in Chile and Madagascar, and school expeditions in Chile, which shows that women had a central role in mobilizing community members and achieving social buy-in for project activities. Indeed, the social capital that was built at project sites would also likely lead to sustainability gains.

Although these initiatives had 'Enabling Activity' status, they were reported to have a well-founded and gender-responsive design. Gender mainstreaming was a novel ingredient in the Convention

on Biological Diversity (CBD) national reporting exercise and was included in two project Outputs (and one gender-related indicator): *Outputs: 2.1. Scoping report/zero draft for each Aichi Biodiversity Targets and/or national equivalent is prepared and includes analysis on gender; and Output 2.3. Gender-sensitive reports for each Aichi Biodiversity Targets and/or national equivalent are developed*.

Preparing "gender-sensitive" or "gender-responsive" National Reports was weaved into the design of these projects, prompting the Implementing Agencies (UNEP and UNDP) to seeks ways to guide countries on how to meaningfully integrate gender considerations into their Sixth National Reports (6NR), both in the process and in the product. Guidance documents and webinars were made available to countries on how to mainstream gender into CBD national reporting and the implementation of National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs).

Ideally a gender-responsive 6NR is one that identifies both the contributions and gaps of women and men to the achievement of national targets and NBSAP implementation in each country. Whenever this ideal was unattainable, however, because NBSAPs do not adequately differentiate gender roles, then "gender-sensitivity" of the 6NRs was raised through guidance on the drafting process.

It was also found that proactively involving women's groups or seeking gender-balanced representation in National Steering Committees and workshops during 6NR preparation, were steps in the right direction for some countries.

Picture 2: Group photo - 6NR Technical Support Workshop for the Pacific. Samoa, September 2018

Several interviewed countries reported that the exercise had been a key learning experience on gender. The project built the 'gender literacy' of countries and demonstrated successes in this realm (some significant, some incremental). UNEP's exit survey noted that 88.2% of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that country project teams had tried to ensure that the 6NR was gender-responsive, while 11.9% remained neutral. When consulted on the challenges faced when trying to develop a "gender-responsive" 6NR, respondents to the UNEP exit survey cited the absence of gender specificity in their National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans (NBSAPs), as well as the lack of knowledge / expertise for conducting a gender-responsive 6NR process.

B. Retrofitting gender in project results frameworks

In UNEP, evaluations include an assessment of the quality of the project design as relates to gender. Specifically, the extent to which the project document identifies concerns with respect to human rights, including in relation to differentiated gender needs and sustainable development. Where a project was designed and approved before the UNEP Gender Policy was implemented (2015), the assessment will consider the level of gender sensitivity and responsiveness in the

design and explore whether gender responsiveness was improved through adaptive management during implementation.

There are instances where project documents are found to be essentially gender-blind in their formulation. Indeed, gender and marginalized groups are not always explicitly targeted by UNEP's initiatives, yet it is still possible for gender considerations to be integrated into project implementation retrospectively.

A couple of examples of gender concerns being integrated retrospectively through adaptive management are presented below.

> **Case 6. ABS Guatemala: Access to and Benefit Sharing and Protection of Traditional Knowledge to Promote Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use**
> *GEF ID 4618. Terminal Evaluation 2019*
> *https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/28532/4618_2019_te_unep_gef_msp_speg_biodiversity_abs_Guatemala.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y*
> *Objective: The Project Objective was "to develop policy and legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms for access and benefit sharing (ABS), in order to strengthen biodiversity conservation, promote rural development and support climate change adaptation".*
> *Participating country: Guatemala*

In this project, a gender analysis was completely absent in the Project Design. However, the Project management team made a remarkable effort in monitoring, analysing, and reporting on gender mainstreaming during the implementation period. As a result of this, it was possible for the project to identify elements for self-assessing their responsiveness to gender equity based on simple disaggregated indicators.

The pilot character of the intervention could have benefited from a well-defined Gender and Human Rights approach providing evidence of the effect and impact of the project on the most disadvantaged groups in local communities; unfortunately, this was not foreseen in the Project Document. Following a request of the Task Manager, a paper called "Gender mainstreaming: Project analysis" was produced for internal use.

Women's participation in the pilot-experiences was variable and gender composition mostly reflected the type of institutions involved. Women's participation in organizations directly linked to project activities, such as the Steering Committee and Technical Working Groups for instance, was generally low (reported as 30%), both at national level and in the Municipalities.

Interestingly, during events facilitated by the NGO known as "Indigenous Women and Biodiversity", women's participation was significantly higher (around 50%). Women's participation was also high (60-80%) in the elaboration of the Traditional Knowledge (TK) and Genetic Resources catalogues because women are usually responsible for running the botanical gardens where medicinal plants are cultivated for the use of the family.

Women's participation was also high among the teachers of the Pilot-Schools (50%), in the outreach activities in the Communities (70%), and in the participation of elder people as trainers/facilitators at community level (60%). From this it was inferred that women's participation was supposedly lower in forums perceived to have higher political activity and levels of conflicts.

Picture 3: Transfer of Traditional Knowledge in San Juan de la Laguna, Guatemala.

Case 7. *Advancing the Nagoya Protocol in Countries of the Caribbean Region*
GEF ID 5774. Terminal Evaluation 2020
https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/32237/5774_2020_te_msp_em_eg_bd_abs_caribbean_region_nagoya%20protocol.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
Objective: The project's overall development goal was to support countries of the Caribbean to facilitate access to their genetic resources and benefit sharing in a fair and equitable way, in line with the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Nagoya Protocol. Its main objective was "seeking uptake of the Nagoya Protocol and implementation of key measures to make the protocol operational in Caribbean countries".
Participating countries: Antigua & Barbuda, Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts & Nevis, Saint Lucia, Trinidad & Tobago

The issue of gender did not receive much attention in the design of the project as the only mention made was that *"gender considerations would be mainstreamed…, ensuring whenever possible equal opportunities for men and women in the implementation of all capacity building processes".*

This notwithstanding, the project team sought to ensure gender issues were addressed and reported in the latter stages of project implementation, by adopting an inclusive methodology that promoted the effective participation of women, indigenous peoples, local communities, particularly in capacity building activities and in the design of protocols for Prior Informed Consent and Mutually Agreed Terms. In doing so, the project acknowledged the importance of indigenous people and gender issues in the conservation and management of genetic resources.

Two workshops each were held in Jamaica and Guyana (January 2019) to ensure the effective participation of women, indigenous peoples, local communities. The workshops also allowed for the participation of persons from the Rastafarians and Maroon Community. The evaluation reports that women comprised almost 80% of those in attendance at meetings, workshops and training initiatives undertaken by the project.

Case 8. *Conservation Agreement Private Partnership Platform*
GEF ID 4259. Terminal Evaluation 2022
https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/40572/4259_2022_te_unep_gef_spem_sphpe_fsp_global_CAPPP.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Objective: The project's overall development goal was to demonstrate the potential for achieving biodiversity conservation and ecosystem service maintenance with private sector support using conservation agreements with local land- and resource-users.
Participating countries: Bolivia, Cambodia, China, Colombia, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, India, Kenya, Mozambique, Peru, South Africa, Uganda

This project successfully engaged with women, and indigenous and vulnerable groups using Conservation Agreements (CA) which integrated gender aspects in the conservation of natural resources and enabled communities to participate actively in monitoring activities. Gender-responsive measures had not been included in the project design, nor were there monitoring indicators on gender. The CA tool, however, included gender-responsive measures and recognised that men and women interact with their environment in different ways, and therefore have different needs, priorities and interests in conservation.

Following the Mid-Term Review, the project applied an assertive mechanism to include gender-sensitive indicators in its monitoring and reporting tools; the mechanism also helped to ensure that differences across contexts and cultural particularities of the different ethnic groups with regards to decision-making, use of the environment, and opportunities for economic development, were understood and incorporated within the CA cycle.

For instance, in Colombia, women were in charge of the activities implemented (harvesting and monitoring *Piangua*) and in Guatemala planting and harvesting *Xate*. They decided how to spend the increased income generated by men in order to ensure it would help to improve family livelihoods and the provision of women's health services, respecting their indigenous cultural disposition with regards to western medicine. In the case of Bolivia, income generating activities like honey production benefited women. Women were members of the Natural Resource Management Committees in Cambodia. In Colombia, a group of women was engaged in monitoring activities. In South Africa, where project activities (e.g., cattle breeding) were more likely to be undertaken by men, a significant number of women engaged in goat breeding had also benefitted from the project.

Case 9. Participatory Sustainable Land Management in the Grassland Plateaus of Western Madagascar
GEF ID 5354. Terminal Evaluation 2023
Objective: The project's objective was to reverse land degradation and improve living conditions in the Bongolava Region of Western Madagascar through participatory sustainable management of the grasslands.
Participating country: Madagascar

The project design was initially weak on gender issues, as reflected in the context, logical framework and results indicators, as well as the project budget. In 2019, the project undertook an assessment to better understand the human rights and gender dimension of its work and as a result, adaptive actions focusing on gender equality were introduced, including the introduction of project activities considered more likely to directly interest women (like improved stoves, breeding, and composting).

To rule out ambiguity in the assessment of the role attributed to women, the project distinguished the recipient from the end user of the support provided. The project strengthened the women as the end user (seeds, tools, etc.) and therefore as true beneficiaries of the project. This happened even though at household level the benefits are often assigned to the head of the households, which are men in most of the cases. The project also promoted the participation of more women by organizing targeted training to allow more women to participate. The evaluation reports that

women's participation rate in project activities was about 37% for awareness-raising, 48% for training and 25% for implementation. These activities were gender-sensitive (accessible to all), allowing women to attain additional knowledge and income.

Picture 4: *Local land users and land management committees trained in sustainable land management (SLM). The project identified urgent SLM measures (e.g. land preparation, soil amendment, planting, relining, installation of anti-erosion device, fixing hedge planting and live hedges, etc.) which were implemented by local communities with equitable representation of men and women*

The project used a bottom-up monitoring approach which allowed beneficiaries and their representatives (Sustainable Land Management committees) to gather data from all the stakeholders including the most vulnerable. This data was disaggregated by gender and age (data was not disaggregated on a marginalization basis as the whole project includes marginalized people). The evaluation records that the monitoring reports were both gender neutral (i.e., reflecting gendered experiences equally) and gender sensitive (i.e., reporting experiences differentiated by gender groups).

Case 10. Promoting Sustainable Land Management in Albania Through Integrated Restoration Ecosystems (SLM Albania)
GEF ID 9477. Terminal Evaluation 2023
https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/41673/9477_2023_te_unep_gef_msp_sphpe_slm_Albania.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
Objective: The project's goal was to strengthen the capacity and skills of national and local government institutions and promote sustainable land management practices in Albania through integrated ecosystem restoration.
Participating country: Albania

The project design tried to integrate indigenous rights and gender equity in planned activities, but there was not much information to illustrate how this would effectively be done. Consequently, the project initially struggled with creating more influence and empowerment for women.

During implementation however, the project team was self-reflective on how to integrate gender considerations when, at the first community meetings held, it was discovered that these were male dominated. The Mid-Term Review recommended that a women-specific workshop be held to discuss how women can gain greater access to markets and securities within the Sustainable Land Management (SLM) arena. Accordingly, a workshop titled "Gender Perspectives in Sustainable Forest and Land Management" was organized in Kolonja, during which the following conclusions were reached: 1) need for trainings related to sustainable land and forest management, protection of the quality of agricultural crops, marketing and increasing women's entry into markets; 2) need for flexible training based on mobile training centres, that can be easily approached by women; 3) need for new guarantee schemes, with a defined target of female beneficiaries in the village; 4) need for increased advertising on different schemes and by promoting special programs on local radio and television stations. This was a useful workshop and appreciated by the participants.

The project highlighted the role of women, showing how SLM offered opportunities for women to strengthen their role as social actors. The success of the project at the farm level was accentuated by good examples in certain intervention areas of female leadership and entrepreneurship in agriculture and food processing, and by the recognition that lasting change is best achieved when supported by all family pillars. Openness to gender equity meant that several project coordinators at the local level were women and contributed directly to the project's progress and impact. Even if the project did not set out to address gender equity, it did serve as a reminder that it is important to value and showcase the role of women.

C. Integrating gender considerations in project monitoring

Monitoring and reporting on gender is not always explicitly done. Sometimes projects do not report on the topic at all or will do so sporadically; when women are mentioned, it is often as headcount or percentage of attendance at an activity such as training. Gender mainstreaming, however, is more than just a headcount.

The integration of gender issues by project teams has its own learning curve. To demonstrate gendered results, a good first step is to ensure that sex-disaggregated baselines are known and recorded, in such a way that any attribution by the intervention towards gender roles or groups (whether positive or negative), can be more readily measured.

Below is an example of a project that used monitoring and reporting of disaggregated data to showcase their gender-responsive results.

Case 11. Capacity Building for Information Coordination and Monitoring Systems/SLM in Areas with Water Resource Management Problems of Country Pilot Partnership Program on Sustainable Land Management
GEF ID 8003. Terminal Evaluation 2023
https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/42167/8003_2023_te_unep_gef_sphpe_fsp_SLM%20Cuba.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
Objective: The project's overall development goal was to address land degradation issues, with an emphasis on water resource management, in key agricultural areas of Cuba.
*Participating country: Cuba*

In unsuspecting or subtle ways, this project was responsive to human rights and gender equality even though no explicit commitment was made in the project's design to attend to the needs of women and marginalized groups. This project carried out several gender-responsive actions and was proactive in its inclusion of women, which included awareness-raising and outreach to increase understanding of the gender dimensions of Sustainable Land Management (SLM).

The project put together an 'Info-Communication Strategy' to encourage public participation through a gender-sensitive and inclusive approach and horizontal communication that was conducive to dialogue and exchange, instead of one-way knowledge transmission. At each project intervention site, a gender champion was appointed to coordinate talks and awareness-raising activities with local actors, producers, and surrounding communities.

In working with beneficiary groups in the field, the project purposefully included women in its activities and encouraged farmers to do the same in their farming operations and businesses. Workshops and meetings were carried out to discuss the relevance of gender to project activities, the role of women in the conservation of natural resources and efficient use of water, the

differential roles of men and women in agricultural activities, and to highlight how female leaders and producers were contributing to SLM across Cuba.

One of the monitoring indicators that included gender-disaggregated targets was the "number of producers and water managers that implement SLM measures with an emphasis on water". Progress against this indicator was recorded through annual progress reports and was expected to show increases with respect to baseline values, using gender-disaggregated figures.
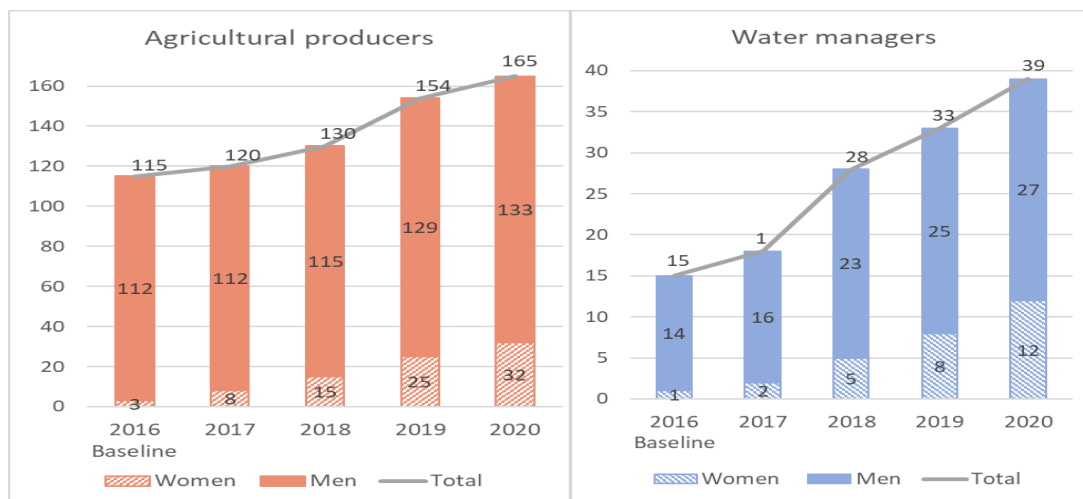
Picture 5*: Annual figures showing how participation in implemented SLM practices increased year on year in Guantánamo-Maisi, Cuba.*
The proportion of women in both groups also grew - from 3% to 19% women among agricultural producers, and from 7% to 31% women in the water managers group

This approach was successful in at least one of the territorial teams which used their own gender-disaggregated data to observe rising trends in female participation between 2016 to 2020, and to differentiate between water managers and producers as two distinct groups. For example, the monitoring data from the intervention in Guantánamo-Maisi demonstrated an increase in the total number of producers and water managers, and the proportion of women, from year on year.

D. Gender consideration in marginalised communities

A more deliberate effort is required to ensure that gender and human rights concerns among marginalised communities are incorporated into project design and implementation. This would enable projects to respond to the needs and priorities of marginalized women particularly in fragile and conflict-affected states. Below are examples of a UNEP projects that managed to enlist a high participation of marginalised women.

Case 12. Expanding Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) Certification at landscape level through incorporating additional ecosystem services
GEF ID 3951. Terminal Evaluation 2018
https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27317/3951_2018_te_unenvironment_gef_global_biodiversity_fsp_SPEM_expanding_forest_stewardship_council_certification.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y
Objective: The project objective was to pilot test expanded and enhanced global and national environmental standards applied to emerging markets for biodiversity conservation and ecosystems services, as an initial step for upgrading successful models for Forest Stewardship Council certification. This was to be achieved through establishing FSC certification as a market tool for a wide range of ecosystem services not adequately covered for sustainable forest management.
Participating countries: Chile, Indonesia, Nepal, Vietnam

This project was reported as being very intentional with its inclusion of indigenous peoples, including women and marginalised groups. There was a high level of female participation in nearly all the local project activities and the National Executing Agencies had a special focus on gender equity.

In this project, gender mainstreaming was more than just a headcount; it had to do with women's empowerment and influence on all levels, and the women's perspective on traditional conservation of nature and sustainability.

Picture 6: Community forestry user group in Nepal.

Regarding gender equity, the project demonstrated their commitment to ensuring female participation in nearly all the local project activities.

In Nepal for instance, the *Dalits* are a group of people that are traditionally discriminated against in the Hindu caste system. The project was able to engage *Dalits,* including the women from this marginalised group, into the local community forestry user groups, making a significant impact to human rights and gender empowerment.

Picture 7: Women bringing home firewood in Nepal.

A specifically interesting and traditionally marginalised stakeholder group are the Dalits (cast-less people) in Nepal. The project, through its national partner, was able to integrate local groups such as communities, indigenous peoples, rural organizations, (represented by men and women) in project activities.

The Evaluator met with local *Dalits* that were very active in project activities, including a lady who was doubly marginalised, being both a woman and *Dalit*. Regarding human rights, the project worked efficiently with indigenous peoples and integration of other traditionally discriminated groups.

The project design included activities specifically aimed at engaging and empowering women in a country where severe gender disparities and vulnerability remain a major issue. Most national-level activities were implemented mainly in Bamyan, Daikundi, and Badakhshan provinces; in Bamyan and Daikundi in particular, the project worked with the Hazara and Sayyid communities, both marginalised ethnic and religious minorities.

The progress reports provided updates on activities specifically targeting women, including some information on how gender was being mainstreamed across project activities and outputs. The evaluation found that there was a good degree of stakeholder participation in project activities, and that field-level activities also benefitted the marginalised groups mentioned above.

Gender issues were deliberately addressed in policy-related work and through pilot projects, and gender aspects were successfully integrated in policies and strategies. Specifically, with support from the project, social inclusion and gender was integrated in Afghanistan's Natural Resource Management Policy and Strategy.

The project worked with the Hazara and Sayyid communities, both marginalised ethnic and religious minorities, whereby women were targeted through specific pilot activities. The participation of women in provincial trainings was encouraged, but due to cultural restrictions and security, more men than women were trained. Reportedly, at least 36 % of the training participants were women, which should be considered a good level of participation in the Afghan context.

The project also carried out an assessment of women's inclusion in environmental management in coordination with the Gender Department of the National Environmental Protection Agency. This was done through a survey that was conducted with 100 women relating to alternative sources of fuel and the impact of coal on health. The results were included in a policy brief on gender resilience and improving women's participation in agriculture, water, forest and rangeland, and was published and distributed in events for the International Women's Day.

E. Gender consideration in conflict zones

The impacts of climate change exacerbate existing social, economic and environmental risks, which can fuel unrest and contribute to conflict. Security concerns linked to climate change include impacts on food, water and energy supplies, increased competition over natural resources, loss of livelihoods, climate-related disasters, and forced migration and displacement. As a result of constrained access to natural resources, community members in the participating communities

reported that out-migration of men was on the increase. Women reported shouldering increased burdens and experiencing higher levels of insecurity as the sole providers for their families in evermore challenging environments.

Despite the gender-related challenges associated with climate change and security, women in the project countries (Sudan and Nepal) have traditionally been sidelined from decision-making processes. Barriers to inclusion are especially high for the female members of ethnic minority communities, as they face multiple levels of marginalization.

Human rights and gender equality were carefully considered and executed in this Project, right from the project design, and throughout project implementation. In addition, the Project Manager took responsibility for incorporating gender perspectives and ensuring equal participation of women and men in all areas of the project. As a consequence of these efforts, women in the intervention areas were empowered in diverse ways throughout the implementation of the project.

Picture 8: Women's community forest in Shakti Karnali River Basin

Women can be very good entrepreneurs when given the opportunity to manage natural resources. The women in Shakti Karnali River basin (Nepal) have fenced the forest, planted trees and plants, and opened a picnic place for gathering and social activities in their community forest.

The gender mainstreaming approach taken by this project included the following elements:

- Preliminary stakeholder consultations were undertaken to obtain an initial understanding of the roles, priorities, and concerns of men and women in relation to the project's objectives in the selected intervention areas.
- Gender considerations were sufficiently reflected in the project's monitoring frameworks at design.
- All data used in intervention planning, baselining and project monitoring was gender disaggregated.
- Support for the empowerment of women was provided through, inter alia, ensuring women's voices were heard in stakeholder consultations (if necessary by consulting men and women separately); where possible, targeting women and women's groups as specific beneficiaries of capacity-building or extension services, while considering women's workload; and promoting women's participation in local resource governance mechanisms, as appropriate.
- Efforts were made to ensure that project capacity building activities achieve a gender balance amongst meeting participants and trainers.
- Gender perspectives were also incorporated into project knowledge and data products when applicable.

Conclusions

When it comes to the practical integration of gender in project design and implementation, the following questions will often arise to which answers must be sought:

- *How do we apply a gender lens in projects with no explicit gender dimension?*
- *How do we identify unintended (negative or positive) gender-related effects of interventions?*
- *How do we practically handle intersectionality (the ways that multiple forms of inequality or discrimination compound themselves e.g. religion, ethnicity, socio-economic status, etc.) while also trying to ensure gender integration in projects?*
- *How do we ensure gender integration in evaluation when the evaluand has no explicit gender component?*
- *How do we ensure gender integration in evaluation when we are working with limited or no gender data on results?*

The UN policy "leave no one behind" is a good entry point. By consulting the population themselves, projects ought to identify who the most vulnerable groups among the project beneficiaries are, who among the most vulnerable groups are women, and the extent to which the project addresses the needs of these groups.

At project design (or implementation), consider the differences in the way women and men (i) participate in project activities; (ii) access project outputs; and (iii) are affected by the project's outcomes. This could be achieved by asking the intended beneficiaries explicit questions aimed at collecting gender-related data, to include among others:

- *Who stands to benefit the most from the initiative?*
- *Who is likely to be left behind?*
- *Why have they participated / are they participating in the project?*
- *What are they hoping to gain from the project/ what does the project provide them with?*

Where project documents are silent on gender equality issues, the project management unit can be deliberate about consulting with and addressing the interests of men and women, including marginalized/disadvantaged groups, to identify their unique interests and concerns. Indeed, where gender considerations have not been explicitly defined in the project document, or at the time of project formulation, the participation of both men and women ought to be sought during project implementation by bringing together representatives from key stakeholder groups to the same table, to discuss their roles in the intervention and how it stands to benefit them.

Even normative projects (e.g. interventions that essentially result in policy/institutional changes) that appear to have no direct effect on human rights or gender equity can influence the well-being of different social groups in different ways. Using a gender lens to query such interventions will reveal project components where gender-aggregated data collection, analysis and reporting is not only possible, but important for the long-term sustainability of project outcomes.

Gender mainstreaming is more than a headcount. Ensuring that gender equity and the empowerment of women is effective and not just nominal, requires a deliberate effort. As demonstrated by some of the stories above, it is important to understand the socio-economic factors that drive change within project countries and/or communities. This will guide the project

on how to integrate outcome-level indicators in the results framework, monitoring and reporting, and not just report on the number of women involved in project activities.

The stories above show that having women participate meaningfully in project activities, and share in the benefits arising, contributes to its success. One of the projects highlighted[1] emphasized the use of a Participatory Impact Assessment (PIA) to ensure that men and women were able to define their own indicators of improved livelihood. In this project, due to the challenges related to cultural and traditional hinderances to women's participation, stakeholder consultations were undertaken separately for men and women in the affected areas – a method that was used to successfully include women's voices in decision-making.

Projects are encouraged to go beyond the collection of gender-disaggregated data, to understanding whether their interventions lead to the desired outcomes in a gender equitable manner. This may be done through: in-depth gender analysis to identify women's and men's different needs based on their concerns and experiences; including explicit gender indicators, baseline, targets, outputs and outcomes in the project logframe; integrating gender as part of ongoing monitoring and ensuring the availability of financial and human resources dedicated to the corresponding measurement of gender indicators; and appropriate participation or representation of women and men in decision-making and/or project implementation activities.

Where the main challenge in gender mainstreaming has to do with the technical capacity of the project management unit itself, the M&E budget could include a line item for the engagement of a gender specialist to ensure gender responsiveness in project implementation and in adaptive management.

In conclusion, gender mainstreaming is a fundamental principle of UNEP's work. The Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment[2] guides UNEP's organization's work in *"ensuring that gender analysis is incorporated more systematically into environmental programming, that the insight, knowledge and expertise of women as well as men informs environmental decision-making, and that women and men participate directly in setting the environmental agenda on an equal basis".* From this perspective, no UNEP project should be considered gender-blind; each project ought to contain a gender-responsive approach, including specific and budgeted activities with gender considerations included in the logframe and workplan, with established outputs, indicators, baselines and targets[3].

Above are examples of UNEP colleagues who are successfully addressing complex situations and finding more equitable solutions.

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[1] *Promoting Peace over Natural Resources in Darfur and Kordofan (PIMS 223.4)*
[2] *https://www.unep.org/resources/policy-and-strategy/un-environment-policy-and-strategy-gender-equality-and-environment*
[3] *UNEP Programme and Project Management Manual (page 57)*