

GENDER EQUALITY & WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: WOMEN IN REDD+



UN-REDD Asia/Pacific Work on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment



Gender, Gender Equality, Gender Mainstreaming and Women's Empowerment

Gender denotes the socially constructed roles, rights and responsibilities ascribed to men and women and the relationship and distribution of power between them, and has interpersonal, cultural, institutional, policy, political and socioeconomic dimensions.

Gender equality exists when men and women are attributed equal social value, equal rights and equal responsibilities and have equal access to the means (resources, opportunities) to exercise and benefit from them.

Women's empowerment refers to tools, strategies and approaches that seek to correct asymmetries of power, access and privilege that result from gender inequalities. Promoting gender equality also requires efforts to ensure women's empowerment.

Gender mainstreaming is a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality. Mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a means to achieve the goal of gender equality.

The UN-REDD Programme is committed to integrating gender equality principles through its national support activities. The Programme recognizes that deforestation and forest degradation have strong socio-political dimension, also structured by gender. While women and men have unique but different knowledge, roles and contribution in forestry, they also have differential access and influence to institutions, and gain differential benefits to resources. It would be difficult for countries to make REDD+ efficient, effective and sustainable without addressing gender issues.

In Asia-Pacific, efforts have begun at the regional level to identify clear strategies to support REDD+ countries in mainstreaming gender and promoting women's empowerment. The UN-REDD Programme Regional Team works closely with regional champions in this area such as Lowering Emissions in Asia's Forests (LEAF) and Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture & NRM (WOCAN) to make the business case that without engagement of both men and women in REDD+ consultations, decision-making, and benefit sharing, REDD+ would not be successful.

Women in REDD+

Women are rarely recognized as primary stakeholders of the forest and where they are, it is as a vulnerable group. There are few cases where gender has been effectively integrated throughout REDD+ strategies, program designs and policies. To integrate gender, REDD+ can build upon key lessons obtained through considerable body of experience, knowledge and best practices, particularly from natural resource management.

THE UN-REDD PROGRAMME

The UN-REDD Programme is the United Nations Collaborative Initiative on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD). It builds on the convening role and technical expertise of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The Programme supports developing countries prepare and implement national REDD+ strategies.

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Photo by Mett Nam UN-REDD

Lesson 1: Women can play important roles for environmental outcomes when their right to participation and influence is recognized, as the increased forest restoration in Community Forestry and carbon emission gains from REDD+ pilot sites in Nepal indicates. Women's recognition as forest manager provides critical spaces for women to gain experience and confidence and build networks that could be leveraged in seeking high-level support and promoting change in political structures.

Lesson 2: Transparent, equitable and accountable benefit sharing system can tailor to wider benefits to women. Benefit sharing systems that allow equitable access to women, and earmark some of its funds to meet women's persisting demands, has helped to enhance livelihoods of poor female-headed households, promote girl's education through scholarships and provide for better maternal health services. Such services enhanced behavioral change and commitment to forest conservation, ensuring forest sustainability.

Lesson 3: Micro-credit and alternative livelihood options can help women increase income, and realize other benefits. As in Vietnam, a range of alternative livelihood options within the value chains of bamboo and essential oil sectors resulted to increased income for 1400 household with over fifty percent of the revenue generated by women. Women's access to micro-credits has resulted into enhanced confidence and decision-making.

Lesson 4: Technology to reduce women's workload can save women from being overburdened. Since women in Asia and South-East Asia, in general, work longer hours

than men, intervention strategies that demands women's time for participation should not overburden women. Use of energy-efficient stoves in Lao, Nepal and India has significantly reduced women's workload, reduced health risks and also abates risks to deforestation and forest degradation.

Lesson 5: Strengthening women's organizations can enable them to negotiate the terms of their engagement within environmental programs. When women's groups were linked by an NGO in Cambodia to form networks, they were able to increase their power to negotiate prices, arrange transport to markets, set up and run community rice mill cooperatives to increase productivity and earnings, and influence decisions at all levels of governance.

Lesson 6: Engaging with political actors, men and religious leaders to support gender equality and women's empowerment can facilitate positive behavioral shifts to abate discriminatory socio-cultural practices against women. In Laos and Indonesia, engaging with political actors, men and religious leaders has generated support to women's empowerment. Behavioral change on parts of men and wider society is essential for women to fully claim and enjoy their rights.

Further information on gender mainstreaming in the UN-REDD Programme, visit "The Business Case for Mainstreaming Gender in REDD+" : http://www.unredd.net/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&qid=6279&Itemid=53

Contribution made by LEAF, USAID and WOCAN



For more information, please visit www.UN-REDD.org or contact:

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