



Gender equality is achieved when women and men, girls and boys, have equal rights, life prospects and opportunities, and the power to shape their own lives and contribute to society.

The Gender Tool Box gathers knowledge material and method support on gender equality in the form of Tools, Briefs and Thematic Overviews.

[BRIEF] Gender and the Environment

The planet is the fundamental resource on which people rely for prosperity. Gender norms influence the impact of people on the environment, the impact of environmental degradation on people, and access to and power over natural resources. This brief gives an overview of the linkages between gender and the environment in development cooperation and on how policy and programmes can facilitate a more sustainable use of resources, while empowering women at the same time.

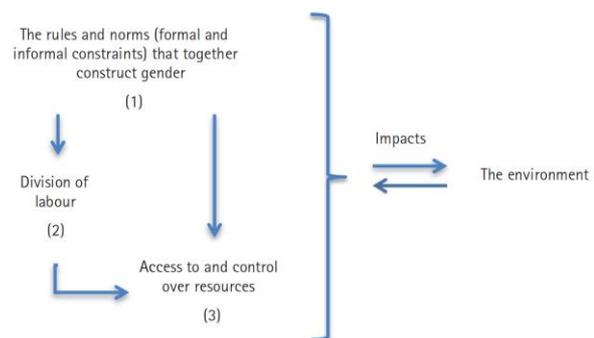
Globally women provide a livelihood for their families and simultaneously manage the environment. However, due to gender power relations, their knowledge is often overlooked and they are not counted as agents of change. Therefore a gender analysis of environmental management is necessary, looking at gender aspects of the use of natural resources (water, forests, land, etc), consumption of services and goods (transport, food, etc) and experiences of environmental degradation (pollution, chemicals, loss of biodiversity, etc). Women and men should be agents in environmental management, including equal participation in decision making and policy processes.

When addressing gender in the context of the environment, it is important to recognise that women and men are not homogenous groups. Where women and men live, their age, social class, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and other variables, interact in shaping the links between gender and the environment. This complexity must be accounted for in participation, needs analysis and programme design.

AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

To understand the linkages between gender and the environment, questions must be asked at different levels. A useful analytical framework has been developed by the Swedish Society for Nature Conservation.¹ According to this framework, a gender analysis of environmental work should cover the following categories:

1. **Formal and informal constraints:** Rules and norms that shape the behaviour of actors in society, gender relations and identities.
2. **Division of labour:** The tasks and responsibilities that men and women are expected to fulfil in private and public arenas.
3. **Access to and control over resources:** The resources, in a broad sense, that men and women have access to and power to decide over.



Formal rules include laws and regulations, for instance the right to own land or forest, or the right to perform

¹ Swedish Society for Natural Conservation: *Protecting the environment: Why a gender perspective matters* (2015) The analytical framework has been slightly revised to fit Sida.

certain jobs. Informal rules and norms include ideas on what is appropriate for women or men. For example, in some contexts women grow only certain crops and in many parts of the world women or girls are responsible for fetching water. The formal and informal rules and norms form the basis and define the constraints for how organisations and individuals act and interact, also in relation to the environment. They set conditions for the division of labour in the household and the community, and directly and indirectly determine women and men's access to and control over resources. This leads to gender differences in needs, use of and impact on the environment and in experiences of environmental degradation.

This analytical framework makes gender differences and power structures visible in environmental work. The next step is to act on the basis of the analysis, and mobilize for change. A pre-requisite for achieving sustainable development is women and girls' voice and agency²: the right to interpret, influence and participate in environmental work on equal terms. It is also important to acknowledge the fact that programmes addressing gender inequalities may conflict with environmental goals and vice versa. For instance women's access to pesticides and farming on equal terms with men is a step towards gender equality but at the same time a threat to the environment.

EXAMPLES OF RELEVANT AREAS

A gender analysis is relevant in all areas of environmental work. Below are some examples.

Chemicals and pollution

Women and men's exposure to toxic chemicals depend on the division of labour in the private and public arenas. For example, men dominate the waged mining sector and are exposed to toxic mining chemicals, while women are disproportionately exposed to pesticides used in non-waged agricultural activities. Women's responsibilities in household work mean that they are more exposed to toxic chemicals found in products used for cleaning, personal care, and pest control, and to pesticides and house building materials stored at home. Another risk is pesticide containers recycled for other uses, which may have severe health consequences. In rural areas indoor pollution affects women more than men, as they are more exposed to smoke from burning fuels.³ In urban areas, risk factors include exposures to chemicals and indoor air pollution from household solid fuel. These hazards play a role in more than 80 per cent of the diseases regularly reported

by the WHO. Inefficient burning of biomass in unventilated homes releases high levels of black carbon, causing approximately 2 million deaths per year, mainly of women and children in the poorest communities.⁴

Waste management

The global environmental consequences of waste disposal are alarming. This is particularly true in the developing world's urban areas, where for example dumpsites have obvious, severe environmental and health effects.⁵ Women and men have different ways of handling waste, in private and public. Household waste management is often the unpaid work of women, but when it is mechanised - for example by the use of carts or delivery tricycles - and at the same time paid for, men often take over this work.⁶ However, a large proportion of waste management in developing countries is not mechanised, but instead collected, sorted, recycled and sold by hand. In many countries waste pickers supply the only form of waste collection, and many of them are women; in some Indian cities up to 80 percent.⁷

Women in solid waste management

Sida supports WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing), focusing on securing livelihoods for the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy. WIEGO's recent study on waste pickers shows how relevant these workers are to urban solid waste management in cities across the Global South.⁸ Waste picking involves whole families, but the study reveals several gender differences. These include how women and men waste pickers are organized, that women have paid help to a lesser extent and that women have a lower level of education. This has an impact on their ability to claim their rights.

Water

Women and girls play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of freshwater as a natural resource, and they are often responsible for sanitation and for maintaining a hygienic home. Water is also a prerequisite for gardening, raising livestock and agriculture. Women and girls bear disproportional the burden of deteriorating water quality and availability in rural and urban areas. A gender analysis is relevant in the management of water as a natural resource, in the planning and design of sustainable water technologies and their application to

⁴ UNDP: *Gender & Environment resources: Chemicals and Gender* (2011)

⁵ Sankoh, Yan & Tran: *Environmental and Health Impact of Solid Waste Disposal in Developing Cities: A Case Study of Granville Brook Dumpsite, Freetown, Sierra Leone. Journal of Environmental Protection no 4* (2013)

⁶ OSCE: *A guide to the integration of gender aspects in the OSCE's environmental projects* (2009)

⁷ UNDP: *Powerful Synergies. Gender Equality, Economic Development and Environmental Sustainability* (2012)

⁸ Dias, Sonia Maria and Samson, Melanie: *Informal Economy Monitoring Study Sector Report: Waste Pickers*. (2016)

² World Bank Group: *Voice and Agency. Empowering Women and Girls for Shared Prosperity* (2014)

³ WHO: *Women and Health* (2009)

local conditions.⁹ Today 2.8 billion people - approximately 40 percent of the world's population - live in river basins impacted by water scarcity.¹⁰ Lack of access to water decreases women's contributions to agricultural production and their business opportunities. Droughts also bring health hazards through lack of water for drinking, cooking and hygiene, as well as food insecurity.¹¹ Other health consequences are nutritional deficiencies and burdens associated with travelling to collect water.

Energy

Rural societies in developing countries rely predominantly on natural resources, such as wood, mangrove, charcoal and agricultural wastes as primary energy sources. The use of these is seldom sustainable and often has negative impacts on the local environment. In many countries women bear the main responsibility for providing energy to the household, and often lack technologies like efficient stoves, grinders and pumps that could ease their burdens.¹² Women are affected by the lack of access to modern energy services also when growing food, maintaining the household, and in opportunities for education and employment.¹³ In the male dominated energy sector a challenge lies in raising awareness and promoting gender policies in institutions and organisations.

Solar Sisters

The organisation Solar Sisters provide technical, business, sales and marketing training for women. This helps the women start small businesses, selling sustainable energy products to their communities. Solar Sisters entrepreneurs work in communities in Tanzania, Uganda and Nigeria, many of which lack access to an electrical grid and where women lack access to wage-earning work. They bring sustainable energy solutions and skills training to solve these issues in tandem. Solar Sisters are members of Energia, supported by Sida.¹⁴

Livelihoods, agriculture and fishing

Women farmers account for 45-80 per cent of all food production in developing countries, depending on the region.¹⁵ Women and girl's responsibilities as food growers, fuel gatherers and caregivers connect them closely to the surrounding environment and natural resources, and equip them with distinct knowledge, such as crop varieties suitable for different soils and weather conditions.

However, women have less access to land than men and are noticeably less productive than men. In coastal areas, men work predominantly with fishing and fish farming, while up to 90% of secondary sector workers are women. Women are also heavily involved in the small-scale fishery sector.¹⁶ Increasing the productivity of women farming and fishing is crucial for women's economic empowerment. But producing more is not enough – and may harm the environment. Women's empowerment through increased productivity must therefore be combined with the conservation and improvement of natural resources.¹⁷

Forestry

Those who rely on forests are among the poorest. Approximately 1.6 billion, among them 60 million indigenous people, get subsistence and income from forests.¹⁸

Women in forest management

Rural Albania is marginalised economically, and patriarchal patterns impede development and women's economic empowerment. Women's dependency on forest and pastoral land is extensive, selling nuts, spices, tea and herbal remedies are important revenues. There is a potential in developing the value chain through investments in storage, and systems providing information on international and national prices. Despite rural Albanian women being more dependent on the management of resources and ownership rights, gender discrimination has hindered women's active participation when these issues are discussed. With support from Sida *Connecting Natural Values and People* (CNVP) in Albania mobilizes women and other marginalized groups to participate in the local management of forests and pastoral land.¹⁹

The gender division of labour in forest management differs and depends on many aspects, but in general men's use of forests causes more environmental degradation. Men often collect firewood by felling and processing trees, while women use fallen branches and thus have a less damaging impact on the environment.²⁰ To a larger extent than men, women use products such as berries, herbs and honey. However, women have less land rights and access to forests, and participate less in forest management and decision making in spite of research showing that women's involvement has positive impact on sustainability, regeneration and conflict management.²¹

⁹ UNEP International Environmental Technology Center in UNEP: Gender and Environment – www.gdrc.org/gender/a21/unep-gender-environment

¹⁰ International Water Management Institute, www.iwmi.cgiar.org

¹¹ WHO: Women and Health (2009)

¹² Energia: *Gender, Energy Technology and Climate Change* http://energia.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/05.-WEDO_ENERGIA.pdf

¹³ Energia: *Energy, Gender and Sustainable Development*

http://energia.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/07.-factsheet_general.pdf

¹⁴ energia.org <http://energia.org/2016/02/solar-sister-brings-light-hope-and-opportunity/>

¹⁵ UN Women Watch Fact Sheet: *Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change*, UN Women Watch: www.un.org/womenwatch

¹⁶ Swedish Society for Natural Conservation: *Protecting the environment: Why a gender perspective matters* (2015)

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ IUCN: *Roots for the future. The Landscape and Way Forward on Gender and Climate Change*. (2015)

¹⁹ http://www.cnvp-eu.org/cnvp/eng/home_page.asp

²⁰ Swedish Society for Natural Conservation: *Protecting the environment: Why a gender perspective matters* (2015)

²¹ Centre for International Forestry Research <http://www.cifor.org/forests-and-gender/>

Democracy

In many developing countries the fight for democracy, women's rights and the environment is inseparable. Women human rights defenders working on land and environmental issues face particular challenges due to the work they do - defending human rights and challenging economic interests, and who they are - women challenging norms. In many cases, they also belong to indigenous or otherwise marginalised groups facing additional discrimination.²² Many women take huge risks; one of them was the environmental and women's rights activist and indigenous leader Berta Cáceres, murdered in Honduras in March 2016.²³

ENTRY POINTS FOR SIDA

Make visible the links between gender and the environment, and possible trade-offs. Make use of the analytical framework suggested here to do a systematic gender analysis of environmental work to enable improvements not only for women but also for sustainable environment management. Does the analysis indicate that men and women have different impact on the environment? Or show that environmental challenges have differentiated impact on women and men? And does the analysis suggest how both women and men can contribute to solving environmental problems?

Collect and use sex-disaggregated data. To enable gender analysis of environmental work, it is necessary to consistently use sex-disaggregated statistics. Develop baselines where these are missing, in order to track change and measure impact.

Advocate for the development of gender action plans in all environmental organisations and ensure that gender action plans are used in dialogue with other donors. Review international organisations' gender policies, and ensure that these are effectively implemented. Initiate dialogue with organisations and donors on how gender policies might be implemented and operationalised, and how monitoring and evaluation systems can be designed to account for the impact on environmental programs.

Advocate for the full inclusion of women in decision making processes at all levels. This includes environmental planning, financing, gender budgeting, and policy-making. Promote women's equal participation in environmental and climate change negotiations at the international level, and in national planning and policy processes

at the national level. Women's equal participation is also key at local levels, in community based organisations and in the identification of strategies and techniques.

Use targeted approaches that address women and girls' specific interests, vulnerabilities and needs. Policies and interventions should take into account the distinct need for specific resources and services targeting women and girls. Technological solutions can for instance provide efficiency gains for women that can have a positive impact on health and well-being.

Leverage and spread information about financing for women doing environmental work. Women entrepreneurs and women's organisations face formal and informal constraints that limit their access to financing and capital. Creating an enabling environment for women's entrepreneurship by giving women access to financing and commercial markets will help to spur work on gender in environment. Women's organisations must be made aware of and have access to financing for environmental work, and be consulted in formulation of environmental strategies. This may require specific actions to target women's organisations, such as opening a window for women only and monitoring whether the program or fund reaches women and women's organisations.

Involve women in the transfer of environmentally sound technologies. Technology is increasingly relevant to mitigating and adapting to climate change. Ensure that technologies are context sensitive, that women's knowledge and innovation capacity is used and that women and men have equal access to adaptation information. Environmentally sound technologies can provide new opportunities for women's participation and leadership.

FURTHER RESOURCES

UNEP: [Gender and the Environment](http://www.unep.org/gender/env)
[www.unep.org/gender.env](http://www.unep.org/gender/env)

UNWOMEN: www.unwomen.org

UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative: [Mainstreaming Climate Change Adaptation into Development Planning: A Guide for Practitioners](#)

Global Gender Climate Action Alliance (GGCA):
www.gender-climate.org

International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) - UNDP: www.genderandenvironment.org

Women's Environment and Development Organization: www.wedo.org

Energia <http://energia.org/>

Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development: Resources on Climate Justice www.apwld.org

²² <http://www.herramientadefensorasderechostierra.org/en/>

²³ <http://www.justassociates.org/>