

A note on including gender issues in projects across sectors

A case of 'Combating land degradation' project: Tajikistan

Desertification, land degradation and drought affect women and men differently given their differing productive roles. Additionally, although both the rich and poor are affected, the poor, mostly women, are hardest hit because their ability to cope with and recover from these phenomena depends on access to assets and the ability to mobilize resources.

Usually, men own the land and produce cash crops, and as a result can obtain credit and other facilities. Women rarely own land and are often confined to the production of subsistence foods. They experience extra burden as a result of land degradation - travelling longer distances to compensate, often under harsh and unsafe conditions.

However, women are the primary natural resource managers, providers of food security, and repositories of knowledge and expertise on indigenous plants, medicines, food and water. They perform many essential survival tasks and have developed valuable skills and practices that complement men's knowledge. But women's perspectives rarely appear in the realms of decision-making, politics and administration related to land degradation.¹

These different vulnerabilities, experiences and skills must be explored and incorporated to ensure that UNDP's programming on combating land degradation is effective, efficient and provides equal benefits to women and men beneficiaries.

Gender analysis was not integrated from the start of the project "**Demonstrating Local Responses to Combating Land Degradation and Improving Sustainable Land Management in South West Tajikistan**". However, it is never too late to include gender perspective into a project. Thus, following Mid-term review of the project, it was agreed to identify gender issues and to promote women beneficiaries' involvement in such project activities as Farmer Field Schools (FFS), revolving fund loans, tree planting, etc.

Firstly, the indicators of the project were slightly modified, including and underlining the quantity and percentage of women and men to be covered under relevant activities. As a result, the number of women participants of FFS and the number of female Dehkan Farms-loan beneficiaries were increased.

Secondly, women's empowerment activity was included in the project. A Women Group Vegetable growers was set up under each of 4 demoplots. The MOU was signed between the Group and landowners on distribution of the income from the demoplots. As per the Agreement, 70% of income was handed over to women and the remaining 30% to landowner.

Thirdly, a survey was conducted which revealed that stoves, used by women in local community were not efficient. On the one hand, cooking stoves at rural area are not meeting the sanitary norms and harmful for women's health. On the



other hand, the need for firewood in winter put pressure on trees and tugai forests. The project initiated demonstration of 40-45% more efficient and less harmful cooking stoves made from local materials. 120 efficient cooking stoves and 80 efficient heating stoves were constructed and trainings to build the capacity of local masters on technology of construction of the stoves were organized. Additionally, women were introduced to a technology how to make the briquettes and plant fast growing tree species for their domestic needs.

This example shows that gender issues are cross-cutting and relevant to various intervention areas of UNDP. It is also never late to include gender issues into a project.

¹ <http://www.unccd.int/en/programmes/Thematic-Priorities/gender/Pages/Access-to-productive-assets.aspx> accessed on 28 October 2013