




# Gender equality as a pathway for sustainable development

## Lessons learned in Eastern and Southern Africa

 Simultaneously addressing gender, environment and climate change by strengthening policy coordination, programmatic partnerships, research, capacities and knowledge sharing can advance sustainable development and address inequalities.

### Key messages

- Addressing gender, environment and climate change as cross-cutting issues can advance sustainable development and empower women.
- Strengthening institutional and stakeholder capacities will accelerate implementation of gender-sensitive climate- and environment-related policies.
- Data demonstrating the added value of integrating gender into climate and natural resource frameworks are needed to convince decision makers to take action.
- Up-scaling proven climate- and gender-smart technologies will help close the gender gap, promote women's empowerment and enhance sustainability.

### The problem

The cross-cutting issues of gender, environment and climate change need to be addressed simultaneously to advance sustainable development<sup>1</sup> in line with the Sustainable Development Agenda 2030 and address existing inequalities. A common challenge in tackling cross-cutting issues is ensuring that they are prioritized – and implemented – in national, sector and district policies and budgets<sup>2</sup>.

To this end, the UN Women's Eastern and Southern Regional Office (ESARO) has partnered with the United Nations Development Programme–United Nations Environment Programme Poverty-Environment Initiative (UNDP-UNEP PEI). Together, they are undertaking activities aimed at mainstreaming sustainable use of environment and natural resources (ENR), climate, and gender issues into national development planning and budgeting processes and country-level programming. Moreover, these efforts aim to increase the evidence base on gender, environmental and socioeconomic issues, which will better inform these processes in the future and facilitate improved decision making and capacity building.

1 UN Women. 2014. World survey on the role of women in development 2014: Gender equality and sustainable development. New York: UN Women  
2 UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative; Mainstreaming Environment and Climate for Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development – A Handbook to Strengthen Planning and Budgeting Processes, 2015

## Evidence and experience: Tackling the challenge on multiple fronts

### Policy and budgeting

Several tools can be used to influence national policy and budget processes across a range of ministries and sectors to promote gender responsiveness and sustainability. Among these are gender analysis, promotion of equal participation of men and women in decision making, estimating the economic costs of gender equality, capacity building, and expenditure reviews on climate, environment and gender<sup>3</sup>.

In Mozambique, the former Ministry for Coordination of Environmental Affairs developed a national gender and climate change strategy in 2010. The country's Ministry of Planning and Development has developed gender-responsive planning tools and adopted a mainstreaming matrix for cross-cutting issues, including environment and gender. This matrix now serves as an important tool in ensuring that annual sector plans and budgets include objectives aimed at promoting environmental sustainability and gender equality. These efforts have been supported by UN Women, UNDP-UNEP PEI, IUCN and the Danish International Development Agency.

### Research

To convince ministries of finance, economy and development of the need to address gender, environment and climate issues, a solid evidence base demonstrating the added value of integrating gender into climate and natural resource frameworks is needed. The recent report published by UN Women, UNDP-UNEP PEI and the World Bank, *The cost of the gender gap in agricultural productivity in Malawi, Tanzania, and Uganda*, quantifies lost growth opportunities and estimates what societies, economies and communities would gain if the gender gaps in the agriculture sector were addressed. It estimates the annual monetary value of the gender gap in agricultural productivity in Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda to be USD 100 million, USD 105 million and

USD 67 million, respectively. Closing the gender gap could lift as many as 238,000 people out of poverty in Malawi, 119,000 people in Uganda and approximately 80,000 people in Tanzania every year. These striking findings send a strong signal to policy makers in Africa as well as to development partners: closing the gender gap is smart economics addressing both inequalities and sustainability.

### Programming

Through the African Women in Technology (AWIT) initiative, UN Women is establishing an alliance to promote up-scaling of rural technologies for women<sup>4</sup>. Implementation of such approaches provides an opportunity to close the gender gap, promote women's empowerment and economic development, and develop societal resilience to shocks.

Through the innovative knowledge transfer mechanism of the Edutainment Initiative – a partnership between UN Women, other UN agencies and the TV production company Mediae – some 6 million viewers in Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania have learned about various post-harvest technologies developed through AWIT.

Energy-efficient cookstoves are one such technology. In Malawi, the Ministry of Energy, supported by UNDP-UNEP PEI, piloted the production, marketing and distribution of energy-efficient stoves and briquettes in four districts. As a follow-up, the national government has developed a draft cookstoves 'roadmap' to further catalyze sustained uptake of cleaner cookstoves in the country.<sup>5</sup>

In Tanzania, UN Women is supporting the Rural Women Light up Africa project, in partnership with the Barefoot College in India. Through this, rural women are trained to install and maintain solar energy panels. As solar engineers, these women not only bring electricity to their communities, but also introduce a renewable and sustainable source of energy that can be maintained and replicated in other communities.<sup>6</sup>

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3 See [www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org) and [www.unpei.org](http://www.unpei.org) for more information

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4 [www.empowerwomen.org/cop/awit](http://www.empowerwomen.org/cop/awit)

5 Government of Malawi. 2015. Cookstoves Roadmap Draft programme document. Lilongwe, Malawi: Government of Malawi.

6 UN Women. 2015. Impact Story: Mothers lighting up homes and communities in rural Tanzania. New York: UN Women

## Strengthening capacities

Designing and accelerating the implementation of gender-sensitive climate- and environment-related policies requires strengthened capacities of institutions, stakeholders and coordination mechanisms that can link policies to budgets and implementation<sup>7</sup>. For example, officials in environment sectors need to be equipped to integrate gender into sector policies and plans, even as gender ministries need to be able to integrate sustainability into their work.

To enhance capacity to integrate ENR–gender linkages into policies and plans, UNDP-UNEP PEI, UN Women, and the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning used UNDP’s Global Gender Economic Policy Management Initiative to bring together some 60 representatives from environment, finance and planning, and gender ministries from 12 countries<sup>8</sup>. The follow-up survey showed that about half of the participants have since used the knowledge gained in the training to influence the design of programs and/or policy and budget processes in their country. One participant from the Ministry of Finance in Tanzania summed up the lessons learned:

“The training has shown how gender and natural capital are crucial variables of economic development, it has demonstrated that the mainstreaming of both gender- and environment-related issues require a systematic approach [...] But, most importantly, the training has provided me with the tools to apply this work in my country.”

## Knowledge sharing

To promote knowledge sharing about replicable and successful technologies and innovations, UN Women – in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Programme – hosted a Sharefair on Rural Women’s Technologies in 2014<sup>9</sup>.

One of the solutions showcased was a green village model that took a holistic approach to environmental sustainability. In Rubaya, Rwanda, a woman-led cooperative helped the village to adopt a range of environmentally sustainable approaches and technologies, including biogas, and rainwater harvesting and land terracing, which have reduced soil erosion and deforestation. The solutions have also reduced the time women spend on water and firewood collection, as well as increased the social and economic benefits from the use of natural resources. Through the cooperative’s example, women have now been empowered to take the lead in community development.

The Government of Rwanda under the leadership of Rwanda’s Environment Management Authority led the initiative with support from UNDP-UNEP PEI Africa. The Rubaya model is currently being replicated in one location, and another three districts have accessed funds from Rwanda’s national environment and climate change fund to establish their own green villages.

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7 UNDP-UNEP Poverty Environment Initiative. 2015. *Mainstreaming Environment and Climate for Poverty Reduction and Sustainable Development – A Handbook to Strengthen Planning and Budgeting Processes*. New York: UNDP-UNEP PEI.

8 Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uganda (2014) and Benin, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal (2015)

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9 [www.empowerwomen.org/en/sharefair2014](http://www.empowerwomen.org/en/sharefair2014)

## Recommendations

Although positive changes are emerging, several challenges remain to integrating gender issues more comprehensively into environment, natural resources and climate policies and programming, particularly in Africa, and to linking such policies more closely to effective implementation at the country level.

- Our experiences highlight the importance of informing policy makers and practitioners in the design and implementation of gender-sensitive climate and environment policies and programs. This includes applying a cross-sectorial approach and engaging with key sectors and ministries of finance and planning. At the local level, concrete, promising programmatic solutions need to be supported by national policies and linked to wider processes of structural reform. Women's groups should be empowered to claim their right and be actively involved in these processes.
- Concerted actions and partnerships at all levels – including significant policy measures and legal reforms, as well as initiatives by the private sector and civil society – are needed to develop and implement gender-sensitive climate and ENR policies that will help achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Partnerships like that between UNDP-UNEP PEI and UN Women ESARO should be further strengthened to support the integration of gender, environment and climate-linked concerns in policies, budgets and programs and strengthening capacities for the implementation of such policies.

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Ollivier Girard for Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)  
Portraits of a woman. Lukolela, Democratic Republic of Congo.

This brief is number 8 in a set of Gender Climate Briefs.  
See the full set here: [CIFOR.org/gender-climate](https://www.cifor.org/gender-climate)



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