

FINDINGS AND LESSONS LEARNED: Barriers and Entry Points for Women's Inclusion in REDD+ in Asia-Pacific



Gender Equality as a REDD+ Safeguard

At the sixteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP-16) meetings of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Cancun, 2010, it was agreed that, along with good governance, REDD+ safeguards - including transparency, full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, biodiversity conservation and protection of the rights of local people - could help ensure that social and environmental risks (including the exacerbation of existing inequalities) are minimized and co-benefits through REDD+ activities are maximized. **Paragraph 72** of the COP-16 outcome document, known as the “Cancun agreement”, also stated the need to address gender considerations when developing and implementing national strategies and action plans on REDD+.

Paragraph 72: Also requests developing country Parties—when developing and implementing their national strategies or action plans—to address inter alia, the drivers of deforestation and forest degradation, land tenure issues, forest governance issues, gender considerations and the safeguards identified in paragraph 2 of appendix 1 to this decision. This would ensure the full and effective participation of relevant stakeholders, inter alia indigenous peoples and local communities.

The Regional Joint Initiative of USAID LEAF, WOCAN and UN-REDD

On the basis of these arguments, the USAID Lowering Emissions in Asia's Forests (USAID LEAF) Program, Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (WOCAN) and the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in developing countries (UN-REDD) Programme launched a Joint Initiative in 2012 in response to the need to identify practical entry points for women's inclusion in REDD+.

This involved further examination of:

- **specific challenges and barriers that prevent the integration of gender perspectives in REDD+ in Asia-Pacific;**
- **collating relevant evidence of good practices of women's inclusion in forest and other land use sectors; and**
- **knowledge sharing for replication of successful practices**

The overall goal of the Initiative is to enhance the effectiveness of REDD+ through greater inclusion of women and gender perspectives in all relevant policies and practices.

The first activity of the initiative was a *dialogue* "The Exclusion and Inclusion of Women in the Forest Sector", held in Kathmandu, Nepal from September 22-24, 2012. This dialogue, organized by WOCAN and the Forest Dialogue, highlighted key impediments and recommended actions to promote women's inclusion and gender equality in Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) and REDD+, which provided the basis for a regional scoping study.

The *regional scoping study* then examined the diverse practices within forest and other land-use sectors in the region to draw out key enabling conditions that have contributed to women's inclusion and gender equality in SFM and REDD+, and correspondingly, program effectiveness. From a wide range of cases, the scoping study identified 10 key enabling interventions and factors that have contributed to women's inclusion in the forest and other land use sectors.

These enabling interventions and factors were analysed in country level studies in Cambodia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, which aimed to explore the current status and effectiveness of policies and practices related to gender and women's inclusion in forest and other natural resource management sectors. They included a review of current policies and practices; gaps between policies and practice; factors that enable the inclusion of women in policies and projects; and barriers to inclusion and effective implementation.

Stakeholders were then selected from organizations working in forestry and gender and climate change/ REDD+ within the three research countries to participate in *National Forest Dialogues* in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on September 27, 2013, Colombo, Sri Lanka on October 5, 2013 and Manila, the Philippines on February 19, 2014. Participants reviewed the findings and ranked the most important barriers as well as identified priority recommendations for actions at community and institutional/policy levels.



Lessons obtained from the Joint Initiative were shared for wider reach and replication through USAID LEAF led **Asia-Pacific Workshop** on Women's Inclusion for Sustainable Forests and Climate: What Works? from March 26-27, 2014 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Primary Barriers to Women's Inclusion

Cultural and Social Norms & Lack of Women's Participation

In all countries, ideological and cultural norms and the lack of women's representation were perceived to be the primary barriers to women's inclusion in the forest sector.

Gender disparities are attributed to cultural norms and expectations about gender-differentiated roles and responsibilities in society that constrain women from fully benefitting from laws and policies that support gender equality. The predominant belief that women's work is supplementary to men's work remains a culturally induced barrier that marginalizes women and their contributions to sustainable management of forests, trees and local resources. These cultural barriers and gender norms limit the recognition of women as distinct stakeholders.

In Cambodia, there has been a lack of participation of women representatives/groups or members of the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) in REDD+ policy development. MoWA only participated during an event for the initial commencement of the REDD+ initiative at the national level. Furthermore, there is no quota set for women representatives/groups/experts that would represent and table gender issues in the REDD+ task force and technical working groups.



In Sri Lanka, during the Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) development process, women stakeholders were not informed or represented; nor was the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs involved to ensure that women's concerns were incorporated into the document.

In the Philippines, men are still privileged over women as the key stakeholder: titles are issued to males while their female spouses are not counted as beneficiaries. Women's contribution to natural resource management is neither recognized in forest-based planning, nor given economic recognition, as it is considered a part of their 'usual' care-taking responsibilities. This social expectation exacerbates gender gaps both in terms of women's lack of recognition as key and legitimate stakeholders and their chances to receive an equitable share of benefits from sustainable forest management. In Sri Lanka, women do the majority of work in maintaining home gardens for household consumption; however, their subsistence contributions have always been seen only supplementary to the work done by men to harvest timber from their home gardens for revenue generation.



Primary Barriers to Women's Inclusion

Financial Commitments, Women's Organizations and Gender-integrated Planning

Other barriers identified were lack of financial commitment, lack of women's organizations and lack of gender-integrated planning and programming within forest and REDD+ activities.

In Cambodia, limited funding has hampered the effective implementation of gender policies and strategic plans to support gender mainstreaming plans developed by Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF)'s Forestry Administration and the gender working groups. In addition, limited capacities to implement gender budgeting is also noted as a challenge. MoWA has introduced gender budgeting to other ministries so that they can track budget allocations that address the needs of men and women. However, although some ministries have an allocated budget for gender mainstreaming, the gender focal points do not know how to make use of it. It was also observed that budget allocations have not reached the sub-national levels, such as the Provincial/District Department of Women's Affairs (DPWA), which is closer to the communities. The projects are usually implemented by the Ministry itself.

In the Philippines, legislative measures provide specific guidelines for the preparation of an annual gender and development plan, and budget and accomplishment reports to implement activities that promote gender equality. While the law prescribes government agencies to allocate at least five percent of their budget to specific gender and development activities, there are several restrictions that limit the potential of this policy to support gender integration. The amount generated from this allocation is very low, and the policy generally covers only specific activities. Moreover, in many cases, the policy is not enforced. Lack of funds is a major barrier to develop long-term capacity building programs for women's leadership and greater institutionalization of gender perspectives into programming of key forestry institutions in all three countries.



In Sri Lanka, most of the women's organizations formed are specific to community forestry, agriculture and irrigation projects, or women-led off-grid "electricity consumer societies" that are location specific. In Cambodia, less than ten per cent of Community Forestry groups effectively involve women and less than five per cent of women hold a management position in a Community Forestry Management Committee. In Sri Lanka, without a specific quota set up to mandate women's participation, it is difficult to institutionalize women's engagement in forest management. Though quotas are important, in some cases they are not sufficient. As in the Philippines, despite having a greater number of women foresters, gender issues are yet to be fully integrated into forest policies and programming.

Priority Recommendations for Women's Inclusion in REDD+

Skills Building, Women's Leadership, Gender Champions and Gender Analysis and Planning

In all countries, skills building, women's leadership/championship and gender analysis and planning were identified as the priority recommendations to address the barriers of ideological and cultural norms and lack of women's representation.



Findings from the regional scoping study and the three national studies emphasize specific interventions (such as the ones noted below) that have shown to be good practices relating to these recommendations.

- Active participation of women's groups, federations and networks in developing REDD+ safeguards to ensure that women are identified as legitimate stakeholders and key beneficiaries in the implementation of the REDD activities
- Technical training and support for women's groups for enterprise development and credit provision.
- Use of gender analysis and value chain analysis to determine women's roles and contributions to forest management and protection
- Use of gender integrated planning to ensure that women's capacity and livelihood needs are addressed through planning and investments
- Strengthening of institutional mechanisms to promote gender equality in key forestry and REDD+ implementing agencies so that gender efforts are incorporated into forestry and REDD+ activities and not implemented as one-off events that have little chance to influence REDD+ programming and outcomes
- Identification of gender champions in government institutions, private sector and communities who have been advocating and promoting gender equality in forest and other land use sectors

Country Specific Recommendations

Cambodia

Skill Building

Enhancing capacity for women to meaningfully participate in REDD+ processes is crucial. At the national level, technical REDD+ knowledge training can be organized, particularly for women's groups and institutions supporting gender equality (including MoWA). At the local level, trainings can be held to improve women's meaningful participation in REDD+, including technical training about REDD+ (i.e. safeguards, forest monitoring), public speaking, and organizational management, among others. Literacy training can also be an entry point for illiterate women to build their confidence.



Gender Disaggregated Analysis and Planning

To ensure REDD+ gender mainstreaming, collecting baseline data and conducting gender analysis is a fundamental step to understand women's and men's differentiated roles and needs in REDD+. Gender disaggregated record keeping is also useful to monitor the process of gender integration efforts.

Promote Gender Responsive Budgeting and Capacity Building

Lack of funding has been cited as the main challenge for implementing gender policies and gender working groups. Therefore, it is important to ensure REDD+ policy makers understand gender responsive budgeting and commit to allocating budgets to support initiatives.

Sri Lanka

Skill Building

Enhancing institutional capacity and technical skills training for women is necessary. Extension officers can be trained to mobilize women's active participation. Attention to timing and location of meetings is crucial. Improvising curricula that incorporate gender concerns in community forestry at the Sri Lankan Institute of Forestry could help ensure that professionals are adequately trained with gender and social issues. Now that community forestry work is moving towards a more integrated social development approach, skills on land use planning, non-timber forest products, micro-finance, and leadership are critical.

Gender Disaggregated Analysis and Planning

Baseline surveys including gender analysis can engender the REDD+ process, address specific issues and institutionalize mechanisms for equitable opportunities. Adding data on the status and contribution of women and men in REDD+ related activities to the Women's Bureau prospective databank is a good opportunity. Such gender-differentiated knowledge can then be explicitly integrated into REDD+ planning vision.

Develop and support women's organizations

Women-only community forestry-based organizations are limited at this time. These groups primarily exist only within donor-funded forest or watershed management projects. However, it is clear that women-only groups provide very valuable spaces for building confidence, exchanging knowledge and developing new ideas. There is a role for The Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs and women professionals working in forests and home gardens, energy and water sectors, to promote local level groups and form national networks. This can be aligned with the Women's Bureau plans to establish national federations by expanding divisional federations. The Bureau requires strong lateral linkages to facilitate local representation and to pool resources and knowledge.

The Philippines

Skill Building

This can be done through gender-sensitive training that imparts fair treatment and non-discrimination as the core values of gender equality. More often, calls for gender equality have been equated with a number of women who do not have technical expertise and a mandate to raise their concerns on gender discrimination. Increased representation of women is a good start, but care should be taken to ensure that such representation caters to empowered decision-making and equitable benefit-sharing. Specifically, the Philippines Commission on Women that provides oversight on gender equality requires more technical knowledge and skills for forestry, climate change and REDD+. Likewise, key forestry and REDD+ implementing agencies such as the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) and its Forest Management Bureau (FMB) require trainings on gender sensitivity, and skills to integrate gender issues in forestry and REDD+ activities. Moreover, gender-sensitive education should be promoted in schools and universities to provide the right value identities for gender equality.

Leadership and Gender Champions

The Philippines already has many gender-responsive policies and institutional systems in place. However, it faces the challenges of adequate monitoring and enforcement of those policies and institutional practices. There is a role for leaders and gender champions to recognize these values, mandate existing policies' implementation, allocate investments and disseminate lessons learned. For this to happen, leaders require proper coaching on leadership and organizational programming. Equally important is engaging with male staff, and community-based organizations such as people's organizations, and sensitizing them on gender equality in a way that is complementary to achieving fair opportunities.

Strengthening key forestry and REDD+ implementing agencies for gender equality

A designated implementing agency such as DENR/FMB is better positioned to integrate gender perspectives and promote women's inclusion in forestry/REDD+ policies and programming. DENR's Gender and Development Focal Point (GADFS) system is an important institutional mechanism to promote gender equality. The GADFS system includes people with expertise on gender analysis, gender-sensitive training and gender budgeting. However, they have limited knowledge on the emerging concepts of climate change and REDD+. There is a need to educate and enhance capacity-building of the DENR/FMB staff on gender issues in climate change and REDD+, whilst integrating the implementation of GADFS-related analysis and tools in forestry and REDD+ programming.



Moving Forward

The research and consultations conducted for the Regional Joint Initiative have highlighted specific challenges that prevent the inclusion of women and gender perspectives in the forest sector and REDD+. They have also presented relevant good practices of women's inclusion in forest and other land use sectors and presented specific recommendations for policy interventions. In order to ensure knowledge sharing to replicate and mainstream successful practices in the forest sector, especially through REDD+, there is still a need for regional dissemination and sharing of lessons learned, as well as in-depth consultations with REDD+ national policy making bodies to ensure gender considerations are incorporated into these programs. To help facilitate this work and process, the USAID LEAF program led an Asia-Pacific Workshop entitled "Women's Inclusion for Sustainable Forests and Climate: What Works?" from March 26-27, 2014 in Bangkok, Thailand. This workshop disseminated the findings from the Joint Initiative as well as shared existing evidence and good practices that enhance women's inclusion and greater integration of gender perspectives in the forestry sector. Likewise, the UN-REDD Programme plans to conduct meetings with REDD+ policy makers in Cambodia and Sri Lanka to develop national action plans for ensuring the effective inclusion of women in REDD+ initiatives.

Good policies alone are not sufficient to achieve results. The best and most sustainable results will be achieved in cases where these interventions are consistent and support one another across the policy, institutional and community levels. Strong women leaders, women's networks and gender champions are required to bring about changes in the forest sector.

To better understand capacity needs, as well as help enhance the overall effectiveness of REDD+ in the Asia Pacific region through greater inclusion of women and integrated gender issues in policies, institutions and practices, members of the Joint Initiative intend to continue with efforts on developing and implementing strategies to best support Asia-Pacific countries in meeting their needs for integrating gender into REDD+ by providing further South-South cooperation opportunities, technical advisory and partnership development support services.

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Read more about the Regional Joint Initiative showcasing:

Regional Scoping study: <http://www.wocan.org/resources/scoping-study-womens-inclusion-REDD>

REDD+ gender work in Cambodia: <http://www.wocan.org/resources/women%E2%80%99s-inclusion-redd-cambodia-good-practices-forest-agriculture-NRM>

REDD+ gender work in Sri Lanka: <http://www.wocan.org/resources/women%E2%80%99s-inclusion-redd-sri-lanka-good-practices-forest-agriculture-NRM>

REDD+ gender work in the Philippines: <http://www.wocan.org/resources/women%E2%80%99s-inclusion-redd-philippines-good-practices-forest-NRM>

Find out more about USAID LEAF and its approach to integrating gender into programming at www.leafasia.org and check out our tool- *Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and Checklist* at <http://theredddesk.org/resources/leaf-gender-mainstreaming-strategy-and-checklist>