



Knowledge for Climate Finance Mobilisation

**Designing gender-responsive projects for
climate finance**



The Southern Africa
Climate Finance Partnership

Designing gender-responsive projects for climate finance; responding to the requirements of the new Green Climate Fund Gender Policy and Action Plan 2020-2023

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This briefing note provides targeted guidance on how to operationalise gender in project planning, and what a gender-responsive project might look like, in line with the new Green Climate Fund (GCF) Gender Policy and Action Plan 2020-23.

In summary;

- Gender-responsive adaptation projects have the potential to equitably reduce adverse impacts of climate change for women, men, girls and boys whilst also contributing to gender equality.
- Climate finance funds are encouraging integration of gender, and the GCF has progressively updated its Gender Policy and Action Plan to encourage projects to be more ambitious - from gender-sensitive to gender-responsive and gender mainstreaming.
- Taking a gender-responsive approach is the responsibility of many different parties - Nationally Designated Authorities (NDAs), focal points, Accredited Entities, and project teams, and involves actions before and during project development and implementation.

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Introduction

Increasing gender-responsiveness in the programming of climate related activities or investments presents an opportunity to equitably reduce the adverse impacts of climate change for women, men, girls and boys, as well as to achieve gender equality. This is particularly important in the context of southern Africa where social constructions of gender roles and gender inequality means that women tend to be more vulnerable and limited in their capacity to adapt to climate change.

Climate finance providers require that adaptation projects are designed, implemented, monitored, reported on and evaluated with gender implications in mind. The GCF in particular aims to take a progressive approach, in-keeping with its ethos to fund projects that have paradigm shift potential. Since being operationalised in 2015, it has released two updates to its initial Gender Policy and Action Plan, each one encouraging successively more progressive approaches, from gender-sensitive to gender-responsive adaptation (and mitigation), and gender mainstreaming.

“The challenge remains to work toward systematic integration and go beyond a gender ‘add-on’. A truly gender-responsive approach to funding climate actions will not only address how funding decisions are made and implemented, but will fundamentally alter the focus of funding operations.”

- Schalatek, 2019 p 3

This policy brief seeks to distinguish between different approaches towards gender mainstreaming in the context of climate finance, and in particular describe how to operationalise a “gender-responsive” approach in project development and implementation in light of the GCF Gender Policy and Action Plan 2020-23.

Meaning of key gender-related terms

Gender refers to how societies and specific cultures assign roles and ascribe characteristics to men and women on the basis of their sex.

Gender equality refers to equal rights, power, responsibilities and opportunities for women and men, as well as equal consideration of the interests, needs and priorities of women and men.

Gender equity refers to the process of being fair to women and men. To ensure equity, measures often need to be taken to compensate for (or reduce) disparity for historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from otherwise operating on an equitable basis. Equity, therefore, leads to equality.

Gender mainstreaming is a process of assessing the implications for people of different genders throughout the strategy and operations of a programme or organisation.

Gender-responsiveness in the context of climate change

The “gender continuum” of approaches

In a gender unequal and largely patriarchal world, the approach that we take to problem identification, and the design of projects responding to these problems, is typically gender-blind. Gender-blind approaches may be neutral in terms of not affecting the existing status quo of gender relations (favouring neither men or woman specifically, but also not shifting existing inequality in any way). However, there is a risk that they may be exploitative, widening inequality between men and women. Due to gender roles, for example, men tend to play a bigger role in commercial agriculture than women. An intervention to promote commercial agriculture would therefore preference men relative to women, and thus widen gender inequality.

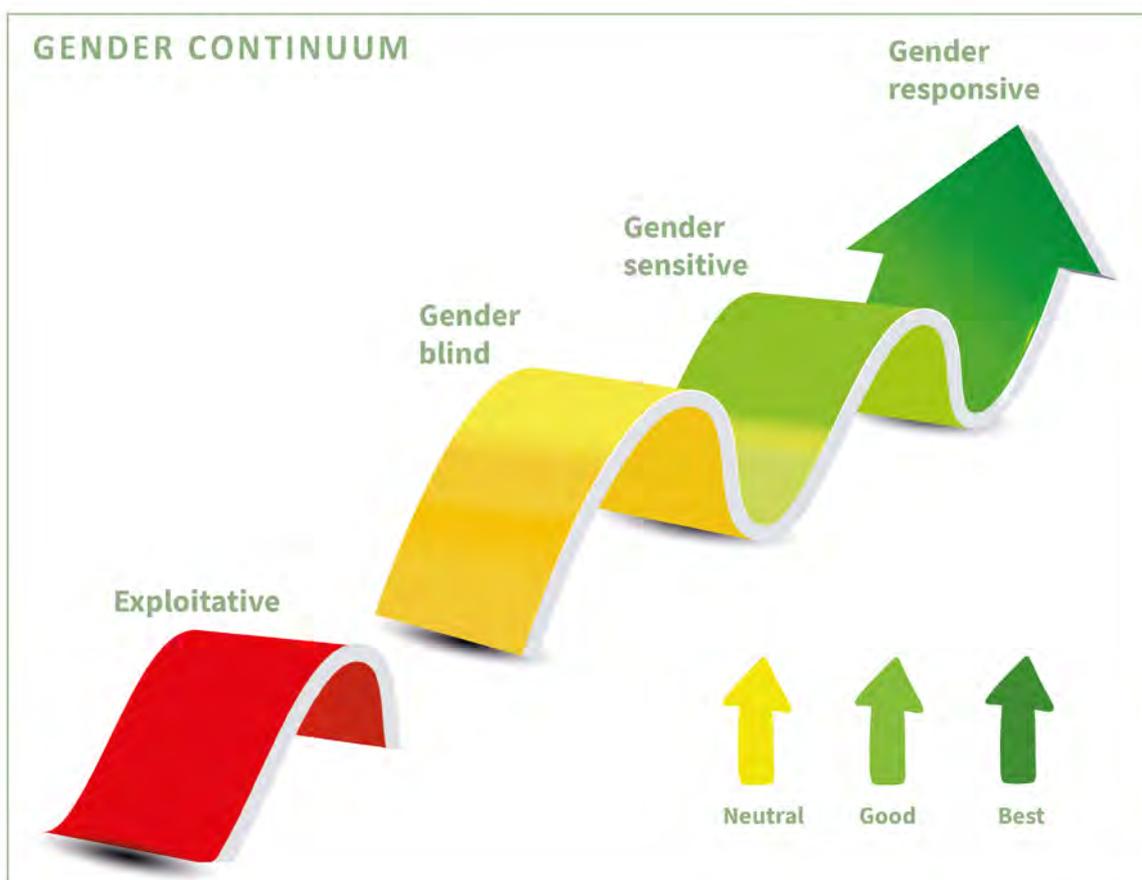


Figure 1: Gender continuum

A better approach is to be gender-sensitive. **Gender-sensitive** means taking into account gendered roles and norms and modifying activities accordingly to ensure equal opportunities for participation and benefits by women and men. In the agriculture example, this might mean providing an alternative option for livelihoods for women that is in-keeping with their home-based responsibilities. Gender-sensitive approaches do not address the underlying causes of inequality.

The best option is to be gender-responsive. **Gender-responsive** means explicit inclusion of activities to promote women’s empowerment and promote equality. It therefore expressly aims to address the root causes that give rise to inequality. In the agriculture example, this may mean awareness raising and training for both women and men to dismantle the social norms that limit women’s role in commercial agriculture, and provide home-based support for childcare to enable women to participate in such value chains.

Since the world is still, to varying degrees, gender-unequal, proactive attempts are typically required to support women's empowerment as a prerequisite to gender-responsive adaptation. This may require targeted efforts at education and literacy for women and girls and directing the availability of resources, for example through the provision of microcredit. However, this needs to be accompanied by the wider systemic change that alters the creation of unequal gender relations. This might include engaging and getting buy in from the government to overturn exploitative laws, for example those that preclude women from owning/having access to land, and ensuring equal access to opportunities.

GCF and Gender

The GCF has been committed to gender equality since it commenced operations. In going beyond the commitment to “do no harm” as shown in typical environmental and social safeguards, it has been commended for exhibiting global leadership in the process (Schalatek, 2019). This commitment relates both to its internal operations and the operations of its network of partners (including NDs and Accredited Entities). It also relates to its programming decisions, in terms of project design, budgeting, implementation and monitoring and evaluation of outputs and outcomes.

The aim of the Green Climate Fund's Gender Policy is to promote climate investments that advance gender equality through climate change mitigation and adaptation actions; to minimise social and gender-related climate risks; and to reduce the gender gap resulting from climate change-exacerbated vulnerabilities. In addition, GCF has regularly reviewed and revised its Gender Policy and Action Plan, setting progressively more advanced benchmarks to ensure that its activities contribute to the attainment of gender equality (Table 1 below).

Alignment of the GCF's Gender Policy with the Paris Agreement

The GCF Gender Policy is aligned with the Agreement to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. In Article 7.5 the Paris Agreement highlights that adaptation action should be gender-responsive; and the Preamble reiterates that, when taking action to address climate change, Parties should consider their commitments to gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity.

GCF Gender Policy and Action Plan 2015-17

The first iteration of its Gender Policy and Action Plan, from 2015-17, took a gender-sensitive approach, anchored in six principles (see Table 2 below). Gender-sensitivity implies a consideration of the potential contribution of women and men to societal changes as well as the methods and tools used to promote gender equity, reduce gender disparities, and measure the impact of climate change and other development activities on men and women. In programming, this mandated that all projects submit a gender assessment as part of their proposals, in which they identified key gender issues of relevance to the project.

GCF Gender Policy and Action Plan 2018-20

The second iteration of the Gender Policy and Action Plan, from 2018-20, shifted its approach further along the gender continuum (see Figure 1 above) to be gender-responsive. Being gender-responsive means that instead of only identifying gender issues or ensuring a “do no harm” approach, the projects they fund must substantially help to overcome historical gender biases. Practically speaking, this requires that all projects submit gender action plans as well as gender assessments.

GCF Gender Policy and Action Plan 2020-23

The third iteration of the Gender Policy and Action Plan, from 2020-23, continues to emphasise the importance of a gender-responsive approach, also highlighting the need to consider vulnerable groups in communities and take into account traditional knowledge. It also builds on previous versions by committing to mainstreaming gender in all its operations. In addition it recognises that, to continue with progress, there is a need to develop the capacities of NDAs, focal points, and Accredited Entities to enable them to better mainstream gender in projects. Financial resources can now be requested for this from the Project Preparation Facility.

EVOLUTION OF THE GCF GENDER POLICY AND ACTION PLAN, AND REQUIREMENTS FOR PROPOSAL SUBMISSIONS

Gender Policy date Principle Gender	Gender approach	Requirements for project proposals		Financial and technical support for NDAs and direct access AEs
		Gender assessment	Gender Action Plan	
2015-17	Gender-sensitive	Yes	No	No
2018-20	Gender-responsive	Yes	Yes	No
2020-23	Gender-responsive	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 1: Evolution of the GCF Gender Policy and Action Plan, and requirements for proposal submissions

Gender Assessment

The Gender Assessment provides a context of the different roles, rights, needs and opportunities of women and men, girls and boys, identifying causes and effects of differential vulnerability and capacity and presenting a gendered “problem context” that the project can address.

Gender Action Plan

Building on the Gender Assessment, the Gender Action Plan contains impact, outcome and output statements and details of how the activities can be made gender-responsive, the budget allocation to them, the targets and indicators that will enable monitoring of progress (e.g. sex-disaggregated data), and the responsibilities of various parties.

Designing and implementing gender-responsive climate change projects

Current good practice recognises that gender-responsiveness is important at all stages of the project cycle and requires involvement of various parties (Table 2).

PRINCIPLES FOR GENDER-RESPONSIVENESS, THEIR TIMING IN THE PROJECT CYCLE, AND WHO SHOULD TAKE RESPONSIBILITY		
Principle	Timing for first consideration	Responsibility
Commitment to gender equality	Before projects are developed	GCF, NDA, AE, project team
Country ownership	Before projects are developed	NDA, AE
Gender assessment	Start of project development	AE, project team, women and men beneficiaries
Equitable resource allocation (in Gender Action Plan)	Start of project development	AE, project team
Accountability for results and impact (in Gender Action Plan)	Start of project development	AE, project team, beneficiaries
Inclusion of women in project governance (in Gender Action Plan)	Start of project development	AE, project team, beneficiaries

Table 2: Principles for gender-responsiveness, their timing in the project cycle, and who should take responsibility

Before projects are developed

Ensuring commitment to gender equality and country ownership are essential prerequisites of an enabling environment for project development. Most southern African countries have gender policies in place which make commitments to achieving gender equality, mainstreaming gender across government and its operations, and proactively supporting women's empowerment. Well-designed GCF climate change projects can support the implementation of such policies. Often commitment to gender equality comes from strong political commitment, or leadership in institutions that can play a role in enabling gender-responsive climate adaptation, for example government ministries (NDAs) and Accredited Entities. Many of the institutions that have been successful in implementing gender-responsive adaptation, and obtaining international climate finance to support the process, are because the leadership of relevant institutions has identified the opportunities for outcomes that have equitable benefits (Direct Access Entity in southern Africa).

“If there is a will, and we can have the board see the same views as the executive, then there is a way and you can move forward” - Direct Access Entity in southern Africa

Country ownership is one of the components of the GCF's Investment Framework. It requires that project objectives are in line with priorities of the country's climate change strategy and other relevant policies, including national gender policies and regulations.

During project development

Beyond country ownership, there also needs to be community ownership among intended beneficiaries. This requires that ample consultation takes place at the commencement of project development. Consultation should involve the target population, inclusive of ethnic minorities, the disabled, elderly, children, women and indigenous peoples (Fayolle and Odianose, 2017).

Your proposal can look good on paper, but if you have not achieved community ownership before you move to tick the GCF requirements, you will face setbacks later on”
- Direct Access Entity in southern Africa

The GCF requires that women and men be provided with equal opportunity to take an active part in stakeholder consultations and decision-making. This may require creativity and additional efforts. For example, in community meetings men's voices are often given preference over women - whether explicitly because gender roles dictate that women should not intend, or implicitly because wives will often defer to their husbands to represent them even if they are present. Consultations in this case may inadvertently only hear the concerns of 50% of the population. Arranging separate consultations for women, that take place at a time and in a location that are appropriate to their gender roles, will increase the likelihood of representation of both genders. The consultations can feed into the gender assessment.

The Gender Assessment is a critical component of the project development phase. It should outline the context of vulnerability for women, men, girls and boys, and their adaptation needs, providing evidence that the intervention will not reinforce inequalities but actively aim to challenge them.

The GCF provides guidance for what should be included in a Gender Assessment.

It includes:

1. The baseline situation

- General country-level indicators, for example gender differences in education, health, life expectancy, labour force participation, political participation
- Specific context of the intervention, including commonly-held beliefs, stereotypes, resource access and use, division of labour and participation of women and men in decision-making structures

2. Identification of an intervention that can provide equitable opportunities for adaptation that contribute to gender equality

- Current and likely changes in vulnerability and adaptive capacity of women and men in the context of the planned intervention and its role in broader gender equality
- Opportunities identified to challenge gender stereotypes and increase positive gender relations through equitable actions
- Roles that women and men are anticipated to play in the intervention, their appropriateness in light of gender differences in resource access and responsibilities and needs for training, and opportunities to promote women's roles in governance

To effectively obtain this information, there is a need to understand the context of women and men. Ensuring that consultation takes place separately with women and men is essential, as is engendering all questions (i.e. asking “what do men do?” and “what do women do?” rather than “what do people do” - which encourages gender blind responses). Whilst sex-disaggregated statistics may be available at national and even regional level, local level context is likely to require descriptive and qualitative analysis.

How information from the gender assessment is going to inform the design of a project that contributes to gender equality is outlined in the Gender Action Plan. The Gender Action Plan should highlight how resources are equitably distributed between women and men (gender-based budgeting). Gender-based budgeting enables analysis of any variations in the impacts of expenditure between women and men, and also makes visible the costs of gender mainstreaming activities.

It should also contain sex-disaggregated indicators that enable monitoring of the inclusion of, and benefits accruing to, both women and men, as well as gender targets. Project proposals submitted to the GCF must also include a logframe detailing activities, outputs and how they link to desired outcomes. Plans for inclusion should also be outlined, so that progress can be monitored and corrective action taken, when required. When used effectively, the results of the Gender Assessment should inform the design of a complementary logframe and Gender Action Plan.

Checklist for the Gender Action Plan

- Is data collection sex-disaggregated to enable monitoring of effects of the project on women and men?
- Are women (and girls) sufficiently included in the decision-making and implementation of the project, with the inclusion of quotas if necessary?
- Have sufficient financial and technical resources been allocated to enable the active participation of, and leadership by, women (and girls)?
- Is there an appropriate accountability mechanism in place to deal with complaints?

“What is not measured is not done - so having sex-disaggregated indicators and targets ensures gender-responsive actions” - National Disaster Management Office, eSwatini

Throughout project implementation

During project implementation, ongoing consultation is key to ensure that all vulnerable groups continue to be actively involved in, and benefiting from the intervention. **Active monitoring**, using sex-disaggregated indicators, is critical to ensure progress towards (gender) targets and enable course correction where required.

There are many levels of management involved in gender-responsive adaptation projects: national, sub-national, local, and then intervention level. *There will likely be a need for awareness raising and training around gender and climate change (as opposed to gender training - which many government officials may have received) throughout project implementation, as changing social norms does not happen overnight.* Empowering local actors and engaging them in work with existing local institutions and structures can help build institutional capacity to address gender issues.

“We found that, at intervention level, the obstacle to women’s participation in governance structures did not come from men - who were actually keen to encourage them - but rather from women themselves. Support from local traditional leadership was essential to change perceptions”

- Direct Access Entity in southern Africa

Building partnerships to enable effective implementation is also key. Gender advisors from different ministries, university academics and civil society organisations can all play a role in reviewing plans, supporting monitoring, and generating evidence on implementation experiences through research (Direct Access Entity in southern Africa, pers comms).

Partnering with educational institutions

Reflecting the different international policy frameworks, climate change and disaster risk reduction are typically led by different ministries at national level. This requires that concerted efforts are required to ensure coordination, given the complementarities between climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. Many countries are making specific efforts to integrate disaster risk reduction into school curricula. In Botswana, for example, this has been found to be very effective in indirectly targeting women, because children relay messages to their mothers when they get home. Teaching issues of gender from an early age can enable the next generation to grow up understanding equal opportunities and that no one gender is superior.

Partnerships with research institutes and universities, and other relevant stakeholders, are particularly important since gender-responsive climate adaptation is relatively innovative, and research helps to generate empirical evidence on effectiveness of applying a gender lens and inform future good practice. There tends to be greater acceptance of the process and buy-in from stakeholders when gender related activities involve academic partners in the process (Direct Access Entity in southern Africa). Empirical and experiential evidence is essential to create “new normals” and ensure the paradigm shift that the GCF wants to enable gender-responsive adaptation.

“We have a partnership with the university, who are developing specific targeting training on gender and climate change (because we find that people understand the need for “equal benefit” but not how climate change affects the genders differently)...it also helps us with the institutional learning and assessment approach – an ongoing developmental approach to really understand how to continually improve and move towards gender responsiveness” - Direct Access Entity in southern Africa

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The briefing note has been prepared by SouthSouthNorth (SSN), under Phase Two of the Southern African Climate Finance Partnership project (SACFP II). The intended audience is the management of entities interested in exploring the opportunities presented by climate finance. In particular, this brief targets Accredited Entities (AEs), or entities contemplating accreditation, to the Green Climate Fund (GCF) who are coming to terms with the requirements of the GCF Gender Policy, and what it means for their organisations. It is important that executives consider the value to their organisations of taking a strategic approach towards mainstreaming gender.

The experiences of entities in Southern Africa who have accessed GCF resources indicates the need to address gender mainstreaming and the need to address the intersecting challenges of climate change, gender, and climate finance through a combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches. The bottom-up approach should enhance the capacity of those tasked with developing, reviewing, implementing, and monitoring climate projects, to assist in the implementation of the GCF Gender Policy requirements in a practical way. The top-down approach should provide targeted, well-packaged information to the executive level, where certain projects receive internal approval, and where shifts in institutional strategy, policy, and process are ultimately made.

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