



BUILDING RESILIENCE, INTEGRATING GENDER

*Women, Natural Resources and
Climate Change in Afghanistan*



ACRONYMS

| | | | |
|----------|--|--------|--|
| AMD | Afghanistan Meteorological Department | IWRM | Integrated Water Resource Management |
| ANDMA | Afghanistan National Disaster Management Authority | LDC | Least Developed Country |
| ANPDF | Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework | LEDS | Low Emission Development Strategies |
| APAN | Asia Pacific Adaptation Network | MAIL | Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock |
| CBDP | Community-based Disaster Preparedness | MEA | Multilateral Environmental Agreement |
| CBNRM | Community-based Natural Resource Management | MRRD | Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development |
| CDC | Community Development Council | NEPA | National Environmental Protection Agency |
| CDP | Community Development Plan | NGO | Non-governmental Organisation |
| CDKN | Climate and Development Knowledge Network | PDMC | Provincial Disaster Management and Response Committees |
| CSO | Central Statistics Organisation | SCCF | Special Climate Change Fund |
| CTCN | Climate Technology Centre and Network | SCWAM | Supreme Council for Water Affairs Management |
| DDMC | District Disaster Management and Response Committees | SDG | Sustainable Development Goals |
| DRM | Disaster Risk Management | SEAC | Sub-national Environmental Advisory Council |
| DRR | Disaster Risk Reduction | SFDRR | Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction |
| EWS | Early Warning System | SNAP | Strategic National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction |
| FEWS NET | Famine Early Warning System Network | SNC | Second National Communication under the UNFCCC |
| GHG | Greenhouse Gas | UNCBD | United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity |
| HCDM | High Commission for Disaster Management | UNCCD | United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification |
| HFA | Hyogo Framework for Action | UNFCCC | United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change |
| INC | Initial National Communication under the UNFCCC | USGS | United States Geological Survey |



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Women, Natural Resources and Climate Change in Afghanistan

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Building Environmental Resilience

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environment

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1

INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

Gender equality refers to the equal participation of women and men in decision making, equal ability to exercise their rights, equal access to and control of resources and the benefits of development, and equal opportunities in employment and in all other aspects of their lives and livelihoods.^{1,2} Unfortunately, across the world, women tend to have less power and control over resources than men, meaning that they often have weaker voices when it comes to making decisions for themselves, their families and their communities.

However, as providers for their families, women's contributions are very valuable as well as closely linked to the goods and services provided by the natural world for food, water, medicine, and fuel. This is especially true in rural areas where women frequently take active roles in agriculture, animal husbandry, and the management of forest, rangeland, energy, and water resources.³ And, as educators to their children, mothers pass traditional knowledge of resource management down across generations and help to ensure the continuation of local practices for the preservation, protection, and sustainable use of natural resources.

Because of their intimate knowledge of natural resources, women tend to have a deep understanding of their local environment. In this way, women keep their fingers on the pulse of the environment and may be the first to see any signs of declining ecosystem health. As stewards of local natural resources, women also help to ensure that their ecosystems remain healthy and are able to absorb shocks from natural hazards and climate change. With an uncertain future and a changing climate, the services provided by women, as well as their traditional knowledge, are essential to enhancing resilience and adaptive capacity.

The effects of ecosystem degradation, natural hazards, and climate change often exacerbate existing gender inequalities between men and women. For example, women are differently vulnerable to men, and are affected in their roles as food producers, healthcare providers, caregivers, and income earners.⁴ Women also bring unique experiences and skills to disaster risk reduction that can complement those of men, but these are rarely acknowledged or tapped into. In order to build meaningful resilience to natural hazards and climate change, it is essential to bridge the gap between men and women and ensure that both genders have equal access to information and decision-making opportunities. Only through the full participation of all people can a community effectively identify smart pathways to resilience, reduce the risk of natural hazards, and strengthen their adaptive capacity to climate change.

Afghanistan is no exception concerning gender equality, and many human rights groups have even gone so far as to declare Afghanistan as among the world's worst countries to live in as a woman.⁵ All too often, the contributions of Afghanistan's women to household production, children's education, and natural resource management are unrecognised and undervalued.

Women in Afghanistan also tend to disproportionately suffer injuries and fatalities from climate-induced and other natural hazards, often due to lack of access to information and early warning, marginalisation from decision-making and planning, and cultural practices that restrict their movement and participation in the public sphere.

Taking into account the complexity of gender, environment, disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in Afghanistan, this paper's goals are twofold. First is to shine greater light on the valuable contributions that women play in the management of natural resources and maintaining healthy ecosystems in Afghanistan. Second is to expand on these contributions and provide concrete recommendations for mainstreaming gender into sectoral policies, increase gender equality in decision-making, and strengthen community-level resilience to natural hazards and climate change in Afghanistan.

The paper is structured as follows. Firstly, a synopsis of the expected impacts of climate change on Afghanistan's natural resources will be provided. This will set the scene for further exploration of how Afghan women are involved in managing these natural resources, as well as what the implications of climate change will be for these women's lives and livelihoods. These discussions will centre on four main themes: agriculture, forests and rangelands, energy, and water. Finally, a number of policy recommendations and practical actions will outline how gender concerns might be integrated into current or future development initiatives as a fundamental aspect of building adaptive capacity to climate change and disasters in Afghanistan.



2

CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATURAL RESOURCES IN AFGHANISTAN

CLIMATE CHANGE AND NATURAL RESOURCES IN AFGHANISTAN

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is a land-locked, arid and largely mountainous country, with cold winters and hot summers. Mean annual precipitation is approximately 300 mm, mostly comprising snow in winter and spring. These environmental factors are critical for Afghanistan's agricultural sector, as 60 percent of Afghans are primarily reliant on agricultural livelihoods.⁶ For example, livestock is important for 80 percent of households and contributes more than 50 percent of the agricultural GDP.⁷ Important crops in Afghanistan are grains, vegetables, fruits and nuts that are cultivated mainly using traditional irrigation practices.⁸ Despite there being little forest cover remaining, Afghanistan's diverse forest types also provide valuable ecosystem goods – including timber, fuelwood, nuts and fruits – that underpin many rural livelihoods.

These livelihoods are threatened by the degradation of natural resources and ecosystems in Afghanistan. For example, 60 percent of rangelands are vulnerable to desertification and overgrazing.^{9,10} Forest cover has also decreased by 50-80 percent since the 1970s, driven by logging, fuelwood collection, unsustainable harvesting, and expansion of agriculture and urban areas.^{11,12} Meanwhile, land area under irrigation has decreased by approximately 60 percent since the 1970s because of limited investment into maintenance and expansion of irrigation infrastructure.

Climate change is expected to exacerbate these challenges. Climate projections for Afghanistan indicate that mean annual temperatures will increase at a rate higher than the expected global mean, while mean annual precipitation is likely to decrease, particularly in the Northern, Central Highlands and Eastern Regions.¹³

Consequently, the frequent and severe droughts already experienced in Afghanistan are expected to continue as a result of increased temperatures and reduced rainfall.¹⁴ Temperature increases are also likely to lead to more frequent flash floods and landslides caused by rapidly melting snow in spring.¹⁵

The impacts of such climatic changes will be disproportionately severe for rural communities dependent on agricultural livelihoods. Projected changes in precipitation will decrease the extent of arable land, reduce agricultural productivity, and lead to food insecurity. Increased exploitation of underground water sources may lead to the drying up of wells and springs, as has already been observed. Droughts will increase in frequency and severity, with severe implications for agricultural production and animal husbandry.

The effects of climate-induced natural disasters will be exacerbated by ecosystem degradation in Afghanistan. Reductions in vegetation cover lead to increased surface runoff and soil erosion, creating a negative feedback loop that will further deplete the natural resource base of the country. Water availability will be reduced, soils will become severely eroded and the integrity of natural ecosystems will deteriorate further. Consequently, desertification will occur at accelerated rates, decreasing forage availability and thus reducing productivity of rangelands. Changes in mean annual temperature and precipitation will also reduce the production of timber and non-timber forest products. These and other expected impacts of climate change will clearly have adverse effects on natural resources and threaten the livelihoods of communities relying on such ecosystem goods and services.







3

AGRICULTURE

AGRICULTURE

Afghanistan is a predominantly agricultural country, with production of various crops highly dependent on specific climate conditions. Changes to the climate will thus have considerable impacts on how crops are cultivated.¹⁶ For example, a warmer climate may increase the duration of the growing season and accelerate plant growth, but can also reduce the amount of time that seed crops have to grow and mature, resulting in lower crop yields. Similarly, changes in amount and timing of precipitation will make rain-fed agriculture particularly difficult, possibly resulting in a widespread decrease in agricultural production and increase in need for irrigation.¹⁷

Women constitute approximately 33 percent of the labour force in Afghanistan's agricultural sector, but are most often involved in lower levels of agricultural value chains and small-scale production owing to inequitable access to opportunities.^{18,20,21} As small-scale farmers, women are extremely vulnerable to climate change as they have limited options for diversifying their production base and thus spread their risk over multiple income sources.²¹

It is thus clear that, while climate change will affect everyone, women in Afghanistan are especially vulnerable because of their lack of access to land, inputs, extension services, information and resources, as well as the fact that they are often marginalised in decision-making.²²

Consequently, involvement of women in planning and practical actions for climate-smart agriculture, such as selection of drought-resistant crop varieties and affordable micro-irrigation technologies, is essential to ensuring that agricultural productivity does not decrease because of climate change, with a resultant potential loss of household income, family nutrition security, and subsequent increases in food prices and market volatility.

Policy Recommendations for Gender Inclusion

- Implement Afghanistan's Strategy on Women in Agriculture in order to promote the gender-inclusive advancement of the agriculture sector.
- Strengthen the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock's institutional capacity on gender inclusion for the agriculture sector and climate-sensitive planning and programming.
- Formally recognise women as farmers from policy to practice and macro to micro levels, including recognising women's small-scale agricultural practices such as home-gardens as legitimate agricultural activities.
- Enact legal and policy frameworks at the national level that address the gap between men and women landholders.
- Establish national and provincial programmes for improving women's access to resources, technologies, and skills for climate-smart agriculture.
- Carry out gender-sensitive outreach, education, and research programmes to bridge the gap between women and climate-smart agriculture knowledge.
- Promote women's involvement in national and provincial decision-making and planning for climate-smart agriculture.
- Empower women as producers and processors of agricultural and livestock products in order to strengthen their positions in agricultural value chains.

Practical Actions for Gender Inclusion

- Prioritise the deployment of female agricultural scientists, offering them equitable pay and other incentives, to deliver gender-sensitive extension work in order to provide women farmers with greater skills, knowledge and resources on climate-smart agriculture.
- Provide women with access to appropriate technologies, equipment and assets, similar to those provided to men, for increasing women's productivity in farming and agriculture, as well as post-harvest processing.
- Deliver practical trainings to women to enhance their knowledge on dietary diversity in order to improve family nutrition.
- Establish and expand women's household and school gardens in rural, peri-urban, and urban areas in order to reduce household food insecurity and low nutritional levels.
- Address local bottlenecks to market access and value chains for women, including through women's collectives, promoting joint/cooperative ventures for women to upscale enterprises for greater mobility and collective market access.
- Diversify women's agricultural products, and their competitiveness, through the development of entrepreneurial skills and initiatives.
- Provide rural women with greater mobility and market participation by facilitating adequate transportation and access to market information.
- Increase women's participation in local markets and establish women's markets at district and provincial levels.



4

FORESTS AND RANGELANDS

FORESTS AND RANGELANDS

Most forest and rangeland ecosystems in Afghanistan are at risk to degradation and desertification as a result of expansion of agricultural land, overgrazing, fuelwood collection and cutting of trees.²³ This has negatively affected the provision of ecosystem goods and services, which ultimately reduces the sustainability of livelihoods underpinned by such natural resources. Climate change is predicted to aggravate current rates of degradation of forest and rangeland resources. In particular, increases in the frequency and intensity of droughts, floods and landslides will exacerbate ecosystem degradation, prevent natural regeneration and accelerate soil erosion.

For example, changes in temperature and rainfall are expected to lead to reduced production of timber and non-timber forest products, while increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather events – such as droughts, flooding and landslides – are likely to accelerate rates of ecosystem degradation, prevent natural regeneration, and increase rates of soil erosion.^{24,25} These impacts here will have adverse effects on the availability of natural resources, threatening the livelihoods of rural communities relying on goods and services from forest and rangeland ecosystems.

Women in Afghanistan are likely to be particularly affected by the impacts of climate change on natural ecosystems as they traditionally play a significant role in management of forest and rangeland resources. For example, women often are responsible for collecting fodder and fuelwood, managing livestock grazing, and collection of non-timber forest products.^{26,27}

However – despite being primary resource users – women have historically had limited involvement in planning and decision-making for forest and rangeland resource management. Given the reliance of many rural Afghan women on natural resources, the threats posed by climate change to rangeland and forest ecosystems is likely to negatively impact on the lives and livelihoods of these women.

Policy Recommendations for Gender Inclusion

- National legislature should recognise the rights of women to forest and rangeland resources, and laws that grant women access to forest and rangeland resources should be monitored to ensure proper implementation.
- Mainstream gender considerations into land tenure systems that recognise women's equal rights to access and use forest and rangeland resources, including land, trees, and their produce.
- Organise gender-sensitisation seminars for policymakers and forestry officials to understand the diversity and concerns of the social groups that depend on forest resources.
- Develop and update legislation, policies, strategies and programmes to support and promote women's unique knowledge and capacities for the sustainable management of forest and rangeland resources.
- Integrate gender-based vulnerability and capacity assessments into national-, provincial-, district-, and community-level strategies and plans for participatory, sustainable and climate-resilient forest and rangeland management.
- Ensure that women are explicitly involved in the selection, prioritisation, and design of interventions for sustainable management of forests and rangelands so that they can more actively derive socio-economic benefits from their sustainable management.

Practical Actions for Gender Inclusion

- Integrate gender considerations into community-level forest and rangeland activities, while remaining sensitive to traditional and cultural beliefs and practices, in order to ensure that women reap meaningful benefits.
- Support women's self-help groups, cooperatives and collectives as a means of improving their capacity to negotiate on and participate in planning and management of forest, rangeland and other natural resources.
- Undertake research to document women's participation in community forestry and rangeland initiatives, collect sex-disaggregated data on access and use of forest and rangeland resources, and inform the selection of gender-sensitive interventions at community level.
- Strengthen the capacity of rural women in forest, range-, and dryland management techniques for improved management of watersheds and local natural resources to increase their climate resilience.
- Establish women's community tree nurseries and woodlots to provide women direct control over forest restoration and resource management.
- Strengthen women's participation in value chains for timber and non-timber forest products as well as animal husbandry to cultivate greater gendered participation in and benefit sharing from climate-resilient management of forests and rangelands.
- Document and disseminate traditional knowledge about sustainable ways of harvesting forest products, such as medicinal plants, to involve women in specialised value chains, diversify income sources, and promote ecosystem rehabilitation.





5

ENERGY

ENERGY

More than three-quarters of households in Afghanistan use solid fuels – mostly firewood, charcoal, animal dung and bushes – for cooking, while more than 90 percent of households use such fuels for heating.^{28,29} Use of such fuels has considerable negative environmental and socio-economic impacts. For example, collection of fuelwood and bushes can cause degradation of rangeland and forest ecosystems, while burning of such fuels results in emissions of greenhouse gases and other forms of pollution.

In particular, combustion of fuel for household cooking and heating emits indoor pollutants such as oxides of carbon, nitrogen and sulphur as well as particulate matter.³⁰ Such indoor air pollution from solid fuel combustion impacts negatively on health and is associated with a range of respiratory diseases.³¹

The burden of collection of fuel, whether wood, bushes or animal dung, falls primarily on women in rural Afghanistan.³² Given anthropogenic and climate change impacts on Afghanistan's ecosystems, sources of fuel are likely to dwindle. This will increase the time and effort required by women to collect sufficient fuel for household needs, as well as increase the cost of purchasing alternative fuel where supplies from ecosystems are scarce. Furthermore, because Afghan women are mainly responsible for household chores such as cooking, the health and other impacts of burning such fuels for indoor cooking and heating impact severely on them and their children.^{33,34}

However, diversification and more efficient use of energy sources offer the potential for delivering a range of environmental and socio-economic benefits, particularly for women. Use of cleaner fuel sources (e.g., paraffin and liquid petroleum gas) have proven to be cost-effective in decreasing the risk of disease associated with poor indoor air quality.³⁵ Moreover, efficient stoves for cooking and heating require less fuel, which will reduce pressure on natural resources, thereby reducing the burden on women of collecting fuel, while also emitting fewer greenhouse gases and other pollutants.^{36,37,38} Switching to electricity provided by renewable energy, such as solar or hydro-power, will similarly improve environmental sustainability and human health conditions while reducing greenhouse gas emissions, thereby contributing to climate change mitigation.

Policy Recommendations for Gender Inclusion

- Develop a national gender- and climate-sensitive energy strategy that recognises the different energy consumption and usage patterns between men and women.
- Increase access to international climate financing for climate-smart energies and technologies, such as solar, wind, micro-hydro, geothermal, and biomass.
- Harness women's economic empowerment as a strategy for expanding electrification and energy access in rural and peri-urban areas.
- Carry out research to identify national priorities at the intersection of energy, gender and climate resilience.
- Improve data collection on women's and men's use of, knowledge of, access to, and control over energy resources as well as opportunities for their involvement in decision-making.
- Establish a national green energy initiative to promote climate-smart technologies and improve energy use efficiency.
- Promote decentralised rural energy generation, sharing, and usage to capitalise on locally appropriate renewable energy sources in order to provide electricity to the most remote and inaccessible communities.
- Develop detailed and gender-inclusive national technical standards and guidelines for decentralised community energy projects.

Practical Actions for Gender Inclusion

- Prioritise energy efficiency in rural development initiatives through improved community-based natural resource management of forests and rangelands.
- Provide women with more efficient technologies and modern energy sources to reduce time burden of walking long distances, carrying heavy loads, and collecting fuel in dangerous areas so that they have time to take advantage of educational, social and economic opportunities.
- Promote clean cooking fuels and technologies in order to reduce pressure on forests and rangelands for fuelwood, as well as improve indoor air quality and reduce risk of respiratory illness among women and children.
- Involve women smallholder farmers in bioenergy production to diversify and improve income sources and livelihoods.
- Develop innovative micro-finance products to overcome barriers and unlock access to renewable energy as well as efficient cooking and heating technologies.
- Promote efficient building design with improved insulation for reduced energy needs.



6

WATER

WATER

Afghanistan is largely semi-arid to arid, with considerable variation in precipitation across the country. There is a heavy reliance on water from rivers and snowmelt for agricultural production in most areas, while livestock farming is also dependent on adequate water for forage and pasture. In terms of domestic water use, more than one-third of the population does not have access to an improved water supply, instead relying on wells and other water sources.³⁹ Moreover, only a quarter of rural households have improved water sources on their premises, thus still requiring investment of time and effort to obtain water from them.⁴⁰

The predicted impacts of climate change – particularly changes in precipitation patterns and increased temperatures – will negatively affect the quality and availability of water resources. Base river flows are likely to decrease, while erosion caused by flooding will increase the silt load in rivers and reduce the quality of water resources. This will likely force Afghan communities to seek alternative water sources, with resulting in increased exploitation of ground-water that may lead to the drying up of wells and springs.

The impacts of climate change on water resources is likely to influence women significantly. Women are involved in many aspects of water management and water use. For example, women and girls in Afghanistan are primarily responsible for collecting water from wells or other sources for domestic water use, which can put them at risk through increased exposure to gender-based violence and other hazards.^{41,42} Similarly, women are primarily

responsible for ensuring water provision to livestock.⁴³ A reduction in water availability is thus likely to add considerably to the burden of women – particularly in rural households – as they will have to spend more time and effort to obtain adequate water supplies for household and other uses.⁴⁴

Policy Recommendations for Gender Inclusion

- Ensure that women's unique knowledge and capacities regarding water conservation, use and distribution are recognised and mainstreamed into sectoral laws, policies, strategies and plans for water resource management.
- Strengthen synergies between the National Environmental Protection Agency, Ministry of Energy and Water, Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and Ministry of Women's Affairs to promote women's involvement in climate change preparedness for the water sector.
- Generate gender-disaggregated data in water resource management in order to integrate the priorities of the most marginalised women concerning water conservation and distribution into decision-making and programming for the water sector.
- Build capacities and resilience to climate change- and water-related disasters through gender-responsive integrated water resource management policies and practices that explicitly include women's perspectives.

Practical Actions for Gender Inclusion

- Mandate representation of women in local water user associations to ensure the active participation of particularly the most marginalised and excluded women in local water resources management.
- Improve water management and use efficiency through community-based interventions that effectively involve women in the management and use of water resources for rural livelihoods (agriculture, irrigation, livestock, drinking water, etc.).
- Rehabilitate and improve existing irrigation infrastructure, and promote water-saving irrigation methods, including drip irrigation, canalisation, on-farm irrigation and water management, water storage facilities, rainwater harvesting, etc.
- Encourage the adoption of innovative approaches to reducing water usage, such as cultivation of drought-resistant crop varieties, improved water distribution technologies, etc.
- Secure the physical safety of women at water collection points by locating water sources in safe areas, reducing the distance travelled to water sources, installing equipment that makes collection easier for women, and ensuring adequate lighting at water sources.
- Deliver trainings and education to women on integrated water resource management in order to build local-level capacity on water use and efficiency.
- Raise public awareness on water-related threats posed by climate change as well as potential adaptation options, strategies, and technologies.





7

GENDER AND RESILIENCE PLANNING

GENDER AND RESILIENCE PLANNING

Men and women both provide vital services that enhance the resilience of their families and communities to climate change. However, as we've seen in earlier sections, these contributions are not always the same because men and women have different skills, knowledge, experience and perspectives as well as different access to economic assets like land and natural resources.

Building effective resilience to natural hazards and climate change requires a gender-sensitive and gender-responsive approach that considers all the many cross-cutting issues between gender, resilience and the environment. This will enable actors to more effectively identify, address and monitor women's priorities related to climate-resilient natural resource management, as well as greater participation of women in planning and decision-making.

The following recommendations for policy and practical actions are targeted towards the broader issues of inclusion, governance, and decision-making for resilience planning. Thus, they focus on the institutions, systems, resources and approaches that can increase women's voices and involvement in building resilient communities in Afghanistan.

Policy Recommendations for Gender Inclusion

- Formally recognise women's role in natural resource management (as users, custodians, managers and shareholders of natural resources) in policies and practice at all levels, and acknowledge women's contributions to the economy through both large- and small-scale activities.
- Strengthen the capacities of key government entities on gender-responsive and climate-resilient planning and programming within and across relevant sectors, including gender-specific budgeting for relevant rural infrastructure and other interventions.
- Improve gender-specific monitoring and reporting of women's involvement in natural resource management in the Central Statistics Organisation's Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey, Statistical Yearbook and other relevant governmental studies, surveys and reports, using gender-disaggregated data that includes ethnicity, age, marital status, household circumstances, disabilities, and other indicators of marginalised women's groups.
- Review and enact relevant laws, policies and regulations that recognise and address the respective rights of men and women access to and use of natural resources including agricultural land, water, forests, and rangelands.
- Establish initiatives at national, provincial and local levels for facilitating women's access to additional finances, resources, knowledge, technologies, and skills for climate-resilient management of natural resources.
- Undertake gender-sensitisation activities for outreach, education, and research aimed at improving the knowledge and understanding of policy- and decision-makers as well as practitioners concerning women's roles in and priorities for natural resource management.
- Involve Islamic scholars in linking gender issues and natural resource management with progressive interpretation of Islamic tenets.

Practical Actions for Gender Inclusion

- Mandate the involvement and representation of women in relevant decision-making structures (e.g. water user associations, forest management associations, rangeland management associations, community development councils) to ensure their active participation in the selection, prioritisation, and design of interventions for sustainable management of natural resources.
 - Work with influential men, especially local Mullahs, who have strong influence within rural communities, to seek their support for recognition of women's rights concerning land and resource management and reduce the possibility of resistance against gender-responsive resilience-building initiatives.
 - Identify, leverage and strengthen already existing physical and cultural spaces for women (such as women's shuras, self-help groups, cooperatives and collectives supported by civil society and non-governmental organisations) for greater involvement and substantive participation of women in planning and prioritisation for natural resource management.
 - Adopt an intersectionality approach to vulnerability and capacity assessments as well as monitoring and evaluation for identifying priorities and tracking women's access to and use of natural resources, collecting disaggregated data on women from marginalised groups that include factors such as age, marital status, impoverished households, ethnic minorities, women with disabilities and women-headed or -supported households.
 - Strengthen women's entrepreneurial skills and participation in value chains for natural resource products including supporting women's groups and cooperatives for production, processing, access to micro-finance, product diversification, value addition and market access.
- Provide training, outreach, education, skills development and awareness raising for both men and women on women's roles relating to threats and opportunities concerning natural resources and climate change.
 - Facilitate access to finances, technology and other resources focused on increasing women's resilience to the impacts of climate change on their livelihoods that are underpinned by natural resources.
 - Identify the most marginalised women, especially those who are the main source of income for their households and/or those with small landholdings, for prioritisation of activities on agriculture, tree plantation, agricultural extension services, training and other needs.

8

POLICY STATEMENT ON WOMEN, NATURAL RESOURCES AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN AFGHANISTAN



POLICY STATEMENT ON WOMEN, NATURAL RESOURCES AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN AFGHANISTAN

The Afghanistan Resilience Consortium (ARC) recognises that natural hazards and climate change impact men and women differently, and that women tend to be disproportionately affected. For this reason, the ARC prioritises gender-inclusive approaches in all its policy- and community-level actions to build climate resilience and adaptive capacity. At the policy level, this includes ensuring that women's voices, needs, concerns, and priorities are reflected in decision-making. At the community level, this means involving women in planning and implementation of local actions to reduce the threats of natural hazards and climate change. Often, this comes down to ensuring that women have equitable access to natural resources, including the management of agriculture, forest, rangeland, energy and water resources, and ample opportunities to benefit from their use.

Across the more than 700 communities in which the ARC operates, we witness first hand the valuable contributions that women daily provide to their families and communities. Therefore, the ARC believes that all resilience-building initiatives must involve women as equal participants in planning, decision-making, and implementation.

When women are part of informed and empowering conversations that achieve meaningful participation and prioritisation of their concerns, their communities become more resilient, innovative and inclusive. At present, women are not sufficiently represented in most resilience-building initiatives from government, non-governmental organisations, academia or civil society groups, and thus require greater involvement, inclusion, and influence in decision-making processes.

Moreover, it is essential to recognise that women are not just a vulnerable population, but are instead agents of positive change for building resilience to natural hazards and climate change. Capitalising on this capacity, however, requires tapping into the traditional knowledge and practices that women possess about their natural environment and livelihoods. Thus, it is also vital to strengthen women's role as the custodians of traditional knowledge on natural resource management, and as the first educators of the next generation. For all these reasons, the ARC believes that disaster preparedness and climate change adaptation efforts in Afghanistan must be gender inclusive, at all levels ranging from policy to practical action.

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