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Making NAPAs Work for Women

Around the world, governments are awakening to the idea that coping with climate change requires a rapid response if we are to avoid its worst consequences. Nowhere are the effects of climate change being felt as acutely as in the developing world, where it is already undermining development gains. And women, as the majority of the poor and the primary caretakers of families, are on the frontlines dealing with increased natural disasters and changes in their environment.

National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs)

In reaction to the current realities of climate change, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)—the lead intergovernmental body that addresses this issue—initiated the process of National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) to help countries already struggling with and/or most at risk from the effects of climate change.

A main function of the UNFCCC is to facilitate countries' reduction of greenhouse gases—a primary contributor to climate change. But the adaptation needs of the least developed countries (LDCs) are equally urgent. A delay in response could dramatically increase LDCs' vulnerability as well as the future costs of taking action.¹ NAPAs are the mechanisms by which LDCs assess their urgent climate change adaptation needs and prioritize actions to meet them.² They

contain a list of ranked priority adaptation activities and projects, with short profiles of each to assist in the development of proposals for implementation.

So why do women or gender advocates care about NAPAs? Who stands to benefit from these activities or access these funds? Whose livelihoods will improve or stabilize thanks to these programmes? NAPA activities should benefit the communities most vulnerable to the effects of a changing climate. It is therefore crucial to ensure that gender inequalities are addressed and women's priorities and concerns are included. This will keep development efforts on track and help LDCs effectively—and potentially more efficiently—deal with the impacts of climate change. What follows is a breakdown of the NAPA process and how these plans can work for women and men.

NAPA Preparation Guidelines

Guidelines for NAPA preparation, put together by the LDC Expert Group, stress that the process should be participatory.³ The team at the national level should be made up of a lead agency and representatives of stakeholders including government agencies and civil society. Women and men at the grassroots level should be involved because they can provide information on current coping strategies. They are also the most affected by climate change and hence could potentially benefit the most from NAPA activities.

The guidelines also highlight the importance of gender equality, noting that climate change has different adverse impacts on women and men and in most cases disproportionately affects women. Other guiding elements include taking a multidisciplinary approach; building on existing plans and programmes; mainstreaming NAPAs into development planning; taking a country-driven approach; emphasizing sound environmental management; and ensuring cost effectiveness and simplicity. The Expert Group notes that the guidelines are not meant to be prescriptive; procedures may be flexible based on individual country circumstances.

How NAPAs are Funded

NAPA preparation and implementation is primarily funded by the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) of the UNFCCC, which is administered by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) (see box). The bulk of the funds are reserved for project implementation. After submitting a completed NAPA to the UNFCCC Secretariat, LDCs are eligible for—and will receive equal access to—implementation funding.^A The UNFCCC has estimated that USD 500 million will be needed to finance NAPA implementation; as of 7 May 2009, the GEF LDCF had collected voluntary contributions

The Global Environment Facility

The GEF was set up to provide grants to developing countries for projects that benefit the global environment and promote sustainable livelihoods in local communities. It is an independent financial entity, but it relies on 10 other agencies to assist eligible



governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the development, implementation and management of the projects.

These agencies offer important entry points for gender advocacy. Each must, for example, apply criteria, indicators and other tools,

and each should collect disaggregated data. The GEF itself has initiated a number of actions to improve gender mainstreaming, and a gender focal point will aid in articulating a vision and crafting a plan of action to create a cohesive gender policy.⁹

• of about USD 176.5 million through pledges from 19 donor countries.^{B,4}

• But all the costs of these urgent activities won't be met by the GEF. It is expected that countries will need to finance the rest from other sources such as national investments, existing multilateral development financing and, most controversially, Official Development Assistance (ODA).⁵ Most developing countries vehemently argue that this is far from fair: they contend that industrialized countries, due to their emissions histories, have an “historical responsibility” to pay additional amounts to cover adaptation needs. (Read more in *Climate Change Connections: Financing that Makes a Difference.*)

Implementation Progress

As of September 2009, 42 LDCs (out of a total of 49) had submitted NAPAs to the UNFCCC.⁶ Combined, the NAPAs have over 400 ranked adaptation projects. But any project to be implemented must go through the GEF project cycle.⁷ In total, 31 priority activities have been submitted for implementation and 28^C approved as of 22 May 2009.⁸

^A Approximately USD 3.7 million per country based on existing resources.

^B Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and United Kingdom

^C Of these, 5 are in the process of initial implementation and 11 are expected to begin the implementation phase before the end of 2009. Source: http://www.gefweb.org/uploadedFiles/Documents/LDCFSCCF_Council_Documents/LDCFSCCF6_June_2009/LDCFSCCF%206.Inf.3.pdf

The Importance of a Gender Perspective In Adaptation Plans

“Climate impacts that lead to changes in agricultural production will have a major and direct impact on women because of their central role in agricultural production. Their work could be made much harder, leading to less time for other activities...There could be resulting social issues and health issues such as nutritional deficiency.”

— Solomon Islands NAPA, p. 32

As the NAPA guidelines recognize, some of the impacts of climate change are gender-specific and overall its effects are greater on women than men. Climate change will make the tasks of growing and preparing food, collecting fuel and water and providing care to the sick in the family and community more burdensome. Demands on women’s already limited time will increase; if girls are attending school, they may be pulled out to help. In addition, women’s lack of property rights and control over natural resources means that they have fewer choices when it comes to adaptation. Natural disasters shorten women’s life expectancy significantly more than men’s, with many women made more vulnerable by their lack of involvement in (or access to information about) disaster prevention and preparedness programmes.¹⁰

At the same time, women are often prepared to

Population Perspective: Adapting in a Dynamic World

Population growth and urbanization is expected to occur mostly in developing countries that are already experiencing climate change impacts and have vulnerable populations, including women. NAPAs tend to focus on physical adaptation such as early warning systems, water systems and agricultural improvement, some of which relate to population. But adaptation can also be social, such as meeting demands for reproductive health services and ensuring education for girls, which empowers women to better negotiate the spacing and number of their pregnancies and increases gender equality.¹² NAPA activities—and indeed all adaptation and mitigation activities—must build on methodologies and commitments already made toward sustainable development and gender equality goals.



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take action to mitigate and adapt to climate change as a means of risk aversion and resiliency building.¹¹ Women already play a key role in managing natural resources and, as many NAPAs note, are the repositories of traditional knowledge on sustainable practices and coping strategies. Provided with the necessary information and skills, they can be effective innovators and leaders in climate change adaptation and mitigation at the community level. Collective action is needed to meet growing challenges such as water scarcity and seasonal droughts. Adaptation plans and programmes simply will not work without women’s participation—from initial consultations through to all levels of decision-making and implementation—to ensure that their knowledge is utilized and that projects establish realistic goals.

Gender in the NAPAs

Almost all the NAPAs acknowledge the immediate and dangerous impacts of climate change on health, water, sanitation, food security, land security and even literacy and education rates, and many specify that women are among the most vulnerable in these situations. But few NAPAs look at how these relate specifically to women’s economic, political and social status.¹³ And even fewer incorporate women as key stakeholders or primary participants in NAPA activities.

The United Republic of Tanzania’s NAPA took a profound step in identifying an urgent concern:

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“Women have to walk very long distances to fetch water. This consumes a lot of their time which could be spent on other productive activities. The burden is more on women and school children particularly girls who seem to be the main water courier” (p. 42).

However, the proposed activities in the NAPA do not directly include women or involve them as stakeholders. Raising awareness in the communities about the gendered division of labour, securing school fees so that girls are not denied an education, working directly with women on sustainable collection techniques or systems, or even setting up microfinance initiatives for women and men to build a fund for purchasing emergency water could have been included in the NAPA as gender-sensitive activities that would strengthen its efficacy.

In April 2009, the Gender Advisory Team at the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) conducted a review of the 39 plans then available.¹⁴ It looked at whether gender-specific vulnerabilities were identified by the NAPA; whether these vulnerabilities were addressed by the projects, including through gender equality programming in general; and how women and men had participated in the formulation of the NAPA. The main findings included:

- Several of the NAPAs mentioned gender equality and women’s empowerment as principles. However, none demonstrated a clear commitment to these principles by mainstreaming gender throughout the document.
- About half the NAPAs identified gender-differentiated impacts from climate change, and most of these recognized women as a particularly vulnerable group.
- Very few NAPAs demonstrated a commitment to gender equality through their projects, despite the fact that several stated that gender equality and/or women’s empowerment guided the project.

Examples of Good Practice in Engendering NAPAs

Bangladesh lists gender equality as one of the criteria for selecting activities. Of 15 projects outlined, three include women among the beneficiaries. Indigenous women participated in the NAPA process.

Women’s groups participated in the development of the NAPA for **Eritrea**, and female-headed households are particularly targeted by one of the projects.

In **Malawi**, women’s NGOs were consulted during the preparation of the NAPA, and gender is one of eight criteria for selecting projects. Proposed interventions include the empowerment of women through access to microfinance, ensuring easier access to water and energy sources, and a rural electrification programme. Three priority activities (out of five) will disaggregate beneficiaries by age and sex.

“The most vulnerable groups are rural communities, especially women, children, female-headed households and the elderly. The proposed interventions include: (i) improved early warning systems (ii) recommended improved crop varieties, (iii) recommended improved livestock breeds, and (iv) improved crop and livestock management practices.” – Malawi NAPA, p. ix

Mauritania acknowledges that women are guardians of vital local and traditional knowledge and that they need to be recognized as key stakeholders in the consultation and decision-making processes (even though they have not been represented in great numbers).

Mauritania’s first approved project for implementation states:

“The programme’s objective is to improve the incomes and living conditions of the target group, women and young people, in a sustainable manner by developing seven agricultural value chains.”¹⁵

In the **Niger** NAPA, women are beneficiaries of three livestock/crop farming projects, one of which includes women’s land use and ownership as an activity. Women were one of the four ‘concentric circles’ of stakeholders/actors that were involved in national consultations.

A gender approach is emphasized in the **Senegal** NAPA and women were consulted in the process. An identified project on water efficiency will distribute kits based on criteria including gender. Forestry projects specifically mention women as beneficiaries.

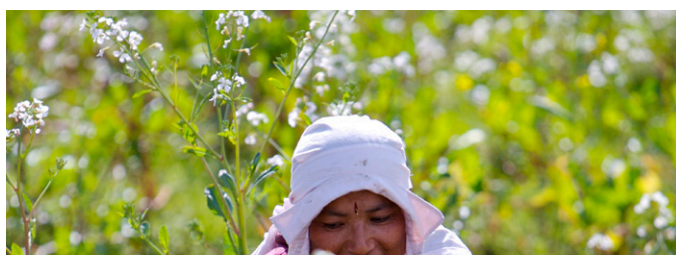
One of the activities in the **Sierra Leone** NAPA (but not chosen as first to be implemented) is to carry out sensitization campaigns on the impacts of climate change on women and to train women in adaptation mechanisms. The NAPA says the inclusion of women (and children) will make the project sustainable.

Making Sure NAPAs are Gender-Responsive^o

Although most of the NAPAs have already been written, and some projects have been approved for funding, very few are in the implementation phase. This means that there is still a tremendous opportunity to influence that process, especially at the national level and in the implementing agencies. The fact that women have been regularly included as among the “most vulnerable”, and should hence be a primary target of NAPA projects, provides an entry point to ensure that their specific needs are taken into account.

NAPA Preparation

- Mainstream gender into NAPAs so that the beneficiaries include both women and men (and girls and boys when appropriate). Ensure gender equality is always a principle guiding the process and a criterion when selecting projects.
- Identify and note in all NAPAs the different impacts of climate change on women and men (girls and boys). Target their specific vulnerabilities in the projects and clearly outline them in the project objectives. State beneficiary population(s) of each project disaggregated by sex and age.



- Facilitate the participation and representation of both women and men, particularly members of affected communities, in the process of developing NAPAs. This can be accomplished by establishing a quota for the participation of women and women's groups. Where traditional barriers prevent women from speaking out, hold separate consultations with them to ensure effective participation.
- Design gender-sensitive capacity-building programmes at the community level to ensure that both women's and men's priorities—and roles and resources—are taken into account. NAPAs should recognize that women can be powerful agents of change and have knowledge and specialized skills that can be utilized at the all levels.

Refining Projects for Implementation Approval

- Include in projects explicit and measurable quantitative and qualitative targets that address gender concerns.
- Establish indicators to track progress toward project goals.
- Collect gender-disaggregated data to evaluate progress for each project. Monitor the impacts of climate change adaptation measures on women and men and the respective benefit they receive from those measures.
- Develop gender-sensitive criteria at the international

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