



GEF

Mother earth



Gender mainstreaming guidance series

Women & sustainable land management



Environment & Energy Practice
Gender Mainstreaming Guidance Series
Sustainable Land Management

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Foreword

At the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), we are committed to supporting sustainable land management for the benefit of both people and the ecosystems they depend on. UNDP's portfolio of projects funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) spans 120 countries, of which some 75 have received GEF and UNDP support in developing their national action plans to combat desertification and identify priority areas of intervention. Guidelines to mainstream land management issues in national development planning were produced to ensure the full integration of desertification issues in the development agenda. UNDP has also affirmed its commitment to tackle the most controversial and crucial issues hampering development by hosting the High Level Commission for the Legal Empowerment of the Poor and gearing up to tackle the issues of tenure, property, and land rights around the world.

Across the developing world where charcoal and fuel wood are still the main sources of energy, UNDP's work on the conservation and sustainable management of forest resources and energy efficiency contributes to maintaining carbon stocks and providing more equitable levels of access to energy. By nurturing pro-poor economic growth, we endeavor to ensure that the market potential of dryland products and their economic returns are opened up, thus providing the poorest of the poor with financial resources, dignity and independence.

As we reach mid-point in the timetable for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the importance of SLM cannot be overstated. UNDP's monitoring of SLM projects across the world show impacts way beyond the technicalities of SLM. In Africa, SLM has reduced children's workload in the fields, freeing their time to attend schools; it has also supported countries to shift from dependence on food aid to more sustained and predictable food supplies. In Asia, SLM has raised women's income and empowered them to take their destiny in their own hands. In Latin America, sustainably managed forests contribute to watershed management, carbon sequestration and the conservation of traditional knowledge. In the Arab States, UNDP supports SLM initiatives that further civil society engagement, public participation by both men and women, and good governance in decision-making.

Within the UN and development families, UNDP has been raising the profile of gender empowerment and mainstreaming gender considerations in development. Human development, as a process of widening people's choices, cannot occur when the choices of half of humanity are restricted. This is particularly true in SLM as gender disaggregated data are showing that although women are the main caretakers of the land and its resources they have less access to extension services, do not fully benefit from credit schemes and are often penalized by the accumulation of domestic and productive chores.

This publication is a joint initiative of UNDP's Environment and Energy Group and the Gender Unit through the Gender Thematic Trust Fund (GTTF). The study was based on a review of the portfolio of UNDP-GEF projects. The GTTF supports programme countries in their efforts to mainstream gender throughout all of their programme work. It works to enable institutional and cultural transformation processes, including: i) eliminating gender biases in development frameworks and paradigms; ii) incorporating gender awareness into policies, programmes and institutional reforms; iii) involving men in the movement to end gender inequality; and iv) developing gender-sensitive tools to monitor progress and ensure accountability.

We hope that this publication will provide practitioners and policy-makers with practical guidance on the mainstreaming of gender considerations in SLM. At UNDP we are confident that such approaches will not only provide women with a platform to fully engage in development, but will also enhance the delivery of impacts and effectiveness of our interventions.



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What is gender mainstreaming?

‘Gender mainstreaming’ has been defined by the United Nations Economic and Social Council as ‘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 the policies and programmes in all political, economic, and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.’ The relative status of men and women, the interaction between gender and race, class, and ethnicity, and questions of rights, control, ownership, power, and voice – all have a critical impact on the success and sustainability of every development intervention.

In practice, gender mainstreaming means identifying gaps in gender

equality through the use of sex-disaggregated data, developing strategies to close those gaps, putting resources and expertise into implementing strategies for gender equality, monitoring implementation, and holding individuals and institutions accountable for results. Gender mainstreaming is not an end in itself, but rather a process whose ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

Expanded freedoms for all – women and men, girls and boys – is UNDP’s goal, not only because it is necessary for development effectiveness, but also because equality is a core value of the UN Charter, which all UNDP staff have pledged to protect as representatives of the UN system.

MIGRATION FORMS PART OF THE AGRO-PASTORAL CULTURE OF THE DINKA TRIBES IN SOUTH SUDAN. IN THE DRY SEASON DINKA LIVE IN RIVERSIDE CAMPS AND HERD CATTLE, WHILE AROUND MAY-JUNE, AT THE ONSET OF THE RAINY SEASON, THEY RETURN TO THEIR FIXED SETTLEMENTS ABOVE FLOOD LEVEL, WHERE THEY CULTIVATE CROPS OF MILLET AND OTHER GRAIN PRODUCTS. LABOUR IS DIVIDED ALONG GENDER LINES, WITH YOUNG MEN ATTENDING TO CATTLE-HERDING WHILE WOMEN, WHO HAVE A MUCH SMALLER VOICE IN DINKA SOCIETY, ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR GROWING CROPS, ALTHOUGH MEN CLEAR NEW FIELDS FOR PLANTING. WOMEN ALSO COOK AND DRAW WATER.

DINKA WOMEN ON THE MOVE, SOUTHERN SUDAN.
PHOTO: M. NIAMIR-FULLER

‘Gender’ refers to the socially constructed rather than biologically determined roles of men and women as well as the relationships between them in a given society at a specific time and place. These roles and relationships are not fixed, but can and do change.



Why is gender relevant to policy-making & programming in Sustainable Land Management ?

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Land degradation, which affects more than 900 million people worldwide and as much as two-thirds of the world's agricultural land, has important gender dimensions.

In many developing countries, women – as farmers and pastoralists, with primary responsibility for household food production – are the principal users and managers of land. However, within productive landscapes, women are often allotted the most marginal lands with the least secure tenure rights.

When land becomes so degraded that it no longer supports crops or pasture, women are forced to find alternative areas for food production. This expansion not only exacerbates agricultural land conversion and degradation of land resources; it also adds to the pressure on women farmers, who may face higher risks to their health and physical safety as they are compelled to venture further and further away from their homes to find productive land to meet their families' needs.

Women also tend to be disproportionately burdened by the indirect effects of land degradation. For instance, when water resources are damaged by high levels of silt in river waters (a typical side-effect of increased soil erosion from degraded land), women and girls are often more severely affected, as they are usually responsible for fetching water to meet household needs.

Land degradation, gender, and development

The term 'land degradation' refers to natural and human-induced processes – including declining quality of soil, water, and/or vegetation – that negatively affect the capacity of land to function effectively within an ecosystem. Land degradation affects more than 110 countries, with the impacts felt most severely in the poorest rural communities (UNEP 1992). By 2025, an estimated 1.8 billion people – more than half of them women and children – will be adversely affected by land degradation and desertification. Agricultural expansion, unsustainable



IN UGANDA GIRLS STILL WALK LONG DISTANCES FETCHING AND CARRYING WATER. PHOTO: E. AUGÉ

cultivation methods, overgrazing, and deforestation are the primary causes of land degradation in rural areas. Land degradation leads to the loss of genetic and species diversity, including plants and animals that are important sources of medicinal, commercial, and industrial products.

As pastoralists and agriculturists, women are disproportionately affected by land degradation. Women farmers are responsible for 60–80 percent of the developing world's food production; in many countries they are the primary income producers, earning their livelihoods mainly from agriculture and other land-based activities (Howard 2003; Baumgartner and Högger 2004). Land degradation adds to the pressure on women to support their families under

increasingly difficult physical, social, and economic conditions. Physically women, as bearers of children, are more vulnerable to lack of food or water. In social, economic, and political contexts, women's relatively weak status and busy schedules with household and fieldwork often leads to marginalization of their concerns and realities.

Besides the direct impacts on agricultural livelihoods, land degradation also has indirect effects, which likewise tends to have a greater impact on women and girls. For instance, increased siltation of river waters due to land erosion and degradation often renders water unusable, forcing women and girls to spend more time and travel farther to fetch water. Increased deposition

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term environmental and food security, they need equal access to land ownership and control over land-based resources.

- **Lack of 'value' assigned to labour and subsistence farming.** Given their central role in food production, women in developing countries often face enormous workloads to provide for their families. In addition to their responsibility for childcare and overall household management, women's work typically includes tending livestock, sowing, weeding, harvesting crops and post-harvest tasks. This work is continuous throughout the day and year, while men's work tends to be periodic and seasonal. In essence, although women's workload is higher than men, almost all of it is unpaid and excluded from economic and financial accounting frameworks (Howard 2003). Men not only receive higher economic returns for their work, but also retain the vast majority of land ownership rights and associated decision-making powers. Women's workload hinders their participation in community decision-making, including decisions related to natural resources management. Decreasing women's workload (for example, through childcare arrangements, provision for

Constraints to engaging women in SLM

Women often face formidable barriers in their efforts to claim an equitable role in decision-making concerning land resources. Some key constraints to engaging women in SLM are:

- **Insecurity of tenure.** Despite women's role in household food production, in most developing countries they have limited ownership and control of land resources. For example in Southeast Asia, women provide up to 90 percent of labour for rice cultivation, but fewer than 10 percent of women farmers in India, Nepal, and Thailand own land¹. Secure tenurial rights enable landholders to make long-term decisions on the use of land resources and invest in management practices that promote sustained land productivity. Conversely, lack of secure tenure can lead to degradation of land resources by users who have no incentive or capacity to manage the land for long-term productivity. All too often, women's inequitable access to secure property rights forces them onto marginal, fragile, highly degradable lands. In order for women to use land sustainably, protect its ecological health, and thereby contribute to long-

¹ <http://www.fao.org/Gender/en/agrib4-e.htm>.

of silt also negatively impacts on electricity generation. In the Sudan, siltation from the Blue Nile resulted in a 40 percent fall in power generation from the Roseires reservoir (Conway and Hulme 1996, Conway 2005) adding to women's workload as they search for alternatives to meet household energy needs.

Studies have shown that involving women in participatory land management promotes more sustainable land use, reversal of desertification, and improved socioeconomic conditions (Aswani

decision-makers who determine land management practices. Women are also most directly impacted by public decisions, laws, and planning related to land management.

When SLM projects enjoy only moderate success, it is often because they have failed to engage with women in their roles as the principal managers of land. Mainstreaming gender considerations into SLM is not only important for the success of the programme and/or project, it can also help pave the way for

It is important to determine the structural roles of women and men in a society in order to target the right stakeholders. For example, in parts of Micronesia, it would be wrong to address men over land-based issues, as they are responsible for marine issues while women are responsible for land-based activities.

and Weiant 2004; Nyssen et al. 2004), which in turn contributes to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, UNDP's core mission. Involving women in the design and implementation of programmes and projects aimed at promoting sustainable land management (SLM) is crucially important, since in many cases women are the principal day-to-day

greater progress in achieving full gender equality. This is because empowering women in the context of SLM may be perceived as less 'threatening' than women's political empowerment, and hence can be a useful entry point for beginning to change social and cultural attitudes towards women and achieving full gender equality beyond SLM.

water and energy requirements, etc.) and increasing the visibility of women's contribution to household income are important steps in empowering women to participate in management and decision-making regarding land use and conservation.

- **Lack of credit.** An important consequence of women's lack of equitable access to land ownership and control is their lack of access to credit. Without secure property rights to the land they cultivate, women farmers lack collateral and so are often denied credit for which they might otherwise be eligible (Baumgartner and Högger 2004). An analysis of credit schemes in five African countries shows that women received less than 10 percent of the credit awarded to male smallholders.² Other factors limiting women's access to credit include lack of education, lack of recognition of women's economic contribution to households and the farming sector overall, and social restrictions.
- **Lack of opportunities to gain and share technical knowledge on SLM.** In some countries, societal norms restrict women from interacting with males other than family members. Since the vast majority of agricultural extension agents are male (only

about 15 percent worldwide are women, according to FAO), women farmers in such cultures are effectively denied opportunities to participate in and gain from extension programmes and other means of transmitting technical knowledge about SLM options, such as soil management techniques, land restoration methods, mixed cropping systems, water recycling, and others. Women are likewise restricted in their ability to share their own knowledge of land management.

In Nepal there are marked gender disparities in literacy rates: 52 percent of males are literate as compared to 24 percent of females. Using printed manuals for extension and education would therefore exclude 75 percent of the target population, reducing the potential uptake of proposed SLM solutions.

² <http://www.fao.org/Gender/en/agrib4-e.htm>.



WOMEN IN BURKINA FASO PICTURED WORKING IN A CHAIN TO CONSTRUCT A CONTOUR BUND TO RETAIN OVERLAND FLOW ON VERY GENTLY SLOPING SOILS. PHOTO: UN PHOTO LIBRARY.

How

can UNDP strengthen the gender dimension of its work in sustainable land management at the **policy level**?

UNDP has a key role to play in addressing the gender dimensions of managing land, natural resources, and the vital services provided by natural, healthy, intact ecosystems. The organization can fulfill this role by working with partners to empower women and increase their access to equitable property rights, enhance their opportunities to gain and share technical knowledge, and strengthen their ability to have an effective voice in decisions about land use and management. Of particular importance are efforts to support the formulation and implementation of gender-sensitive policies concerning SLM policies. Specifically, UNDP can engage with its partners to:

– Raise awareness of and

and accurate picture of local conditions, land use and management trends, and priorities and needs for more sustainable options. It is important to identify the most vulnerable sectors of local communities and the macro-level policies that influence the behaviour of communities concerning land management practices. These should be targeted in the design of project activities, since such policy reforms are critical for achieving equitable, as well as effective, development interventions. As experience with GEF-SGP India and elsewhere has shown, there is significant scope for greater sensitization of government and private-sector officials on the gender dimensions of land



WOMEN PLANTING TULIP BULBS. PHOTO: GEF SMALL GRANTS PROGRAMME, TURKEY.

agencies to better understand who is using the land, in what ways, the results of their actions, and any differences in the roles of women and men. Such understanding is critical to assessing needs, examining policy alternatives, formulating effective policies and programmes, monitoring progress, and evaluating results. According to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, information on

on the ground if it incorporates information on land uses by the full variety of land managers and users, including women as well as men, from all communities and socioeconomic groups. Within this context, it is critical to collect and use data on women's access to secure land tenure, their access to credit, and their relationship to practices and activities that lead to land degradation. Such sex-disaggregated data

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