HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG
NORTH AMERICA

FINANCE

Overseas Development Institute

Climate Finance Fundamentals

www.climatefundsupdate.org

Brief 10

Written by **Liane Schalatek,** Heinrich Böll Stiftung North America with **Smita Nakhooda,** Overseas Development Institute.

November 2011

Gender and Climate Finance

Women, who form the majority of the world's 1.4 billion poorest people, are often disproportionally affected by climate change impacts, largely due to persisting gender norms and discriminations. Women and men also contribute to climate change responses in different ways and have different capabilities to mitigate and adapt. The Cancun Agreements acknowledge that gender equality and the effective participation of women are important for all aspects of climate change, but especially for adaptation. Gender-responsive climate financing instruments and funding allocations are needed. This is a matter of using scarce public funding in an equitable, efficient and effective way. It also acknowledges that climate finance decisions are not made within a normative vacuum, but must be guided by acknowledging women's rights as unalienable human rights. Currently, gender considerations are not addressed systematically in existing climate funds, but only as an afterthought. The new Green Climate Fund has the opportunity to distinguish itself from existing funds by integrating a gender perspective from the outset. Some key principles and actions for making climate financing instruments more gender-responsive are outlined.

Overview

Women form the majority of the world's 1.4 billion people still living in abject poverty. They are often disproportionally affected by climate change impacts. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) acknowledges the role of gender in contributing to climate change vulnerability. This is largely due to persisting gender norms and widespread gender discriminations that deny women income, legal rights, access to resources or political participation, while assigning them the primary role in caring for their families and providing for their livelihoods. This contributes to women's marginalization in many communities. Women and men also contribute to climate change responses in different ways and have different capabilities based on their respective knowledge, experiences and expertise to mitigate and adapt. This makes women important agents of change in the fight against global warming.

Gender in the Cancun Agreements and the Green Climate Fund

UNFCCC Decision 1/CP.16 confirmed important short- and long-term climate finance goals and provided guiding principles for the finance obligation of Annex II countries under the Convention. Article 7 in the decision also acknowledges that gender equality and the effective participation of women are important for all aspects of climate change. This is especially relevant for adaptation, where Article 12 explicitly demands a gender-sensitive approach. Gender-differentiated vulnerabilities and capabilities in the context of climate change thus necessity gender-responsive climate financing instruments and funding allocation and disbursement. Gender considerations are not systematically addressed in existing climate financing instruments. The new Green Climate Fund has an opportunity to integrate a gender perspective from the outset. The draft governing instrument for the GCF, which the COP 17 in Durban will consider and approve, includes several references to gender relevant to the Fund's mission, governance and operational modalities. This responds to a number of country submissions in the design process.

The Importance of Gender-Responsive Climate Financing

Making public climate change funding more gender-responsive is an opportunity to improve its effectiveness and efficiency, as international experience from development programmes indicates. According to a recent report of the World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group, integrating gender-awareness in World Bank project design and implementation improves development outcomes, and thus the effectiveness, of development aid. For climate finance, the same holds true: ignoring women as a most relevant stakeholder group in recipient countries will lead to suboptimal results.

The example of adaptation financing in Africa illustrates this. Of the roughly $10 billion of funding approved by mid-2011 in the dedicated funding instruments tracked by Climate Funds Update (CFU), only $350 million was devoted to climate change adaptation in Africa. This is hardly enough to deal with the adaptation funding needs for Africa, which are estimated to be up to $2 billion per year until 2015 and higher thereafter. The UNFCCC estimated that it would cost between $7-9 billion per year by 2030 in additional investments (on top of normal development assistance) for Africa to adapt to climate change impacts, with the most additional resources needed for human health ($2.166–3.328 billion per year), water resources ($2.788-2.913 billion) and agriculture, forestry and fisheries ($1–2 billion) respectively. In Sub-Saharan Africa, women are still the primary agricultural producers, accounting for up to 80% of household food production. As women own little of the land they work on, they are often excluded from formal consultation processes to determine adaptation needs of rural communities and are unable to secure credits or other agricultural extension services. In times of food insecurity, aggravated by the extreme weather variability and long-term weather pattern changes brought on by climate change, women are often likely to receive less food because of gender-based distribution dynamics within households.

To be effective, adaptation policies and funding for adaptation projects and programmes in agriculture in Africa need to consider the gender dynamics of food procurement and distribution within both households and markets. For example, policies should target rural women in Africa specifically with capacity-building, consultation outreach, technical assistance and tailored agricultural extension services. Without a gender-sensitive lens, climate financing instruments that deliver adaptation funding to Africa can exacerbate the discrimination of women. This threatens women's rights and directly contravenes the Convention on the Elimination on all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which almost all recipient and contributor countries of international climate finance have adopted.

Gender as an "Afterthought" in Existing Climate Funds

While gender considerations are not completely absent in existing dedicated climate funds, they have been generally added only as an afterthought. As a result they lack a systematic integration. The World Bank and the regional multilateral development banks implementing the Climate Investment Funds (CIFs) have gender policies for their development financing operations. The World Bank has a mandate to mainstream gender. But gender has not been integrated into the programs supported by the Clean Technology Fund (CTF), which finances large-scale mitigation in large economies and accounts for 70% of the CIFs pledged funding portfolio of $6.5 billion. In the Pilot Program on Climate Resilience (PPCR), which funds programmatic adaptation portfolios in a few developing countries, gender is not included in the operational principles, although most pilot countries have included some gender dimensions in their Phase I proposals. These vary from the inclusion of gender experts in the country mission during project preparation, to the promise of consultations with gender-disaggregated groups or the development of gender action plans for specific projects. However, an integrated approach is missing. The challenge going forward will be to ensure that the programme implementation in countries is conducted in a gender-responsive way. In the Scaling-Up Renewable Energy Program in Low-Income Countries (SREP), the newest of the CIFs, the suggested structure of the investment plans requests the inclusion of information about "environmental, social and gender co-benefits" and asks for social co-benefits to include "greater involvement and empowerment of women and other vulnerable groups."

At the Kyoto Protocol Adaptation Fund, which started funding in 2010, existing project proposals unevenly include some gender analysis. Up until a recent revision of the operational guidelines adopted in July 2011, it was not mandatory or a strong consideration for the project approval and subsumed under a vulnerability focus. The new version of the guidelines makes the inclusion of gender considerations in project and programme planning, as well as in project consultation processes, if not mandatory, then at least an important review criterion. At the Global Environment Facility (GEF), gender has so far not been an obligatory decision criterion for project review and approval for the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) and the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF). The LDCF is supposed to fund and implement National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs), but only a third of the NAPAs include gender analysis or gender indicators. Women's participation in their development has been likewise uneven, despite clear UNFCCC guidance on this issue. Most NAPA implementation projects funded under the LDCF lack the gender component entirely. As a result of some prodding by Northern contributor countries during the GEF's last replenishment cycle, the GEF is working to implement its own gender mainstreaming policy. The goal is to ensure that gender expertise in the GEF Secretariat is improved and all GEF implementing agencies are applying and documenting a gender mainstreaming approach to GEF project implementation.

Good Practices and Experiences from other Global Funds

Experience in other areas of development show that it is possible to include gender considerations systematically and effectively in a global financing mechanism devoted to developing country actions. The Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria (Global Fund) and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations (GAVI) have had a gender action plan or a detailed gender policy on the books since 2008. In addition, they have a "gender infrastructure" for both funds. This constitutes a Gender Working Group in the case of GAVI, which includes representatives from all secretariat teams. In the case of the Global Fund, there are several full time gender advisors as well as gender experts on the monitoring, evaluation, legal advisory and civil society outreach teams.

On its own, a formal gender policy or a gender action plan for a climate finance instrument is not enough. Equally important is the systematic integration of gender equality in a fund's governance structure as well in its public participation mechanisms, for example through a dedicated role for gender-focused organizations and women's groups. At the CIFs, civil society representatives can participate as active observers in board meetings with the right to take the floor, add agenda items and recommend outside experts for consideration by a fund board. Special representation is accorded to indigenous peoples with a separate seat that is not counted toward the overall civil society quota. This should be replicated for women's representation.

Key Principles and Actions for Gender-Responsive Climate Finance

The effective use of climate finance requires mainstreaming climate change considerations into development policy and planning, which in turn requires incorporating gender considerations into these processes in order to achieve sustainable and equitable outcomes. Funding allocations need to be coherent and consistent with national development plans, mitigation, and adaptation strategies, which should be developed in through gender sensitive participatory and transparent processes involving all relevant stakeholders.

Some key principles and actions to operationalize such an approach include the use of:

- Gender equality as a guiding principle and a cross-cutting issue for all climate finance instruments, but particularly for the Green Climate Fund.
- Gender-responsive funding guidelines and criteria for each thematic funding window or sub-fund.
- Explicit gender criteria in performance objectives and evaluation of funding options. Such criteria can include a mandatory gender analysis of the proposed project or programme, a gender budget and some clear indicators measuring how projects and programs contribute to gender equality objectives, as well as the systematic collection of sex-disaggregated data.
- Gender-balance and gender-expertise of an institution's staff administering climate finance, to ensure that gender equality principles are considered in programme and project review and the monitoring, reporting, verification and evaluation of a mechanism's funding portfolio.

- Special efforts to seek the input and participation of women as stakeholders and beneficiaries during and after the programme or projects.
- A regular audit of the gender impacts of funding allocations in their overview and reporting in order to ensure balance between mitigation and adaptation activities and gender-responsive delivery.
- A robust set of social, gender and environmental safeguards and guidelines for their implementation that guarantee gender equality, women's rights and women's full participation. These safeguards should comply with existing international obligations, including on human and women's rights, labor standards and environmental law.

References and useful links:

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