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# What should be included in the Green Climate Fund's new Gender Policy and Action Plan?

## Lessons from CIFOR's research and analyses

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## **Key points**

- Despite a clear mandate for addressing gender equality in climate policy and action, gender considerations tend to be sidelined or watered down at national/program levels. The Green Climate Fund is well placed to help bridge this gap and contribute toward a global vision to address gender equality and women's empowerment in climate policy and action.
- For this, the updated gender policy of the Green Climate Fund must be guided by a 'gender-responsive' approach, and hence move beyond the 'gender-sensitive' approach of the current gender policy.
- The objectives of the new gender policy should be two-fold: (i) advance gender equality and women's empowerment through climate change mitigation and/or adaptation actions; (ii) minimize gender-related risks and safeguard women's rights in all climate change actions.
- The Gender Policy and Action Plan need to be aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals. This will allow for clearer sets of targets and progress indicators for assessing the Fund's contribution toward enhancing gender equality and women's empowerment (SDG5).

### Introduction

At COP15 in Copenhagen, advanced countries agreed to jointly mobilize USD 100 billion per year by 2020 in order to address developing countries' mitigation and adaptation needs. The Green Climate Fund (GCF) was established by 194 Parties of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), to "support a paradigm shift in the global response to climate change" (GCF Global Context). Since its inception, the GCF has raised more than USD 10 billion and approved 43 projects/programs worth USD 2.2 billion (GCF Projects).

The GCF is the first multilateral climate fund to include gender considerations in its operations from the offset. The Governing Instrument for the GCF states: "Fund will strive to maximize the impact of its funding for adaptation and mitigation [...] while promoting environmental, social, economic and development co-benefits and taking a gender-sensitive approach" (GCF 2011, p.3). In March 2015, the GCF Board approved the GCF Gender Policy and Action Plan.

GCF's Gender Policy reaffirms the Fund's commitment to gender equality by "adopting a gender-sensitive approach in its mandate on climate change" and by applying its gender policy "to all its activities, whether implemented by public institutions, non-governmental organizations or the private sector" (p. 14). The Policy outlines an overarching framework for gender mainstreaming and holding the Fund and its grantees accountable for applying a gendersensitive approach in their responsibilities and activities. The Gender Policy is further supported by a 3-year Gender Action Plan, which identifies specific activities to implement the gender-sensitive approach across the Fund's portfolio, with a policy review after 3 years.

In response to the request from the Board of the GCF, the GCF Secretariat invited submissions from Board members, Alternate Board members, national designated authorities, focal points, accredited entities, accredited observer organizations and civil society organizations, to review and update of the Gender Policy and Action Plan (hereafter GP/GAP) by May 31, 2017. This policy brief is based on CIFOR's

submission of inputs to the GP/GAP review and revision process. It focuses on:

- Gender mainstreaming,
- Key results areas,
- Content of GP/GAP,
- Scope and principles of GP/GAP, and
- Entry points for engagement and participation of women and men.

In what follows, we will draw on research conducted by CIFOR and others to make the case for updating the Fund's current gender-sensitive approach to a gender-responsive approach (Section II). In Section III, we critically discuss some assumptions about women and climate change underlying the current policy, and suggest a more rightsbased objective. Section IV makes the case for explicitly aligning the Fund's gender policy with gender equality related targets defined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework. It also provides guidance for operationalizing the gender-responsive approach in project selection, implementation and monitoring. Finally, we conclude with a set of concrete recommendations for achieving this (Section V). While this Infobrief is directed specifically to the GCF, it also offers broader lessons for ensuring gender equality and women's empowerment are at the heart of climate change policy.

# Advancing gender equality and climate action

The Fund's commitment to contributing to gender equality as part of its mandate to address climate change is supported by considerable evidence on the links between gender equality and climate change. It is also in line with global mandates and agreements. However, this commitment would be better supported by an explicit 'gender responsive' approach rather than the current 'gender sensitive' approach adopted by the GP/GAP. Gender sensitivity is commonly understood as being mindful of gender differences or 'doing no harm' (Aguilar 2016). Gender-responsive climate action goes beyond *gender-sensitiveness* to systematically address gender gaps in responses to climate change (EGM/GR-CR/Report 2015) and to "substantially help to overcome historical gender biases" (Aguilar 2016).

There is considerable evidence that gender inequalities in access to and control over productive resources, division of productive and reproductive labor, and participation in decision making place women and men in differentiated positions regarding their abilities to respond, cope and adapt to climate change. Such inequalities are accentuated by intersecting social categories, including ethnicity, class and age (IPCC 2014). Gender-blind climate change action

risks exacerbating such inequalities, potentially undermining women's rights, as well as the efficiency and sustainability of climate actions (see Peach Brown 2011; EGM/GR-CR/Report 2015; Pearse 2016).

The specific linkages between gender equality and climate policy and action are supported by over 60 UNFCCC decisions. They are also enshrined in the preamble to the Paris Agreement, which states that: "Parties should when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on [...] gender equality, empowerment of women." This commitment was reaffirmed at COP22 in Marrakech, where Parties agreed to focus on improving the gender balance in all UNFCCC processes, and to "increase awareness and support for the development and effective implementation of *gender-responsive* climate policy at the regional, national and local levels" (UNFCCC Gender and Climate Change (emphasis added)).

The importance of placing gender equality and women's empowerment at the core of sustainable development is gaining increasing recognition globally. The 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, adopted by 193 Member States, included an explicit commitment to gender, both as a standalone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment (SDG 5) as well as a crosscutting theme across the SDGs. As notable feminist scholars and activists have commended (e.g. Goetz and Jenkins 2016; Razavi 2016), the SDGs build on the Millennium Development Goal's (MDG) recognition that gender equality remains a persistent challenge for countries worldwide and that lack of such equality is a major obstacle to sustainable development. At the same time, the scope of the gender-specific targets and indicators in the SDGs goes far beyond the MDGs (and its limitations) (see Kabeer 2005) by recognizing the underlying drivers of gender inequalities that women's rights advocates and movements have raised globally. These include lack of access and command over economic resources; undervaluation of women's reproductive and care work; discriminatory cultural practices; persistent information asymmetries; inadequate voice and influence in decisionmaking processes; widespread violence against women; lack of reproductive rights; and absence of sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels. SDG 13 on combating climate change aims to promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing states, including focusing on women, youth, and local and marginalized communities. Hence, it is commendable that the GCF's gender policy aims to be "congruent with other international conventions, in particular with the

United Nations Human Rights Declaration, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Millennium Development Goals and follow-up Sustainable Development Goals" (GCF 2014, 12).

However, there is a real and pressing need for global mandates on gender equality in SDGs and climate change to be translated into national policies or programs on climate change. Analyses of the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) submitted by Parties to the UNFCCC show that only 40% included any references to gender or women. Most of these references were very generic, and were justified on the grounds that women belong to vulnerable populations (Huyer 2016). On a program level, CIFOR's research on REDD+1 (Larson et al. 2015; Evans et al. 2016), for instance, found that despite REDD+ aiming to address gender inequalities and minimize risks to women, gender issues are insufficiently accounted for in REDD+ implementation. Across 22 subnational REDD+ initiatives in six countries where this research was carried out, CIFOR found that women's groups were substantially less knowledgeable about REDD+ and participated less in REDD+ initiatives than mixed gender (male-dominated) focus groups. These findings suggest that women have limited voice and influence in REDD+ projects. Preliminary analysis of the findings of the second phase of the research (carried out 2-3 years after the phase) suggests that women's perceived wellbeing has declined, or improved much less, in comparison to the first phase of the research, and both the mixed gender groups and control groups over the same period. The presence of the REDD+ initiative was found to be significantly associated with women's relative decline in wellbeing (unpublished data).

The Fund is well placed to contribute toward bridging the gap between global mandates on gender and national-level policies by supporting the design and implementation of climate action that contributes to: (i) reducing gender-specific vulnerabilities, (ii) enhancing resilience and adaptive capacities of women and men, and (iii) advancing a global vision of gender equality and women's empowerment. However, we believe that the Fund's current commitment to a *gender-sensitive* approach is inadequate for achieving these goals. This risks falling short of the Fund's explicitly stated commitment to contribute toward "equal rights, power, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men".

The Fund's current commitment (4.1 under section on "Commitment") to a gender-sensitive approach includes three elements: (i) "a consideration of the potential

contribution of women and men to societal changes"; (ii) "[a consideration of] methods and tools to promote gender equity"; and (iii) measurement of "the impact of activities on women and men". But simply considering gender differences, "being fair to women and men" and sex-disaggregating data on project participants and beneficiaries does not necessarily mandate action aimed at addressing and transforming the deep-rooted gender inequalities leading to differentiated vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities.

It is, therefore, not evident how the GP/GAP, in its current form, will ensure that the Fund's resource allocation contributes toward addressing the following as articulated under "rationale" in the GCF: "gender norms and discrimination that result in imbalanced division of labor, lower income, and lesser livelihood opportunities; less access and control over land and other productive assets; fewer legal rights; lesser mobility and less political and professional representation".

We recommend that the fund explicitly adopt a 'gender-responsive approach'. This is in line with the language used in UNFCCC decision CP.20 (Lima Work Programme on Gender), FCCC/SBI/2016/L.37 (gender and climate change) and the Paris Agreement. All three refer to 'gender responsive' climate action (and not just gender sensitive).

We further recommend that the gender responsive approach of the GP/GAP seek to build greater synergies between the GP/GAP and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (see Section IV).

# Broaden the scope of the 'gender policy' and address contradictions

The current gender policy of the GCF duly recognizes that gender equality is a pre-condition for efficient and just action for climate change mitigation and adaptation. However, the current gender policy is partially based on tenuous assumptions and weak empirical evidence about women's victimhood in the face of climate change.

The introduction to the current GP/GAP provides reasons why gender equality matters for climate change. Included among the reasons are women's higher mortality in climate-induced natural disasters, women's greater reliance on natural resources and women's relative poverty (women represent 70% of those living on less than USD 1 per day). A growing body of research has questioned the empirical validity of such statements (see e.g. Medeiros and Costa 2008; Chant 2010; Arora-Jonsson 2011). Notable gender researchers found that frequently cited facts about women's vulnerability to climate change are only based on qualitative

<sup>1</sup> Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and fostering conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks

# Box 1. Gender, vulnerabilities and coping strategies in the face of climate change: lessons from research in Northern Mali

Northern Mali is increasingly facing frequent and unpredictable droughts, and other climatic variabilities. CIFOR research (Djoudi and Brockhaus 2011; Brockhaus et al. 2013; Djoudi et al. 2013,) in the region has traced the effects of these variabilities and the range of adaptation strategies being employed by local communities. One of the key findings of the research is that strategies adopted by women and men are being determined by gender norms, ethnic and class relations. By and large, men are adopting out-migration for employment purposes as a viable adaptation strategy. This has meant that women are left behind and compelled to cope with the changing climate without men. Hence, women's vulnerability has increased because of the adaptive strategy chosen by men, as male activities are being added to women's already high workload.

Without secure tenure and command over financial resources, many women are unable to pursue agriculture in the drying climate. There is further differentiation among women as well. Women from lower social classes are defying traditional gender norms barring women from entering charcoal production. Due to the social stigma associated with the activity, women from higher social classes are not able to engage in charcoal production.

The vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities of women and men are thus affected by gender and intersecting social variables, such as class and ethnicity, along with adaptive strategies of other groups.

This example thus illustrates the need for gender and vulnerability assessments to go beyond static ideas of women and men's respective capacities, needs and priorities, which still continue to be predominant in the field of gender and climate change (Djoudi et al. 2016). Instead, vulnerability assessments must pay close attention to the local social, economic and political contexts and account for intra-community diversity and power relations too.

estimates. Analysis of a sample of natural disasters across different countries between 1981 and 2001 shows that the gender gap in mortality rates only makes sense when combined with other forms of disadvantage, such as class, caste and ethnicity, which vary from place to place (Arora-Jonsson 2014).

By isolating 'gender' from other social relations (such as age, class, ethnicity), these kinds of views on "why gender matters for climate change" risk confusing socially constructed roles and responsibilities with biological sex. The IPCC 5<sup>th</sup> Assessment report recognizes the poor empirical validity of such statements, and understands gender-based vulnerability as intersecting with other social relations and contexts. "While earlier studies have tended to highlight women's quasi-universal vulnerability in the context of climate change [...] this focus can ignore the complex, dynamic, and intersecting power relations and other structural and place-based causes of inequality." (IPCC 2014: 808) We recommend that the Fund develop guidelines for gender assessments that go beyond the collection of sex-disaggregated data to also account for intra-community diversity and complexity, including intersecting categories such as, ethnicity, class and age.

The Fund's current gender-sensitive approach lists the first objective as ensuring that "the Fund will achieve greater and more sustainable climate change results, outcomes and impacts, in an efficient manner". This recognizes that causes

and underlying drivers of climate change and of gender inequality are deeply interlocked. Unsustainable patterns of development that contribute to climate change, rely on and reproduce gender inequalities, exploiting women's labor and unpaid care work. For climate change solutions to be truly sustainable, those whose lives and wellbeing are at stake must be involved in decision making and leading the way (UN Women 2014). For instance, in the forestry sector, there is ample evidence of a positive relationship between women's participation in forest management decisions and enhanced forest management outcomes (Agarwal 2010; Coleman and Mwangi 2013; Leisher et al 2016). Hence, there are synergies between addressing the drivers of climate change as well as underlying causes of gender inequality.

At the same time, these synergies need to be created and not be pre-assumed. Simply adding women to climate change polices and programs and/or mobilizing women to address climate change without considering how these policies and programs would also be beneficial to women, is ineffective and unjust. It risks shifting responsibilities of climate change action to poor women, directing attention away from the underlying drivers of climate change. Relatedly, policies and approaches designed to address climate change can inadvertently increase gender inequalities and undermine women's rights if they end up reducing women's access to resources (Bee and Sijapati Basnett 2016), increasing women's care burden (Westholm

and Arora-Jonsson 2015), and limiting women's voice in climate change related decision-making processes (Pham et al. 2016).

Hence, we recommend that the objective of the Fund's GP/GAP (see III. Objective) should be to: (i) promote actions designed to achieve co-benefits in gender equality and climate change; and (ii) ensure that women's rights are safeguarded in any activities financed by the Fund.

# Align gender-responsive approach with 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda

Greater alignment between the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (or the SDG framework) and the GP/GAP would provide a rights-based framework for addressing gender equality in climate action, and more clarity and guidance on how to operationalize gender equality and women's empowerment in projects financed by the Fund. It also offers concrete and comprehensive targets for assessment of the contribution of the fund toward SDGs so that the Fund contributes to a global vision on gender equality and sustainable development, rather than striving for results in a piecemeal and isolated manner.

The SDG framework includes a standalone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment (SDG 5) encompassing many of the underlying facets of gender equality, such as full and effective participation, equal rights to productive resources, and unpaid care and domestic work. SDG 5 is further complemented by gender-specific targets defined in other SDGs, such as SDG 2 on food security, productivity; SDG 8 on decent work; and SDG 13 on climate change.

### Guidance for operationalizing the genderresponsive approach in selecting projects to fund

The current GP/GAP lacks clarity on how to operationalize gender equality in activities financed by the Fund. As outlined under the Operational Guidelines of the Gender Action Plan, the assessment requires accredited entities to collect baseline data and to "determine how the project/ program can respond to the needs of women and men in view of the specific climate change issue to be addressed" (GCF 2014: 8). Such wording does not provide much clarity on how to promote gender equality, and how to operationalize it at project/program level. It also does not require determination of how projects could contribute toward addressing and/or transforming inequalities between women and men. Instead, a definition of gender equity is developed within each project. Such unclear

wording can allow projects to simply fit gender goals to existing project structures, rather than consider gender equality as one of the core objectives from the outset of the project.

This is a problem because many projects tend to operationalize 'gender equality' in project implementation-related activities and the monitoring and evaluation framework as number of women and men who participate and/or access benefits from the project activities. However, these gender elements are rarely informed by an analysis of the underlying causes of gender inequalities and gendered risks that the projects may introduce or exacerbate. Hence, these gender elements are not designed with a clear theory of how they will address inequalities and/or mitigate risks. CIFOR's cumulative research on REDD+ design and implementation serves as an illustration (Larson et al. 2015).

The assessment of REDD+ projects demonstrates that women's participation in stakeholder consultations is often nominal and tokenistic, due to structural gender inequalities with respect to information sharing and knowledge. Bee and Sijapati Basnett's (2016) review of REDD+ program design showed that gender was being understood as 'equal participation' of women and men in REDD+ design without a clear understanding of what that meant, and how to achieve meaningful participation of a range of women. There was also an assumption that women's participation would automatically lead to benefit-sharing arrangements that would promote gender equality. However, research in Vietnam shows that although many REDD+ projects and programs aim to apply a gender-sensitive approach in allocating benefits from REDD+, there was little effort to ensure that women had a voice in identifying what benefits they would prefer and how they wished to receive them. As a consequence, benefits generated by REDD+ risked reflecting only powerful male social groups' priorities, and excluding women altogether and/or exacerbating preexisting gender and social inequalities (Pham and Brockhaus 2015, Pham et al 2016).

Greater alignment between the Fund's Gender Policy and the SDG framework would allow projects financed by the Fund to assess potential co-benefits and/or trade-offs between different programmatic goals. For instance, CIFOR's research on mitigation/adaptation linkages in Burkina Faso compared household adaptive capacities under different forest- and tree-based mitigation strategies. The findings show that women's adaptive capacities, especially in terms of options for livelihood diversification and secured access rights, are significantly higher in indigenous tree-based parklands (*Vitellaria* and *Parkia* trees) and small-scale restored lands than in monoculture tree plantations (Djoudi and Brockhaus 2011). However, some monoculture tree plantations contain higher carbon stocks than parklands.

When carbon stock is seen as the only priority for mitigation action, trade-offs between carbon stock and women's adaptive capacity become invisible. Therefore, assessing the potential impacts of any planned mitigation actions on women and men's adaptive capacities will help identify potential tensions or trade-offs between gender equality and climate action, and help in developing better options to generate co-benefits between the two.

It is not reasonable to expect all projects and activities funded by the GCF to advance gender equality and/or empower women, nor is it to feasible for them to address all aspects of gender equality. It is important for the Fund to prioritize projects that are committed to advancing gender equality through climate change mitigation or adaptation; and/or achieving multiple benefits, including gender equality and women's empowerment. For this, the Fund must request grant applicants to indicate the way the proposed project will contribute toward the various gender equality related targets defined in the SDG framework. This should be supported by a clear Theory of Change, outlining the specific steps proposed in order to achieve the set goals. Three defining criteria to guide any assessment of the likelihood of a project achieving gender equality are: Does it support women's capabilities and their enjoyment of rights? Does it reduce, rather than increase, women's unpaid care burden? And does it embrace women's equal and meaningful participation as actors, leaders and decision makers (UN Women 2014; Asher and Sijapati Basnett 2016)?

At the very minimum, the Fund should mandate all prospective grantees to identify gender-related risks associated with their planned activities, and clear set of practical and feasible measures for addressing them. This would require grant applicants to identify the major gender-related risks of their proposed project, and how they will address them. For instance, projects that are likely to disproportionately increase women's labor burden, limit women's economic opportunities, undermine their decision-making capacity, dispossess them of land and other productive resources, and increase violence against women should not be eligible for funding unless adequate safeguards are put in place. Safeguards for reducing some of these gender risks may include ensuring gender-responsible implementation of Free Prior Informed Consent (FPIC); developing gender action plans focused on mitigating or compensating women and men for potential costs associated with the planned intervention; enhancing women's voices in key decision-making processes; and distributing potential benefits equally between different social groups. The projects need to have in-house capacity to both assess these risks and ensure that there are adequate safeguards in place. Hence, in-house capacity and accountability mechanisms for gender mainstreaming are essential (Arwida et al. 2017).

## Guidance for operationalizing the genderresponsive approach for grantees and for the Fund

In the current GP/GAP, the targets and indicators identified are mostly oriented toward the process of ensuring various aspects of gender mainstreaming are integrated in the Fund's portfolio. Identified output and outcome indicators focus on percentages of projects that collect disaggregated baseline data, include specific 'gender elements' and apply gendersensitive indicators. The definition of gender sensitivity in the Fund's current policy includes measuring the impact of activities on women and men.

However, targets and indicators for assessing the progress and impact of projects/programs on gender equality are missing. Indeed, the only progress/outcome-oriented indicators specifically mentioned under Priority Area (d) are "gender-sensitive outputs, outcome and impact indicators [...] to measure climate change resilience and behavioral change toward low-emission development". Such indicators say little about the impacts of projects on gender equality.

The major benefit of greater alignment between the GP/GAP and SDGs would be a clearer analytical framework for: baseline data collection for each project; identification of which projects/elements of projects can contribute toward which aspects of gender equality (and which ones they cannot); identification and management of possible risks and trade-offs with respect to gender equality and other program objectives; design and integration of necessary safeguards; and, finally, communication of each project's contribution toward gender equality more clearly and consistently.

Moving beyond specific projects, aligning the GP/GAP with SDGs would provide concrete and comprehensive targets for assessing the Fund's contribution toward gender equality. As signatories to the 2030 Agenda will have to report against the SDG indicators, aligning the Fund's gender-related targets and indicators with the SDG framework will also support national-level efforts and ensure that national action on climate change are in tandem with those on sustainable development.

#### Recommendations

The following recommendations should, therefore, be taken into account in the revision process:

 Update the current 'gender-sensitive' approach to a 'gender-responsive' approach.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> As per UNFCCC decision CP.20 (Lima Work Programme on Gender), Articles 7 (gender-responsive adaptation action) and 11 (gender-responsive capacity building) of the Paris Agreement, and FCCC/SBI/2016/L.37 (gender and climate change).

- 2. Align the 'gender responsive approach' with genderspecific targets and indicators defined in the SDGs (particularly SDG 5).
- Adopt a dual objective: (i) enhance gender equality and women's empowerment through climate action;
  (ii) safeguard women's rights.
- 4. Require all prospective grantees to demonstrate how their projects will address gender inequalities through climate action, and/or to identify possible gender-related risks and integrate adequate safeguards.
- 5. Encourage projects to identify and enhance synergies between mitigation actions and the adaptive capacities of women and men.
- 6. Require projects to collect baseline data, conduct a gender assessment and periodically report on their progress with respect to the full spectrum of gender equality, including paid and unpaid work, full and effective participation, access and control over productive resources and other aspects defined in the SDGs.
- 7. Ensure that National Designated Authorities (NDAs) and accredited entities have staff with gender expertise, and that project budgets allocate resources for gender/social inclusion experts.
- In addition to ex ante gender assessment, ensure that funding is available for rigorous, longitudinal and in-depth quantitative and qualitative research on the gender impacts of climate change as well as of responses to it.
- 9. Develop guidelines for gender assessments that go beyond the collection of sex-disaggregated data to also account for intra-community diversity and complexity, including intersecting categories of, for example, ethnicity, class and age.
- 10. Develop specific targets and progress indicators that are aligned with the SDG framework, particularly SDG 5. Integrate both qualitative and quantitative targets and indicators into the Fund's Results Management Framework.<sup>3</sup> Require all projects/programs financed by the Fund to report their progress and impact against this framework.

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The CGIAR Research Program on Forests, Trees and Agroforestry (FTA) is the world's largest research for development program to enhance the role of forests, trees and agroforestry in sustainable development and food security and to address climate change. CIFOR leads FTA in partnership with Bioversity International, CATIE, CIRAD, INBAR, Tropenbos International and the World Agroforestry Centre.



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