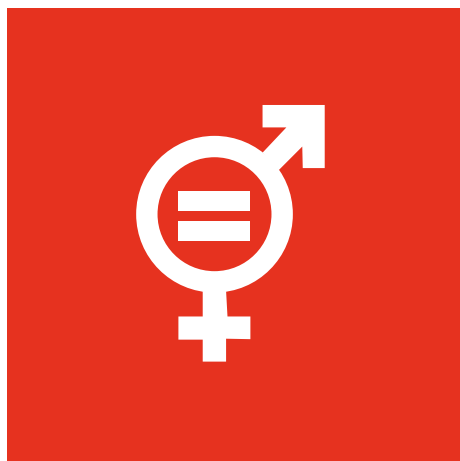




GENDER EQUALITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

A Guide to UNEP's work



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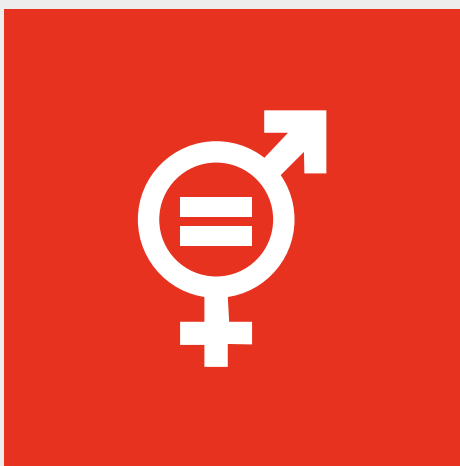
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Unlocking the Potential of Gender Equality in Advancing Sustainable Environmental Development



Introduction

Environmental changes affect us all. However, these changes affect the lives of men and women in different ways due to existing gender dynamics and inequalities. In addition to gender, adverse impacts can also be compounded by factors such as age, geographical location, socio-economic conditions and other vulnerabilities. Varying roles and status within society can affect the coping strategies and choices women and men have available to them in becoming agents of change in sustainable development.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is committed to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in the area of sustainable development. It is only through the full and meaningful participation of both women and men that the pressing environmental issues of our time be confronted.

It is within this context that UNEP has for the first time formulated a complete gender mainstreaming policy statement and operational framework to guide the organization's work in all subprogramme areas.

UNEP's Policy and Strategy on Gender Equality and the Environment is underpinned and informed by the UN System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-

SWAP)¹ and is closely linked with the newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The SDGs, which aim to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, recognize that "ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that build economic growth and addresses a range of social needs including education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while tackling climate change and environmental protection".²

The Policy and Strategy is also guided by the 1995 World Conference on Women Beijing Declaration, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and the 2012 Rio+20 outcome document.

This document outlines the linkages between gender equality and the environment, the impacts of gender inequality, how unequal participation in policy- and decision-making stymie effective action on tackling environmental challenges, and opportunities to unlock the untapped potential of both men and women in confronting these challenges. The document will also describe how UNEP, in accordance with its Policy and Strategy, is endeavouring to redress this gender imbalance. It describes how changes in its internal organizational culture, work and engagement with partners and stakeholders will

help UNEP to achieve genuine gender equality in the sphere of the environment and sustainable development.

UNEP Subprogrammes

- Climate Change
- Disasters & Conflicts
- Ecosystem Management
- Environmental Governance
- Chemicals & Waste
- Resource Efficiency
- Environment under Review



¹The UN SWAP is administered by the United Nations Entity for Women and Gender Equality (UN Women).

² UN, 'The Sustainable Development Agenda', (Web) Available at: <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>

Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

Misconceptions often exist on the meanings of gender and gender equality. Before proceeding, it is important to outline the definitions of these terms in order to ensure a common understanding of what is meant when we speak of gender and gender equality.

According to UN Women, **gender equality** refers to equal rights and opportunities of women, men, girls and boys. While recognizing differences between the sexes, rights and opportunities will not depend on whether one is born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration. It is not only a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Gender equality is seen both as a human rights issue and a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable, people-centred development.

Gender refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between and among men and women. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed, learned

through socialization processes, and context/time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities.³

Gender and the Environment

Alterations in environmental conditions pose an immediate threat to the world and its inhabitants. However, gender plays a prominent role in the differing impacts on men and women. Gender not only determines men and women's ability to cope with environmental changes but underlying structural inequalities can also mean that those changes have a disproportionate impact on women.

Several factors contribute to women's particular difficulties in redressing environmental challenges. These include insecure land and tenure rights, obstructed access to natural resource assets, limited participation in decision-making, limited access to basic education, and lack of access to markets, capital, training and

technologies. Women's ability to affect change is further impinged by additional burdens due to their responsibilities both inside and outside of the home.⁴ Collectively, these impediments present structural inequalities that restrict collective solutions being found to universal challenges.

Environmental Conditions & Gendered Impacts

Climate change and its increasingly severe consequences, such as drought, floods, extreme weather conditions, and food and water insecurity, acutely impact the poorest populations.⁵ However, with more women than men being income-poor (70 per cent of the world's poor are women), it is they who are at the forefront of the challenges resulting from climate change. In many developing societies the traditional responsibilities of women and girls – such as growing food, collecting water and fuel and serving as caregivers – ties them closely to available natural resources and **ecosystems**. Therefore, when environmental conditions result in ecosystem degradation reducing resource availability, it is often these women and girls who are most adversely affected.

³ Text derived from: UN Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, 'Gender Mainstreaming: Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality', August 2001, p.1. Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/factsheet1.pdf>

⁴ UNEP, 'Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment 2014-2017', February 2015, para. 20.

⁵ UNFCCC, 'Gender and Climate Change', (Web) Available at: http://unfccc.int/gender_and_climate_change/items/7516txt.php

Hazardous **chemicals and waste** may devastate human health irrespective of sex. Gender roles may affect the exposure of men and women to chemicals. Men are often engaged in activities that put them at heightened risk of illness or death due to exposure to hazardous chemicals outside the home, such as work in industrial sectors, while working roles for women both inside and outside the home may put them at greater risks from other hazardous chemicals. Due to differences in physiology, women's exposure can result in increased likelihood of certain types of cancer, transfer of toxins through breastmilk to infants, foetal abnormalities and lifelong cognitive disabilities in their children. This not only affects women and children but has long-term implications for society as a whole.

In addition to their tragic human toll, **disasters and conflicts** can destroy infrastructure, undermine human security and tear apart the fabric of sustainable development. Again, it is the most vulnerable sectors of society whose livelihoods are most affected, thereby compounding poverty.⁶ The ability of individuals to cope with the impacts of disasters and conflicts – which include displacement,

food and physical insecurity, loss of livelihood and social exclusion – largely depends on existing gender dynamics.⁷

Marginalization in Environmental Governance

Despite comprising over half of the world's population, women remain under-represented and marginalized in areas of policy development and decision-making at the local, national and global levels. While women have made advances in parliamentary representation in almost 90 per cent of countries over the last two decades, only 20 per cent of members of parliament are women.⁸ This under-representation is mirrored in decision- and policy-making processes on environmental issues.

Existing social and institutional structures that cause women to predominate in the more vulnerable and insecure social and economic spheres often limit their potential to influence the direction of environmental development.⁹ This lack of participation not only deprives women of their voice in decision-making processes, it deprives society of the particular perspectives, insights and

experiences of half of the world's population, meaning that the needs of women, and especially poor women, are largely ignored.¹⁰

Gender Equality as a Driver of Sustainable Environmental Development

Women are not merely passive victims of climate change and environmental degradation. With women being likely to benefit most directly from environmental conservation, protection and improvement, there is clear evidence that such benefits are passed more completely to their communities than those experienced by men, including through a greater positive impact on the nutrition and education of their children. Thus positive environmental outcomes for women are an important means to ensure sustainability for all.¹¹

Both women and men possess knowledge and skills that are critical to finding solutions to environmental challenges. Identifying and addressing both women's and men's needs, as well as empowering women as decision-makers, are critical to ensuring the sustainability of

⁶ UNEP, 'Disasters and Conflicts: Introduction', (Web) Available at: <http://www.unep.org/disastersandconflicts/Introduction/tabid/51921/Default.aspx>

⁷ UNEP, UN Women, UNPBSO & UNDP, 'Women and Natural Resources: Unlocking the Peacebuilding Potential', November 2013, p. 10. Available at: http://postconflict.unep.ch/publications/UNEP_UN-Women_PBSO_UNDP_gender_NRM_peacebuilding_report.pdf

⁸ United Nations, 'The Millennium Development Goals Report 2015', 2015, p.5. Available at: http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/MDG/english/UNDP_MDG_Report_2015.pdf p. 5

⁹ UNEP, 'Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment 2014-2017', February 2015, para. 21.

¹⁰ Ibid., para. 22.

¹¹ Ibid., para. 23.

environmental policy, planning and programming.¹² Genuine participation of women offers the opportunity for their views, experiences and ideas to be incorporated in sustainable development initiatives. Given the requisite tools and support, women are a driving force for the new, more equitable and more sustainable model of growth.¹³

UNEP's Role in Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment

As the United Nations entity charged with responsibility for environmental issues, UNEP has a central role to play in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in the area of sustainable environmental development. .

UNEP envisages a world in which people are understood to be at the centre of sustainable development that is just, equitable and inclusive, and where sustained and inclusive economic growth, social development and environmental protection are achieved.¹⁴

In highlighting the important role that women play and recognizing their leadership, UNEP endeavours to promote gender equality and women's empowerment to ensure their full and effective

participation in sustainable development policy- and decision-making at all levels.

To realize its vision, UNEP has developed a comprehensive Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment, which provides a complete gender mainstreaming policy statement and operational framework to guide the organization's work.

UNEP takes a dual strategy in mainstreaming gender, internally, focusing on organizational culture, policies and practices, and externally, though the implementation of its programmes and work with partners and stakeholders. Both dimensions are closely related and together form UNEP's holistic approach to gender equality and women's empowerment.

What is Gender Mainstreaming?

Gender mainstreaming has been defined as

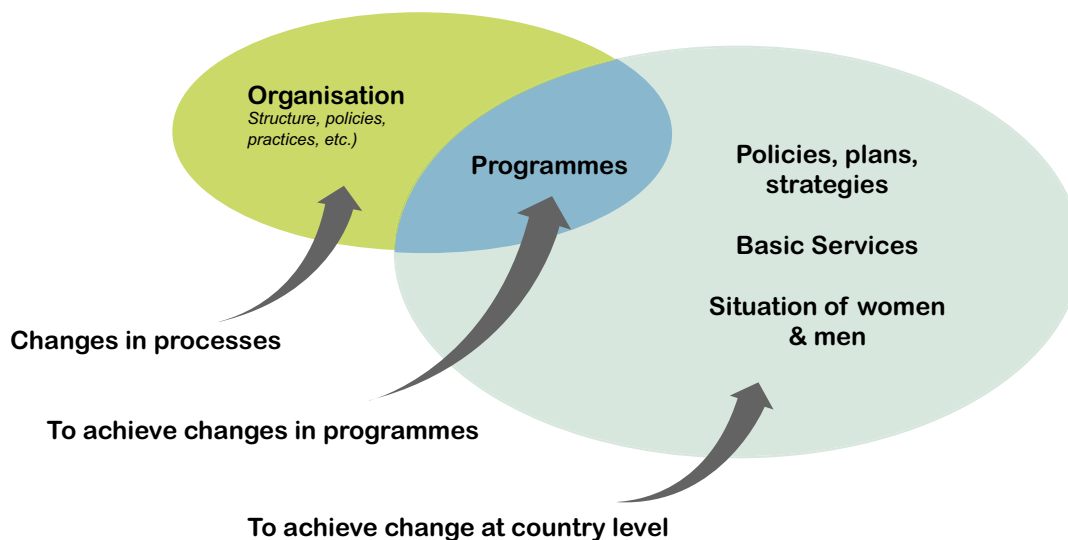
the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.



¹² Ibid., para. 24.

¹³ Ibid., para. 25.

¹⁴ Ibid., para. 11.



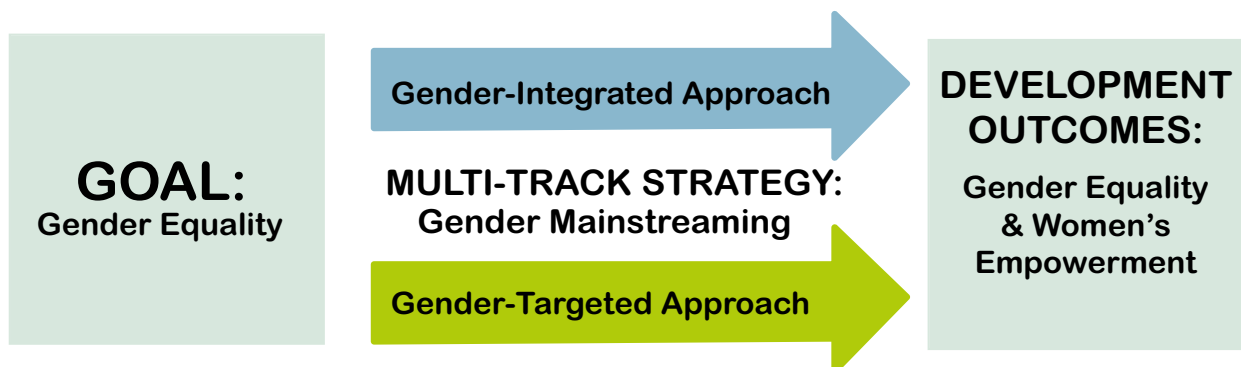
Strengthening Gender Sensitivity in UNEP's Work

UNEP uses a multitrack approach to gender mainstreaming, combining a gender-integrated approach and a gender-targeted approach. With the ultimate goal of achieving gender equality, a gender-integrated approach considers the different needs, concerns and experiences of men and women to ensure that

the benefits of policies and programmes accrue equally to both and do not perpetuate gender inequalities. A gender-targeted approach includes gender-specific activities and affirmative action, whenever women and/or men are in a particularly disadvantageous position.

UNEP recognizes gender as a cross-cutting priority that affects all of its areas of work. In line with

its Medium Term Strategy (2014-2017) and Strategic Framework (2016-2017), UNEP promotes gender-balanced participation through the systematic integration of gender perspectives throughout its work. Analysis and use of gender equality indicators and sex-disaggregated data in policy, programme design and monitoring frameworks helps UNEP deliver on the promise of gender equality for sustainable development.¹⁵



Graphic adapted from UN Women, 'Gender Mainstreaming in Development Programming', November 2014, p.17

¹⁵ UNEP, Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment 2014-2017, February 2015, para. 4.

UNEP has already made significant progress in the mainstreaming of gender in the design and implementation of its projects. For example, in 2013 gender considerations were integrated in project implementation in fewer than 40 per cent of projects; by 2015, this had risen to 64 per cent.¹⁶

Within the organization, UNEP has adopted a high-level, sustained commitment to internal capacity-building and sensitization. The organization has held workshops and trainings, made changes to policy and practice, and held staff accountable for implementation. Rather than adding women's participation and a gender approach onto existing strategies and programmes, UNEP's gender mainstreaming strategy aims to transform unequal social and institutional structures in order to make them gender responsive.

UNEP will ensure the internal production and exchange of information on gender equality and women's empowerment related to its subprogramme areas, making clear the linkages between gender, environment and poverty.¹⁷ This approach will help to continually build UNEP's

internal capacity to reflexively view all of its activities through a gender lens.

To operationalise and realise its goals, UNEP has established an internal organizational 'gender architecture'. While the implementation of the Policy and Strategy falls under the ultimate authority and responsibility of the Executive Director, the task of mainstreaming gender falls on a wide variety of actors. The Gender Architecture comprises a senior management monitoring committee, an advisory committee and a cross-organizational team of thematic and technical focal points, all coordinated by the UNEP Gender and Social Safeguards Unit.

The implementation of the Policy and Strategy will ensure the accountability of all staff for the achievement of gender-mainstreaming results, and the resources, capacities and partnerships needed to support them in achieving UNEP's gender-related goals.

Promoting Gender Equality within UNEP

UNEP not only promotes gender equality and women's empowerment in its programming, it also does so within its own organizational structure and culture. With the ultimate objective of achieving gender parity, UNEP aims to substantially increase the number of women in leadership positions by removing barriers to full and equal participation in decision-making and management at all levels of the organization. UNEP has also implemented UN Secretariat policies, rules and regulations in order to promote a healthy work and home-life balance for its staff, both men and women. These include policies on maternity, paternity, adoption, family emergency leave, breastfeeding, childcare and flexible work arrangements.

¹⁶ UNEP, Programme Performance Report 2014–2015, December 2015, p. 78.

¹⁷ UNEP, Policy and Strategy for Gender Equality and the Environment 2014–2017, February 2015, para. 127.

Achieving Gender Equality through Gender-Targeted and Gender-Integrated Activities

UNEP works closely with and provides technical assistance to national, regional and local partners and stakeholders, including donors, international organizations, international financial institutions, regional banks, the private sector, NGOs and community groups. Through these relationships UNEP promotes the full participation of women and men and through the mainstreaming of gender in all political, economic and environmental decision-making, policy processes and resource allocation, particularly in developing countries.¹⁸

In conjunction with its partners, UNEP advocates for the repeal of discriminatory laws and removal of formal barriers, ensuring equal access to environmental justice, institutional reform to ensure competence and capacity for gender mainstreaming, and the development and adoption of innovative and special approaches to address informal, harmful practices that act as barriers to gender equality.¹⁹ In this regard, UNEP is committed to creating an enabling environment for improving gender equality,

including in rural areas and local communities and among indigenous people and ethnic minorities, through its internal operations, policies and country-level activities.²⁰

UNEP is also committed to highlighting issues related to gender equality and women's empowerment in its communications and advocacy initiatives. In its position as a global opinion leader on matters relevant to gender and sustainable development, particularly in connection with its own subprogramme areas, UNEP provides regular updates on the organization's gender website and produces and disseminates relevant knowledge materials.²¹

Through its partnerships and its communications and advocacy initiatives, UNEP aims to nurture a culture of inclusion in decision-making on environmental sustainable development initiatives with tangible and shared benefits on the ground.

UNEP, Gender and the Road Ahead

UNEP's mandate places it at the forefront of tackling the immediate threats posed by changes in environmental conditions. It also firmly believes that these challenges can be addressed in a holistic and inclusive approach to

ensure that all sections of society participate in finding solutions to these collective problems.

UNEP is committed to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in how it conducts all facets of its work. By making its internal organizational structure, policies and practices more gender responsive, UNEP can ensure that gender is successfully mainstreamed into all aspects of its programming and activities. Through its work and partnerships UNEP continues to advocate for genuine and equal participation of both men and women in environmental policy- and decision-making. This in turn can help achieve the desired outcomes in achieving gender equality and sustainable environmental development at the community, country, regional and global levels.

While men and women may be affected differently by changes in environmental conditions, they are both indeed affected. It is therefore essential that the needs of both are highlighted and addressed when developing policies and practices to combat environmental threats.

Confronting the greatest challenges facing our planet and species will take concerted and collective efforts. We must therefore come together as one to find solutions for the sake of our world and all humankind.

¹⁸ Ibid., para. 8.

¹⁹ Ibid., para. 3.

²⁰ Ibid., para. 8.

²¹ Ibid., paras. 128, 132 & 133

Something's cooking in the Afghan mountains



Bamiyan province in Afghanistan can be an inhospitable place. Wedged between the Hindu Kush and Koh-e-Baba mountain ranges, temperatures can plummet to below -20°C (-4°F) during the long Afghan winter. With no electricity, gas or water infrastructure to support them, people must be very resilient to survive in this rugged place.

Inhabitants of this remote area collect shrubs from the mountainsides to burn as fuel for cooking and heating. However, without these plants in the soil, rainwater flows unrestricted, causing flooding. When burned, the shrubs produce thick smoke that leads to respiratory problems, particularly for women and children who spend the most time in the kitchen.

Supported by UNEP and the Embassy of Finland, Afghan NGO the Conservation Organisation for Afghan Mountain Areas (COAM), developed innovative culinary solutions to these problems.¹ Habiba Amiri, COAM's country director, explains that "we have found four solutions for the cookstove project: the tandoor, bukhari, fuel and solar".

Tandoors are a staple of many Afghan kitchens. However, these large clay ovens bellow smoke through their upward-facing outlet, filling the kitchen with smoke. A simple yet ingenious

design has significantly reduced this problem. By rotating the tandoor by 90 degrees, smoke emissions decrease. Yasir, the brains behind the new design, explains that "we thought to make something which makes less smoke, which consumes less [fuel] and which makes more bread". Indeed, the new oven produces over 90 per cent less smoke and burns 70 per cent less fuel, resulting in improved health and lower costs.

Not satisfied with just one innovation, COAM has also reinvented the bukhari, a traditional fuel-burning heater and cooker. In addition to functioning as a heater, the new design can simultaneously boil water, bake bread and cook on a hotplate. It can also be insulated for fuel efficiency or opened to heat the home during winter months.

Both the tandoor and the bukhari can be fuelled by locally produced high-density briquettes that produce less smoke and are more energy efficient. Now there is less need to collect fuel, which means that fewer shrubs are being torn from the already-barren mountains.

Another simple yet effective solution has been the introduction of solar water heaters. A metal dish reflects the sun's rays directly into pot, which boils the water inside. Locals can use the heaters to

make a scalding glass of kahwah, a traditional green tea, all without striking a single match.

Habiba explains the project's many benefits: "We have considered that the economic situation for each family is different. It is very good for children's and women's health, the environment and creates job opportunities. Those that can make the stoves can get jobs."

The project's next phase will be locally run and see Bamiyan's culinary solutions distributed to 10,000 individuals in the region.

Together, these local innovations help protect the environment and women and children's health while generating employment for local men, illustrating that simple, locally driven solutions for local problems are often the best for all.²



¹ The cookstove initiative formed part of a wider UNEP community resilience-building project to address issues such as food security, sanitation and natural resources management.

² To view a video on the cookstove project, please go to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CIFWQ_kFby8

Women, Wadis and Peace in Darfur



The Darfur region of Sudan is no stranger to conflict. For over a decade, cycles of violence have driven over 2 million people from their homes and villages and into internally displaced persons (IDPs) camps near towns.

Many of those displaced during the hostilities settled in the area of Wadi El Ku in northern Darfur. Rapid population growth over the past decade means that an estimated 700,000 people now depend on the Wadi (a valley or seasonal riverbed) for their water and livelihoods, putting additional pressure on already-limited natural resources. With competition over land and water having been an original trigger for hostilities, tackling the root causes has been a priority in halting any further downward spiral of violence in the traumatized region.

During the conflict many men lost their livelihoods and moved elsewhere in search of opportunities, leaving a large number of female-headed households. Women also undertake most of the domestic and agricultural work, meaning that they are heavily reliant on available water and land resources. However, women are largely excluded from decision-making in the household and wider community on how these resources are exploited.

In response, UNEP, the European Union, the Darfur Regional Authority, and the Government of North Darfur launched a three-

year project in 2013 to support inclusive sustainable land and water resource management in the Wadi El Ku catchment area. The project, which has targeted 81,000 residents from farming, pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities, aims to support economic and livelihood recovery and thus reduce intercommunal tensions.

Given that women comprise around 65 per cent of the population of the project area, UNEP staff realized the importance of considering gender issues to ensure that the project addressed the specific needs of both men and women. Magda Nassef, UNEP Project Manager for Environment and Livelihoods in Sudan, explains: "Gender is an important component of any project dealing with natural resources because men and women have varied roles, needs, capacities and contributions when it comes to natural resources. These are important to understand so that our activities do not neglect the priorities and contributions of a particular gender."

A comprehensive analysis was undertaken to help understand the local gender dynamics and confirm or refute some of the anecdotal information on gender in Darfur. Magda says that including gender in projects is not as complicated as it's made out to be.

"We held focus group discussions with men and women and assessed the level of women's involvement in various institutions

– within our project governance structures, within government institutions, within the UNEP office in Darfur and within our implementing partners' offices," she says.

The gender analysis helped the team tweak project activities to make them more gender responsive. A gender strategy was also developed to frame UNEP's position on gender and to monitor progress on gender mainstreaming.

By incorporating a comprehensive gender analysis early in the project it is hoped that both men and women in Wadi El Ku can improve their lives and livelihoods in an environment of peace and coexistence through inclusive and environmentally sustainable resource management.



Women farmers. Photo: Avadalla Hamid.

Tackling Pollution in Rural Georgia



Untreated human excrement, animal waste and chemical fertilizer seep into the land and permeate the water system. Raw sewage flows into the river and is carried downstream to the highly polluted Black Sea. People fall ill and the natural environment deteriorates.

Belying their picturesque surroundings, Khorga and Chaladidi, rural villages located along the banks of the meandering Khobi River in Georgia, face an unseen environmental and public health crisis

Marina Tsirdava, whose family are farmers in Khorga, paints a vivid picture: "We disposed all the grey water in the open, the toilet smelled bad, animal manure was scattered all around, and the nearby river was not safe for swimming or washing. We always wanted to improve the situation [but had] no knowledge of how to do so."

Gogi Khajaia, Head of the Khobi Municipality, explains: "The waste disposed into the rivers and ditches affects the quality of water not only in the rivers but also wells used for drinking."

Contamination of household water means that women and children are more exposed to infection. The risks are especially high for children, whose underdeveloped immune systems can easily fall prey to illness. The burden of caring for the sick ultimately falls on the mother, confining her to the

home and rendering her unable to undertake other work.

With the ultimate goal of reducing pollution of the Black Sea, UNEP, in partnership with Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF) and Rural Communities Development Agency (RCDA), implemented a wastewater management project in Khorga and Chaladidi in 2014.

Women's participation and leadership were seen as key to the success of the project. Consultations and meetings were held and gender-balanced working groups formed. More than 270 people, over half of whom were women, participated in trainings and workshops on various low-cost sustainable waste management technologies, which were then implemented in various locations, including the Khorga village kindergarten.

Nelly Khubutia, a teacher at the kindergarten, explains the project's benefits: "Thanks to the project, today we know much more about the safe hygiene and sanitation. The project helped us not only improve our awareness and knowledge about environmental pollution, but practically demonstrated the opportunities to address them." Maia Kenkia concurs: "I have two children and didn't bring them to the kindergarten due to bad sanitary conditions. As you see, now I can bring them and I have more time to work in the field."

The community-wide participation in this project illustrates how the

inclusion of men and women in all aspects of decision-making can help create a cleaner, healthier environment above and below water. Provided with the requisite knowledge, tools and support, communities can be engines for continued sustainable change.

"We did not have sufficient knowledge and human resources to cope with existing problems", says Mr. Khajaia. "We greatly appreciate that WECF, with the support of UNEP, has started the project in our municipality and will support its replication in other communities."



Photo: WECF/RCDA

Women Take the Lead in Rwanda's First 'Green Village'



Like many children from her village in the hills of northern Rwanda, 15-year-old Sandrine would regularly accompany her mother to collect firewood and water. Hauling the loads for up to three hours at a time meant that Sandrine had little time for anything else. Due to this arduous undertaking, Sandrine's mother laments, many children in the village could no longer attend school. Firewood collection also had a negative impact on the land, causing fertile soil to be washed away during heavy rains, resulting in lower agricultural productivity and food security.

However, since 2010, Sandrine's village, Rubaya, has been quietly leading a sustainable development revolution. In partnership with Rwanda's Environment Management Authority (REMA) and a range of other ministries – including Local Government, Infrastructure and Agriculture – the Poverty-Environment Initiative (PEI), a joint UNEP-UNDP programme, supported the adoption of a range of environmentally sustainable approaches, making Rubaya the country's first "Green Village".

Terracing and tree planting have reduced soil erosion and deforestation, which has improved agricultural productivity while reducing flooding, siltation and pollution from fertilizer run-off. New biogas plants have provided Rubaya with a clean energy source, reducing smoke-related health problems and decreasing dependency on firewood. Rainwater stored in reservoirs and

underground tanks is now used for crop irrigation and household consumption. With these resources now close at hand, women and children have more time to be productive in other ways.

The "Green Village" initiative has improved the lives and livelihoods of community residents, particularly women. Forty-three families have seen their food security improve.

"We are getting more crops, yields have increased and we live in better houses," says Ms. Muhawenimana Solange, the head of the local women-led cooperative leading the "Green Village" initiative. "The poor people were the poorest among the poor but if you see them now, they look better off. Living conditions are better. Now we have biogas, a school, a health centre and water. We have solved all of these problems."

Key to the project's success has been the focus on empowering the community, particularly its women. The formation of the cooperative that leads the project has empowered women to take a lead in community development while ensuring that solutions serve the needs of both men and women. While women's participation in the project was largely community driven, PEI, in consultation with the villagers, helped identify environmental solutions, ensuring that the needs of both women and men were met.

Thanks to Rubaya's success, Rwanda's Economic Development and Poverty Reduction Strategy

now includes aspects of environmental sustainability. The Ministry of Local Government has requested that all districts in Rwanda establish at least one "Green Village" based on the project's best practices. The model is now being replicated in four districts informed by a toolkit developed by REMA and PEI that lays out the process for establishing a green village while promoting women's empowerment in sustainable development planning.

Meanwhile, back in Rubaya, the future is looking bright for this small community of environmental pioneers. Participation of both men and women in all aspects of the project has ensured the project's sustainability, thereby allowing the whole community to reap its benefits far into the future.

With more time to focus on their studies, Rubaya's boys and girls are now free to realize their academic potential. Sitting with her mother, Sandrine notes contentedly that "now with biogas and water nearby, I have time to go to school".



Tea picker north of Kigali, Rwanda. Photo: Finbarr O'Reilly / Reuters

Anchoring Gender in UNEP's Asia/ Pacific Office



UNEP's commitment to gender not only rests in the pages of its Gender Policy. It is also spread geographically through its staff in regional offices across the globe.

In UNEP's Regional Office for the Asia/Pacific region (ROAP), significant advances have been made to ensure that gender plays a prominent role in the execution of its work. Isabelle Louis, Deputy Regional Director, says: "It is timely and of utmost importance that the matter of gender equality gets a higher visibility within our regional work of Asia and the Pacific."

A core component of the office's increased gender sensitivity has been the building of its human capacity and expertise on gender issues. In 2016 the Swedish International Development Cooperation, highlighting its ongoing commitment

to gender equality, funded the position of a dedicated Gender and Environment Officer for ROAP.

Isabelle Louis notes: "To have a Gender Focal Point and a Gender Officer working full-time constitutes an anchor for our collective work ahead, and for supporting our staff to realize effective gender mainstreaming in their work planning and implementation, as well as in engaging with our partners and donors."

Through its increased capacity and ongoing commitment to gender equality and gender mainstreaming, the Regional Office for the Asia/Pacific ensures that UNEP's Gender Policy not only remains as dry ink on paper, but is operationalized where it is most important, on the ground.

‘Gender Heroes’ Take Action on Chemicals and Waste



On the morning of the 4 May 2015, the silence of the Centre International de Conférences was broken by almost 1,200 participants from 171 countries amassing near the shores of Lake Geneva. The previously quiet auditoria, chambers and halls transformed into bustling hives of activity for the 11-day Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Basel, Stockholm and Rotterdam Conventions (BRS), the three leading multilateral environmental agreements on chemicals and waste management.

On the sidelines of the conference, members of the BRS Secretariat's Gender Task Team launched a compilation of stories that highlight grassroots action being taken by individuals and communities around the world to protect the most vulnerable from the potentially harmful effects of certain chemicals and wastes. The collection of inspirational case studies covers a range of issues, from pesticide use in the Asia-Pacific and toxic toys in Kazakhstan to e-waste management in Africa.

A number of the authors presented their stories at the launch and the publication, "Gender Heroes: from grassroots to global action", was distributed to all 1,200 participants in the COP.¹

The BRS Secretariat's Deputy Executive Secretary, Ms. Kerstin Stendahl, explains the thinking

behind the report: "We sought to promote gender issues to the forefront of the chemicals and waste agenda and for people to understand that this is absolutely key because women, men, boys and girls are exposed to these harmful substances in different ways and to varying degrees depending on where they work and live. In addition to gender differences in exposure to hazardous substances, there are also differences in physiological susceptibility between men and women, girls and boys."

She continues: "We need to take these differences into account when we devise measures for the sound management of chemicals and wastes so that we tailor our responses with gender aspects in mind. We achieved this, at least to a certain extent, by compiling concrete examples of cases where people have problems with chemicals and wastes and how they can overcome these problems."

Through a call for submissions, the Secretariat requested Parties and other stakeholders to submit stories of how gender issues are considered in and impacted by hazardous chemicals and waste management at the local, national and regional levels.

Ms. Stendahl concludes: "It was an inspiration and a delight to bring to our Parties and partners a varied collection of stories from around the world that provided a snapshot

of how gender perspectives are being incorporated into the sound management of chemicals and wastes. Staff members enjoyed the creativity of the work on the publication and were very much encouraged by the feedback received from partners who enthusiastically contributed. Gender mainstreaming is a relatively new dimension under the BRS Conventions and we were pleased to see interest in the publication from various stakeholders."

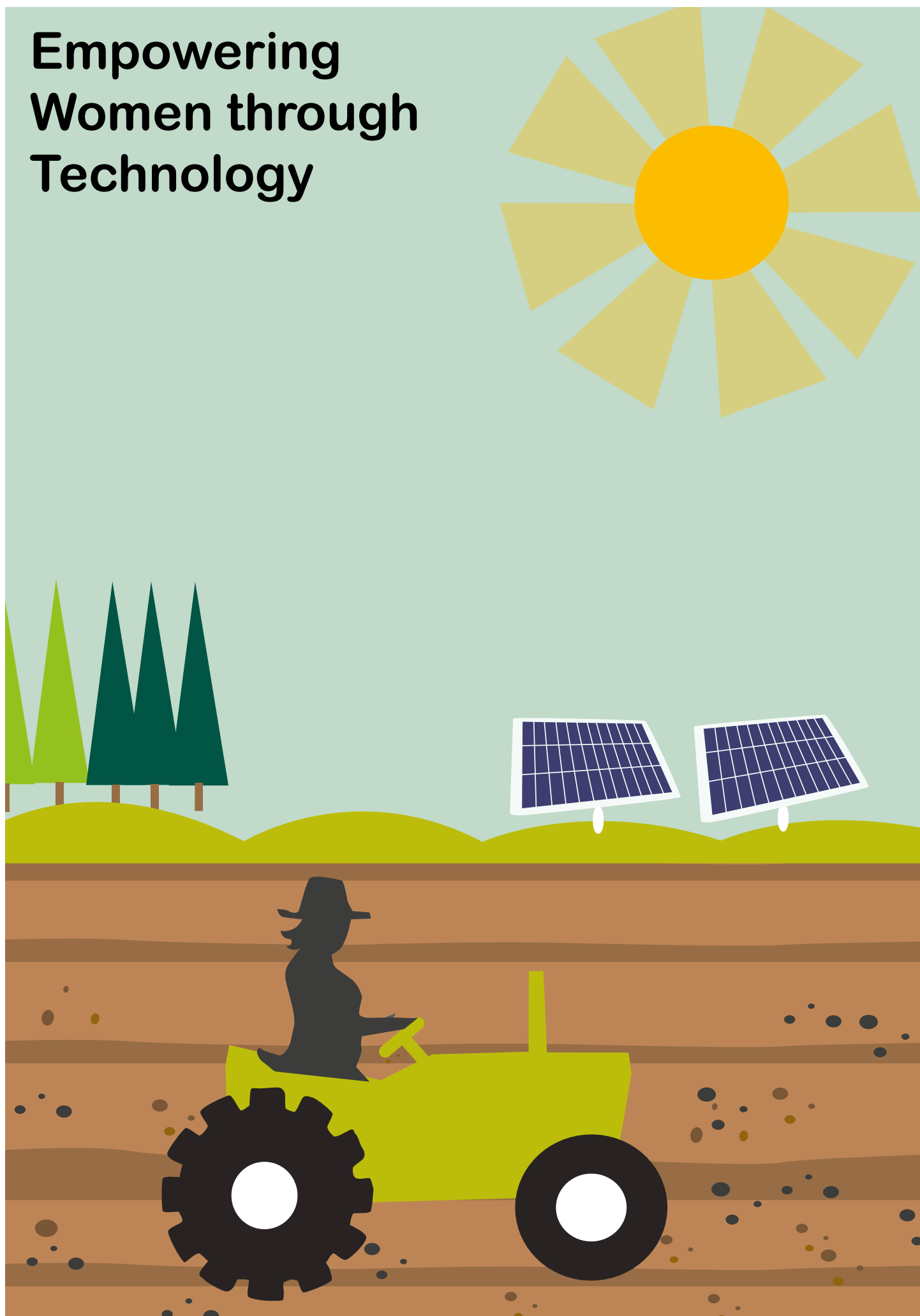
This interest was even more evident during the weekly serialization of the stories on the BRS website between November 2015 and January 2016, and their dissemination via social media (Safe Planet on Facebook and @brsmeas on Twitter), leading to additional outreach and interest of 200,000 people via Twitter alone.

The days of frantic activity in Geneva drew to a close and the halls of the Centre International de Conférences fell silent, but the unsung gender heroes continue to quietly pioneer for the safe management of hazardous chemicals and wastes, from grassroots to global action.



¹ Publication available at: <http://synergies.pops.int/Portals/4/download.aspx?d=UNEP-FAO-CHW-RC-POPS-SEC-REP-BRS-GenderHeroe.English.pdf>

Empowering Women through Technology



The Technology Needs Assessment (TNA) process was launched at the 2008 UN Climate Change Conference (COP 14) with the objective of enhancing the transfer of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries. TNAs are country-driven and participatory activities that help to identify, select and implement clean technologies.

With the ultimate goal of achieving gender equality, mainstreaming gender in the TNA process allows women and men to benefit equally from technology so that gender disparities are not perpetuated.

Gender-responsive TNAs can help increase technology access in a more equitable way, reduce energy poverty for women and men equally, and increase the participation and leadership of women in the energy sector, where women's involvement, voice and leadership is particularly low. To this end, the UNEP DTU Partnership for National TNA Teams is providing guidance and demonstrating the benefits of gender-responsive TNA processes. The Partnership – a joint initiative of UNEP, the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Technical University of Denmark (DTU) – is now incorporating gender

aspects into its guidance note on identifying and engaging stakeholders in the TNA process to ensure gender-responsive stakeholder engagement. This will enable more appropriate technology selection, facilitate inclusive and representative processes, reduce energy poverty and accelerate sustainable development.



Internet Cafe, Kabul, Afghanistan. Photo: Mohammad Ismail / Reuters

Promoting Women's Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Energy



UNEP and UN Women have joined forces to develop a Global Programme to Promote Women's Entrepreneurship for Sustainable Energy. The initiative was successfully launched at the Paris Climate Change Conference (COP21) in late 2015.

UNEP's Executive Director, Achim Steiner, said: "By collaborating with UN Women, UNEP hopes to accelerate the development of economic opportunities for women to play a central role in the emerging clean energy economy."

The Programme builds on the recognition that the transition to sustainable energy requires a paradigm shift: Instead of being

passive providers and users of energy, women must become agents of change in promoting sustainable energy technologies.

The Programme "will ensure that we empower and strengthen women so they can play a role at the policy level, the delivery level but also in managing the efficient use of energy at the household level", said Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women. To this end, removing structural barriers and discrimination has proven effective in creating gender-responsive services that empower women and increase their capacity to access energy and seize new income-generation opportunities.



Bhutan Photo: CC-BY-NC-ND Asian Development Bank

Driving Gender in India's Public Transport Policy



Riya wakes before dawn. She has to if she wants to make it to work on time from her small home on the outskirts of the city. She prepares breakfast and gets her children up and dressed. She leaves for work after taking a detour to drop her children off at school.

From there Riya starts her long trek to catch the bus. She has to arrive early since public transport is so unreliable. There are no footpaths, so Riya dodges the traffic on the busy road. So far she has been lucky, with only a few near misses and a bump from a cyclist.

Because of her poor diet Riya tires easily from the long walk. Fatigued, she finally reaches the bus stop. She waits and waits. When it finally arrives, Riya boards the crowded bus for a trip she can barely afford. This is the part of the journey she fears most. Sometimes men make lewd comments. A few have grabbed her. Riya has heard about other young women who took the bus but never made it home.

Riya must undertake the same gruelling journey again after a long day of work. The sun now set, she nervously walks the narrow unlit alleyways of the slum to reach home. It's not safe for a young woman here after dark. Relieved and exhausted, she arrives. She prepares dinner, puts her children to sleep and goes to bed. She

will be up again in a few hours to begin another day.

The challenges faced by the fictional character of Riya represent an amalgamation of the issues confronting many poor Indian women who are forced undertake arduous, lengthy and often unsafe travel.

With the support of the German Government's International Climate Initiative, in 2010 UNEP launched the Promoting Low Carbon Transport in India initiative, which developed a network of expertise on transport planning, safety, social inclusion, air pollution and climate change. The network was responsible for advising the project's three pilot cities¹ and helped the Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD) mainstream climate change, social inclusivity and environmental issues in urban transport policy development.

One of the local partners, CEPT University, was brought in to ensure that low-carbon transport plans included key gender considerations. Half of the project's core team were women, while the steering committee included a local NGO, Self Employed Women Association (SEWA), which works for the rights of poor and working women.

The initiative undertook a year-long, in-depth study of transport

in three pilot cities.² The research sought to understand how the everyday realities of men and women differ when navigating public space and how gender-sensitive transport policy can ensure that the needs of both men and women are addressed. The study found that women, particularly poor women, face the worst mobility situation. Not only do they have limited money, they also lack time, energy and safety.

Based on the study's success, UNEP and its project partners helped revise MoUD's Comprehensive Mobility Planning (CMP) toolkit, the core guide for transport planning in Indian cities. The aim was to ensure that the document considered climate change, social inclusivity (including gender) and environmental issues. Cities throughout India have to conduct CMPs to access MoUD funds for sustainable, low-carbon urban transport projects.³

The work of UNEP and its partners illustrates that the availability of affordable and safe transport would encourage women and members of other socially disadvantaged groups to make more use of public transport. This would promote gender equity, create a more sustainable transport system, and make it possible for women like Riya to benefit more fully from life's opportunities.⁴

¹ The three pilot cities were Rajkot, Visakhapatnam and Udaipur.

² Key Implementing Partner: UNEP DTU Partnership; Local partners: the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi and CEPT University, Ahmedabad.

³ Ministry of Urban Development, 'Toolkit for Comprehensive Mobility Plan (CMP) Revised', 2014, Available at: http://www.unep.org/transport/lowcarbon/PDFs/CMPToolkit_revised.pdf

⁴ The full report, 'Gender Sensitive Transport Planning for Cities in India', available at: <http://www.unep.org/transport/lowcarbon/PDFs/genderSensitiveTransportPlanning.pdf>

A Whole New Outlook



Responding to a call from the Network of Women Ministers and Leaders for the Environment, UNEP committed at the Rio+20 conference in 2012 to ensure that gender considerations would feature more prominently in its global environmental assessments.

Four years later, and after countless hours of hard work, the first-ever comprehensive, integrated and global assessment of gender and the environment is set to be launched at the second United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) in Nairobi, Kenya in May 2016.

The Global Gender and Environment Outlook (GGEO) will for the first time provide a comprehensive overview of the linkages between gender and environment in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The report aims to enable better understanding of the environment through a gender lens, drive impact through partnerships, and support better integration of gender perspectives in development as well as in the implementation of environmental policies at international and national levels.

With vast amounts of knowledge scattered and fragmented, the arduous task of sourcing and compiling information on gender and the environment was one of the first undertakings for the GGEO.

Ms. Trang Nguyen, the GGEO

Coordinator, explains: “Each assessment could be considered as an operational project which required the necessary timeframe and human and financial resources. We had more than two years and substantial resource to prepare and develop the work which allowed for in-depth analysis and stakeholder engagement and participation.”

From the outset there was significant engagement within UNEP through its network of dedicated gender focal points and experts. The project also brought together highly knowledgeable and experienced individuals from other UN organizations, NGOs and academia. Such broad participation meant that the GGEO could benefit from the advice and contributions of a wide variety of experts from within UNEP and beyond.

The ultimate goal of the report, according to Ms. Nguyen, is to effect change. “We hope that the GGEO will be a credible reference for integrating gender perspectives into development and implementation of environmental policies at both international and national level,” she says. “We envisage that the report will highlight the need for further research and help identify knowledge gaps and barriers to gender equality in environmental management and conservation.”

Without the unwavering commitment and support of numerous groups and individuals across a range of disciplines, sectors, organisations and sponsors this mammoth undertaking would not have been possible.



Coffee plantation, Rwanda. Photo: Hervé and Hylke de Vries

Recycling for Life — and a Living



An estimated 4 million people make their living from informal recycling in Latin America and the Caribbean. Working in hazardous and unsanitary conditions, most of these recyclers are socially and economically marginalized. Their livelihood is in what others discard. However, they also make an important environmental contribution in areas that generally lack the means to undertake comprehensive solid waste management.

Around 30 per cent of waste recyclers in Peru are women, many of whom must balance their role in the domestic sphere with wage labour. Informal recyclers are one of the most vulnerable and excluded collectives given the generalized lack of capacities, stigma, unhealthy work environment and lack of recognition and support.

However, in the Peruvian city of Arequipa, three-quarters of both formal and informal recyclers are women. With a strong gender focus, UNEP and UNDP through the Poverty-Environment Initiative (PEI) and support from United Nations Volunteers, are helping transform the relationship between waste collectors, communities and the environment in Arequipa.

Alicia Cruz, a smiling lady of 48 years, wakes at five in the morning to begin her day. She prepares chicken and rice for herself and her colleagues, with whom the dish is

always popular, for the day ahead. She fills the lunchboxes for herself and workmates but leaves most for her children for when they return from school.

She dons her impeccable blue uniform, black boots, gloves and sunhat and leaves for work. Following around an hour's travel, Alicia arrives in a quiet residential area of Arequipa and begins work

At the first house, a gentle housewife hands a bag full of green plastic bottles to Alicia, who in return gives an empty bag, which she will collect when filled the following week. The exchange is brief but friendly. Each bag collected from the houses Alicia visits is placed by the fence of a nearby park along with those left by the other collectors. From there, they are collected by truck, taken to a collection centre and weighed. This morning Alicia's haul included two big bags of bottles, two bags of cans, a bag of newspapers and a bag of various plastic materials – an acceptable day's work. She will visit around 40 houses on Wednesday of every week.

This apparently unremarkable routine has changed the lives of the 14 women who make up the Recycle Life Association. This initiative forms part of the Peruvian authority's "Integrated Solid Waste Management for Sustainable Development and Inclusion" programme, supported by PEI, which aims to change the relationship of a community with its habitats and livelihoods.

In total, the project has been actively working with 105 women from 10 associations in Arequipa. Through this mutually beneficial arrangement, residents sort their garbage and have it collected from their door, while women like Alicia no longer must travel to the informal dumps on the outskirts of the city to sort through waste in hazardous and unsanitary conditions.

With the support of PEI, The Ministry of Environment and the Municipality of Arequipa, in cooperation with the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion and the Ministry Women and Vulnerable Populations, have been working to achieve the dual goal of improving the livelihoods and living conditions of recyclers, and implementing environmentally sound waste management processes. Such initiatives represent a win-win situation for waste collectors, household residents and the environment, while helping to combat poverty and promote equality.



Photo: Celia Sahuanay

So What about Gender Equality at UNEP?



Strolling around the leafy Nairobi headquarters, one could get the impression of there being a general balance in the numbers of men and women working for UNEP. However, appearances sometimes do not tell the whole story. While women may overall be well represented in corridors of the carbon- and energy-neutral offices, does this parity translate to the upper echelons of the organization? If women predominate in lower levels of the professional ladder and are under-represented at the top, can this really be called gender equality?

Back in 2003 UNEP didn't stack up so well, with women accounting for just a third of all professional-level staff. However, it was not just UNEP that was underperforming. Across the UN system women were conspicuous by their relative absence, particularly at the decision-making levels.¹ Something needed to be done.

Since his appointment to the position of UNEP Executive Director in 2006, Achim Steiner has been leading the charge in redressing these gender imbalances.

"Between 2013 and 2015, many members of the UNEP's senior management team moved to new positions or retired and we were in a position to recruit new directors (at D2 level)," explains Mr. Steiner. "We needed to attract innovative leaders who could be

part of the team and help UNEP to elevate itself to achieve the mandate given to us at Rio+20. We searched across a broad range of sectors for such leadership and made a conscious decision to actively encourage applications from potential female candidates. I often challenged hiring managers on diversity among shortlisted candidates to note that the search process was the critical phase in which to secure applications from qualified female candidates. It's important to openly discuss within the organization the importance of gender parity in the work environment. Cultural change comes from awareness, awareness comes from day-to-day operation."

Women now account for almost half (46 per cent) of UNEP's professional-level workforce. There has also been significant progress in addressing gender imbalances at higher levels of the organization. Between 2008 and 2013 there have been two female Deputy Executive Directors and four of UNEP's five Divisions are currently led by women. However, while much progress has been made, Mr. Steiner concedes that more needs to be done.

"It is true that at UNEP, the number of female applicants to P5 and above positions is generally lower. A number of factors need to be considered: Mobility of female applicants at mid-career stages is often more constrained in terms of location, opportunities for spouse and work-life balance

considerations. As a hiring manager and as an institution, we need to be more sensitive to these criteria and address them proactively."

Speaking of his commitment to the Secretary-General on "increasing efforts to attain gender parity", Mr. Steiner notes that much progress has been made in UNEP. "Our remaining challenge lies with P5 and D1 positions, where both a legacy of many more internal male applicants are seeking to move up in the organization and for fewer women to apply as external candidates," explains Mr. Steiner "This is where we need a fair but also proactive approach to correct this imbalance over time. At the D2 level, we have now succeeded and important lessons have been learnt."

This year's International Women's Day will be held under the theme of "Planet 50-50 by 2030: Step it up for Gender Equality". Explaining the importance of women's participation in addressing pressing environmental issues, Mr. Steiner concludes: "Half of the world's population is women. It is a huge opportunity lost for UNEP, let alone for the entire international community, if highly skilled women are forced to choose between work and family at a mature stage of their career. Women make household decisions which have a profound effect on the environment. If you reach them, you change the world."

¹ Note: Senior management positions are considered to be those P5 and above.

Will Dance for Data



“The women made me dance before they would sit and talk”, recalls UNEP expert Zinta Zommers. “A few women wanted us to answer a question for them, ‘Could a foreigner jump as high as the Turkana?’ We discovered that fieldwork was as much about sharing lives as it was about collecting data.”

Zinta and her colleagues were in Turkana, Kenya to conduct interviews and focus group discussions to understand concerns about climate change and identify how multi-hazard early warning systems (EWS) can be designed to better communicate risks to the most vulnerable. EWS can help communities and households anticipate climate-related hazards and to take early action to mitigate their impacts.

As part of its Climate Change Early Warning Project (CLIMWARN) started in 2013, UNEP has undertaken extensive consultations with policy-makers, academic experts, NGOs and vulnerable communities in Burkina Faso, Ghana and Kenya.

The project team knew that if the system did not meet the needs of half the population, it would have far-reaching consequences not only for women, but entire communities.

“When women are empowered

to access information and take action, they substantially contribute to disaster reduction efforts,” says Asha Sitati, an Associate Programme Officer at UNEP who worked closely on the project.

She explains that it was essential for the project team to gather sex-disaggregated information. “Different vulnerable groups have varying needs in terms of how they would want to receive risk information and respond,” Asha says. “Climate hazards also affect women and men differently due to varying levels of exposure to risks, capacity to respond and access to information.”

In some areas literacy levels vary sharply according to gender, with more women than men being unable to read and write. This can result in situations where information received in an unsuitable format cannot be understood by the end user. Moreover, compared to men, a higher proportion of women are involved in climate-sensitive sectors such as agriculture and pastoralism, hence the need for targeted warnings. By understanding the differing needs and abilities of males and females, policy-makers can design an EWS to ensure these considerations are taken into account.

The CLIMWARN¹ study showed that women have diverse avenues from which they can receive

information such as women groups, churches, or schools which can be used to help spread early warning information. However, such avenues have not been explored fully in the past.

While in many cases women’s voices are marginalized on issues that affect them, they can also be powerful agents of change in their communities. For example, a group of women in Turkana strongly suggested that they collect data and make observations for the EWS since they are the ones who possess the local traditional knowledge. Tapping into and corroborating existing local knowledge offers the potential to enhance citizen science, ownership and trust in EWS information.

Armed with vast swathes of data, UNEP helped design a prototype web-based multi-hazard EWS that can communicate messages by SMS or email to different groups. The project also produced a comprehensive report, based on the findings from field work, to serve as a guide to policy-makers and EWS stakeholders.²



¹ A video on the CLIMWARN project is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxfvxM-MXv0>

² Full report, UNEP, ‘Early Warning as a Human Right’, September 2015, Available at: http://apps.unep.org/publications/index.php?option=com_pub&task=download&file=011971_en

Supporting Gender Mainstreaming in Kenya's Environmental Policy



In 2011 the Kenyan Ministry of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (MEWNR) partnered with UNEP to support the preparation of a national gender strategy for the environment and natural resources. Funds for this initiative were derived from the United Nations-Government of Kenya (UN-GoK) joint programme on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, in which UNEP was a participating agency, funded by the Norwegian Government.

Key to the success of the process was the highly collaborative and consultative approach taken in the development of the strategy. Under UNEP's leadership and technical expertise, the process involved widespread consultations, including with gender focal points in eight government ministries, members of parliament and 14 UN agencies. The consultations culminated in a *Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and Action Plan for the Environment and Natural Resources in Kenya: 2015 - 2018*. Published in March 2016, it is the first comprehensive national strategy on gender mainstreaming on the environment and natural resources management in Kenya.

In presenting the Strategy and Action Plan to the High Level Gender and Environment Forum of UNEA in 2014, Dr. Alice Kaudia, Environment Secretary (MEWNR), said that the document was anchored in Kenya's development agenda, which seeks to promote gender equality in all

sectors. Further, it is "part of the commitment made by the Kenya government to the Africa Women Ministers and Leaders for the Environment (AFWMLE) formed in 2010 (a chapter of global Network of Women Ministers and Leaders for the Environment - NWMLE)". Further, the Strategy and Action Plan meets commitments by African Ministerial Council on the Environment (AMCEN) to address gender issues, particularly with respect to climate change and emerging environmental challenges.

The core purpose of the Strategy and Action Plan is to mainstream gender into the environmental management processes in Kenya, with two main objectives: 1) to enhance gender mainstreaming and promote equal participation of women and men, boys and girls in protecting the environment and natural resources, and 2) to enhance decision-making and equal access to and benefits from natural resources and economic/development programmes and projects at national and devolved levels.

The Strategy and Action Plan will ensure that gender is mainstreamed with regard to access to, use and management of Kenya's environment and natural resources for sustainable development. At the institutional level, it will ensure that gender is articulated in all processes of procurement, employment, and progression of employees in their respective fields of expertise.

To this end, the Strategy and Action Plan is meant to serve as a "how to" guide and reference document for a wide variety of decision-makers on mainstreaming gender into environmental policy and natural resource management.

With the development of the Strategy and Action Plan, Kenya is now amongst a select few countries with a comprehensive national gender mainstreaming strategy and action plan on the environment and natural resource management.



Turkana, Kenya. Photo: Goran Tomasevic / Reuters

Partnerships for Gender-Responsive Sustainable Development



UNEP has joined the UN family and the rest of the world in tackling the issue of gender equality. Our work in this area goes back to a 1995 summit in Beijing, when 189 countries issued the Declaration and Platform for Action, committing to make a world in which each woman and girl can exercise her choices, such as participating in politics, getting an education, earning an income, and living in a society free from violence and discrimination. As the international community revisits its achievements, we should reflect on those efforts, commitments and initiatives that have contributed to this progress.

There is much to celebrate. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the outcome document of the Conference on Financing for Development have both placed gender equality and women's empowerment among the international community's top priorities. The SDGs include Goal 5 – "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" and Goal 13 – "Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts". Goal 13 calls for the promotion of mechanisms that build capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management, "including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities".

Around the world, environmental conditions impact the lives of women and men in different

ways as a result of existing inequalities. Gender roles often create differences in the ways men and women act in relation to the environment, and in the ways women are enabled or prevented from acting as agents of environmental change. To address gender differences and how they shape environmental management, policy-makers at the national, regional and international levels must develop gender-responsive policies and strategies on environmental management. This cannot be done in isolation, which is why we have developed a strong and collaborative partnership with the Network of Women Ministers and Leaders for the Environment (NWMLE).

The NWMLE was founded in 2002 in Helsinki, Finland by Women Ministers for the Environment, the Council of World Women Leaders, and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The establishment of the network, which today also includes male environmental leaders, reiterated the commitments that had been made at the international conferences, and served as a call to action to make these commitments a reality. The broad objective of the NWMLE is to promote gender-responsive sustainable environmental management at regional and global levels and enhance the representation and involvement of women in decision-making in the areas of environment and sustainable development at all levels.

UNEP has been supporting the NWMLE since 2008. In March 2015, during the regular session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), UNEP supported the launch of the network's first regional chapter, The Network of African Women Ministers and Leaders for the Environment. Furthermore, AMCEN requested UNEP and the newly formed African chapter to develop an Africa-wide Policy on Gender and the Environment, which will be presented to the next regular session of AMCEN in 2017. In addition, since 2009 the NWMLE and UNEP have partnered in hosting Global Gender and Environment Forums, which are held during the global environmental meetings hosted by UNEP.

The NWMLE is a powerful collaborating partner, particularly for UNEP, to promote and deliver on gender mainstreaming as required by governments. At the global level, UNEP is also a founding member of the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA), which has worked collaboratively with the NWMLE to ensure that gender perspectives on climate change are highlighted in the climate change negotiations and deliberations. Today the GGCA has a membership of over 100 organizations, including UN agencies and international environmental organizations.

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