



UNDP Community-based Adaptation to Climate Change and Gender

Background

Poor communities in developing countries contribute the least to the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change. Yet, they are the ones most severely affected by the adverse impacts of climate change. Due to a number of factors, such as having a lower adaptive capacity to cope with climate change-driven disasters and relying directly on climate-sensitive natural resources for food, shelter and livelihoods, poor communities are in the front-line of climate change impacts. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) recognizes adaptation as one of the four strategic priority areas to address climate change. Because different regions and communities suffer from different impacts, effective adaptation strategies need to be contextualized to local needs and conditions.

With this recognition, UNDP spearheaded local level adaptation work through the UNDP Community-Based Adaptation (CBA) Project piloted in 10 countries since 2008. CBA is a five-year global initiative funded largely by the Global Environment Fund (GEF) as well as bilateral donors and the United Nations Volunteers (UNV), and delivered through the GEF-Small Grants Programme (SGP) mechanism. The Government of Japan, the Government of Switzerland, and Australia AID provide additional funding. The CBA small grants delivered under the project aim to enhance the resiliency of communities and ecosystems to projected effects of climate change through grassroots action and policy change. UNV partners with UNDP and SGP in seven of the CBA countries to enhance community mobilization, and facilitate capacity building of partner NGOs, and community-based organizations (CBOs).

Gender mainstreaming is a critical factor to the success of the Project. Just as different communities are distinctively affected by climate change impacts, different groups within a single community have their own unique vulnerabilities. Women, in particular, can be disproportionately affected by climate change impacts. Limited access to resources, restricted rights, lack of education, limited mobility and limited roles in decision-making increase poor women's vulnerability, which in turn can also reinforce gender inequalities. Given the different roles in households and communities, men and women have different but complementary knowledge that can support long-term adaptation strategies. Ensuring that women are able to contribute their knowledge and skills strengthens adaptation projects, and at the same time empowers women to participate in decision-making and planning in their communities. Mainstreaming gender into the CBA process is important as part of efforts to understand the multidimensional ways that climate change impacts communities and to identify the best strategies for adaptation.

Cross-practice strategy

Applying a cross practice approach, the UNDP CBA Project and Gender Teams partnered to mainstream gender in CBA small grants projects including the following initiatives:

- Developing knowledge products such as the [Gender, Climate Change and Community-Based Adaptation Guidebook](#) for designing and implementing gender sensitive community-based adaptation programmes and projects for policymakers and development practitioners such as CBOs, NGOs, governments, development agencies and other community-based practitioners;
- Creating awareness and building capacity on gender and CBA through presentations at global CBA meetings such as the recent 5th Global CBA meeting in Bangladesh;
- Building capacity on gender, climate change and CBA for the SGP National Coordinators and UNVs during their annual planning meetings in the field;
- Identifying gender-specific vulnerabilities in the formulation of CBA projects and integrating gender-inclusive adaptation practices into implementation of CBA projects with regular monitoring and evaluation;
- Collecting gender-disaggregated data on climate change impacts and CBA projects outcomes.

Examples of gender mainstreaming in CBA projects:



*Inclusion of women in CBA projects is essential as they are active agents in addressing climate change.
Photo: Liseth Martinez/UNDP-GEF CBA*

In **Namibia**, subsistence farmers are facing increased water scarcity that threatens their crop production. Female-headed households, which have less resources to devote to agriculture, and fewer coping mechanisms to deal with food shortages, are among the most vulnerable to climate change impacts. In addition to teaching coping strategies such as water harvesting, crop rotation, and irrigation techniques, participants in the CBA small grants project are organized into self-help groups (SHGs) that receive training on group saving and lending, problem solving, and planning. Currently 80% of participants are women, a group that was hitherto marginalized. As SHGs must work with local leaders and government, women in the groups have increased influence in decision-making by communicating climate change impacts and adaptation strategies. Women also mobilize their families and communities to engage in adaptive capacities.



*Siya Group members celebrate pearl millet harvest. Other CBA groups are hoping to replicate the group's success.
Photo: Sion Shifa/UNDP-GEF CBA*



*Local voices are heard and all community members are a valuable contribution to all CBA projects.
Photo: Adeline Aubrv/UNDP-GEF CBA*

In **Morocco**, several women adhering to old age cultural beliefs, were hesitant to participate in the CBA small grants project located in Sidi Majbeur. Their husbands tend to be suspicious of all-women associations and did not want them leaving the house. As a culturally appropriate solution, CBA project meetings are now held in women's homes. Witnessing the progress and professionalism of the associations, their husbands are now more supportive, and along with the mayor of the town, have recognized their work in adaptive practices. Organizing women in a culturally acceptable manner allows them to equally share and express their problems and ideas, as well as use their collective mobilizing force to advocate for adaptation techniques in their community.

In **Niger**, migration is the main coping mechanism used in the district of Tamalolo during extended dry seasons that threaten crops and livestock. Men often leave their villages to seek resources and work, but women are generally not customarily allowed to move outside of a village as they must care for children and the elderly. Unable to adapt to climate change impacts in the same ways, women are learning different techniques to reduce their vulnerability. Utilizing women's social networks and organizational skills, CBA projects are supporting goat breeding with common and rotary funds from women's support networks. Goats are better adapted to harsh conditions and produce milk that enables women to supplement family nutritional needs.



*CBA meetings are held in women's homes as a culturally-sensitive solution in Morocco.
Photo: UNDP-GEF CBA*