

Gender Mainstreaming

LME: LEARN
POLICY BRIEF

Improvement of Livelihoods in Coastal Fishing Communities

Context and importance of the problem

To be successful, initiatives aimed at the betterment of lives and the environment must recognize women's frequent roles as primary land and resource managers and weigh the different ways women and men consider conservation and sustainable use incentives. Projects must also recognise that women and girls often carry the responsibility of water collection and household water use. In impoverished or disadvantaged communities, the role of water in the community is especially gendered.

Gender plays a key role in the access to and utilisation of water resources and the livelihoods that they support

In many places around the world women and men exhibit distinct differences in their perspectives and priorities concerning environmental quality, natural resource use, and access to basic requirements such as water, energy and food. Importantly, these perspectives are diverse and varied in different countries, cultures and communities and efforts to mainstream gender equality and empower women must be integrated into the design and then the implementation of the project. It is recognised that a failure to understand and address gender within environmental and development projects risks negative effects on household welfare, women's equality, and the water resources and wider environment.



Figure 1:
Women play a major role in coastal fisheries (GEF 2018)



National and regional initiatives aiming to create environmental and economic benefit should account for gender differences in how resources are used and managed in order to achieve their desired objectives. However, this is most often not the case and gender is not considered at all or, if it is, the acknowledgement on paper rarely translates to actual empowerment and impact. The common role of woman as the primary resource manager and knowing what is required to benefit their livelihood, their family and their community should be central to the project design, as should incentives for project participation and engagement that may differ between women and men.

Critique of Policy Options

In most societies it is the women who are responsible for both marine and freshwater resource use. Water is necessary not only for drinking, but also for food production and preparation, care of domestic animals, personal hygiene, cleaning, washing, and waste disposal. All over the world, Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) projects are seeking to introduce ecosystem-based assessment and management practices for the long-term recovery and sustainability of marine and coastal ecosystems. Very often, the important roles that women take on in the coastal communities of LMEs are not well recognized. For example, not only are women heavily involved in fisheries (Figure 1), they are often responsible for farm work and domestic food production and, as such, they carry a broad range of social and economic responsibilities. Most often it is women and children who have primary responsibility for management of the household water supply. Large multilateral agencies that work with National Governments and the GEF, such as UNDP, UNEP, and the World Bank, found in their own assessments that the general application of gender-related strategies remained weak and with varying degrees of success on gender mainstreaming (UNDP 2006). Gender mainstreaming is a term used to describe processes and strategies towards achieving gender equity (Box 1).

Box 1 - What is gender mainstreaming?

Mainstreaming gender is "...the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, 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 programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of gender mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality" (ECOSOC 1997).

Women and men often have different knowledge about water resources, including location, quality, and storage methods depending on the type of water use. However, efforts geared toward improving the management of the world's finite water resources often overlook the central role of women in water management. Public participation that includes provision for gender issues is required to capture knowledge that is representative of the gendered reality of water resources. The document 'Public Involvement in GEF-financed Projects' (GEF 1996) was an early adaptor of addressing gender in national development efforts. It noted that there should be emphasis on local participation and, importantly, specific local and national aspects of livelihoods, culture, traditions and beliefs taken into account – all of which have gender aspects and require a gender disaggregated approach. History shows us, however, that in practice gender is overlooked in natural resource management and sustainable development efforts.

When developing national policy and regional collaborations the link between the environment and gender is often not considered and this is to the detriment of both environmental and development projects and their desired outcomes. In many parts of the world an individual's gender, social and cultural setting will determine to a large extent the interactions they will have with the environment and the role(s) they will have

that interact with marine and fresh water resources. The differing interactions and use generate different knowledge and priorities according to gender. Mainstreaming gender in national and regional efforts to manage marine and fresh water resources is therefore essential to effectively manage both the resource as a whole and to benefit the society as a whole. Gender mainstreaming is also justified on arguments of justice and equality, credibility and accountability and quality of life (UNEP 2019). Finally, gender equality contributes to economic growth and project results have been shown to be superior when gender considerations are integrated into the design and implementation of projects (World Bank 2002)



Figure 2:
Gender roles have overlap and differences in LME communities (GEF 2013)

Integrating gender in national and international activities

Gender mainstreaming is a methodology for integrating a gender approach into environment and development efforts. In practice, gender mainstreaming means being deliberate in giving visibility and support to both women's and men's contributions individually, rather than assuming that both groups will benefit equally from gender-neutral development interventions (GEF 2013). National and international development activities that ignore the differential impact on gender groups are often simply unaware to gender and the potential harm they may cause. Within the development context, gender mainstreaming commonly includes identifying gaps in equality through the use of sex-disaggregated data, developing strategies and policies to close those gaps, devoting resources and expertise for implementing such strategies, monitoring the results of implementation, and holding individuals and institutions accountable for outcomes that promote gender equality.

Patience and education at all levels of stakeholder is required to educate on gender mainstreaming, what it means and what it offers. The concept and terminology may, if not likely, to be new and unknown outside of development agencies. Importantly, communicating the gender equality does not mean that women and men will become the same, but rather aims for equal treatment of women and men in laws and policies, and equal access to resources and services within families, communities and society at local and national levels (WHO 2001). To achieve this goal, a two-pronged approach of gender mainstreaming is often required: 1) systematically analysing and addressing in all initiatives the specific needs of both women and men; and 2) targeted interventions to enable women and men to participate in – and benefit equally from – development efforts. A full understanding of gender roles within a society, and consideration of women's and men's specific interests, needs, and priorities is necessary to achieve and sustain the goals of any project. Gender equality is not solely a women's issue; in fact, it seeks to tailor activities to the beneficiaries of the project from both sexes. Gender equality serves to the advantage of both men and women and cannot be achieved without the full engagement of both (UNDP 2007).

Gender mainstreaming in Large Marine Ecosystems

Large Marine Ecosystems support a multitude of fisheries and, spatially, the coastal zone component of LMEs is especially important for small scale fishing communities. These components range from accessible fishing habitats (e.g near-shore reefs or estuaries) to ecosystem habitats critical for supporting fish life cycles (e.g. mangroves, sea grass meadows). These complex and changing areas are best managed using a multisectoral approach such as Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) or Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM). Such an approach involves all stakeholders, namely decision-makers at local, provincial and national levels, regional international development agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the general public where community-based management approaches are particularly important.

Similarly, practical steps for mainstreaming gender need to occur at all levels ranging from the high political level to community and implementation activities on the ground. At the national level a statement of political will for gender equality is needed. This should include the consideration of gender-sensitive actions and cross-cutting issues covering communication, gender-disaggregated data collection and governance (Brugere 2014). At the project or community level a commitment to build capacity and the allocation of time and finances to allow this is required. Use of participatory approaches in planning and sustainable management initiatives should be considered to provide equal opportunity for men and women to benefit from the planned activities.

A critical challenge faced by policy makers, environmental managers and development practitioners in mainstreaming gender in the integrated management of marine and coastal ecosystems (through ICM, ICZM or similar multisectoral approaches) is the lack of practical examples to guide the implementation of gender-sensitive and gender-responsive actions from an empowerment approach. When implemented at an LME scale, the multisectoral approach needed allows lessons learned and experience from the GEF IW LME portfolio to be more easily adopted. Historically, a variety of factors have led to women's workload and contributions in fisheries, marine and coastal conservation and resources management being undermined and undocumented. These include top-down and linear planning, lack of gender-disaggregated data, focus on formal and paid activities where men dominate and the production and techno-environmental bias of marine and coastal development policies and projects (UNEP 2019).

Even when decision makers, managers and development practitioners are aware of gender mainstreaming and its suitability and applicability in the integrated management of marine and coastal ecosystems, they often lack practical actions and strategies on how to implement it. Not only is there a critical lack of such practically-oriented documentation, but also the varied socio-economic, cultural, geographical and political contexts of gendered relations and access and control of resources means that there is no 'standard formula' for successfully gender mainstreaming in marine and coastal interventions.

Gender Mainstreaming starts with a Gender Analysis

This policy brief draws on the experience of gender mainstreaming from the GEF IW portfolio, with GEF first implementing gender sensitive management approaches in 1996. Gender mainstreaming in multi-faceted conservation and sustainable use development activities requires gender equity to be actively pursued and not simply recorded. Measures to address inequalities and differences must be part of a gender action plan, or similar, that is a central component of the LME-scale project and integrated into the regional goals of the initiative. This approach provides a connection between an initial gender analysis and implementation of the gender mainstreaming as a core component of the LME effort. Gender analysis is an entry point for gender mainstreaming as it reveals connections between gender relations and the environmental problem to be solved. Without it, the lack of information can lead to policies and activities that inadvertently impact gender relations and opportunities.

When does scoping of the project start asking what is really known about the role of women and men, their access to resources, participation in decision-making, empowerment and local gender relationships? The gender analysis (Figure 3) should take place as early as possible, so that activities that respond to specific needs can be timely planned and implemented. This analytical process examines and records the differences between the roles that women and men play, the different levels of power they hold, their differing needs, constraints they face and opportunities they have, and the impacts of these differences on their lives. Undertaking a gender analysis is good practice because it can help to uncover hidden assumptions and values that may be sustaining inequality while assisting the design and improving the outcomes of gender-based project activities.

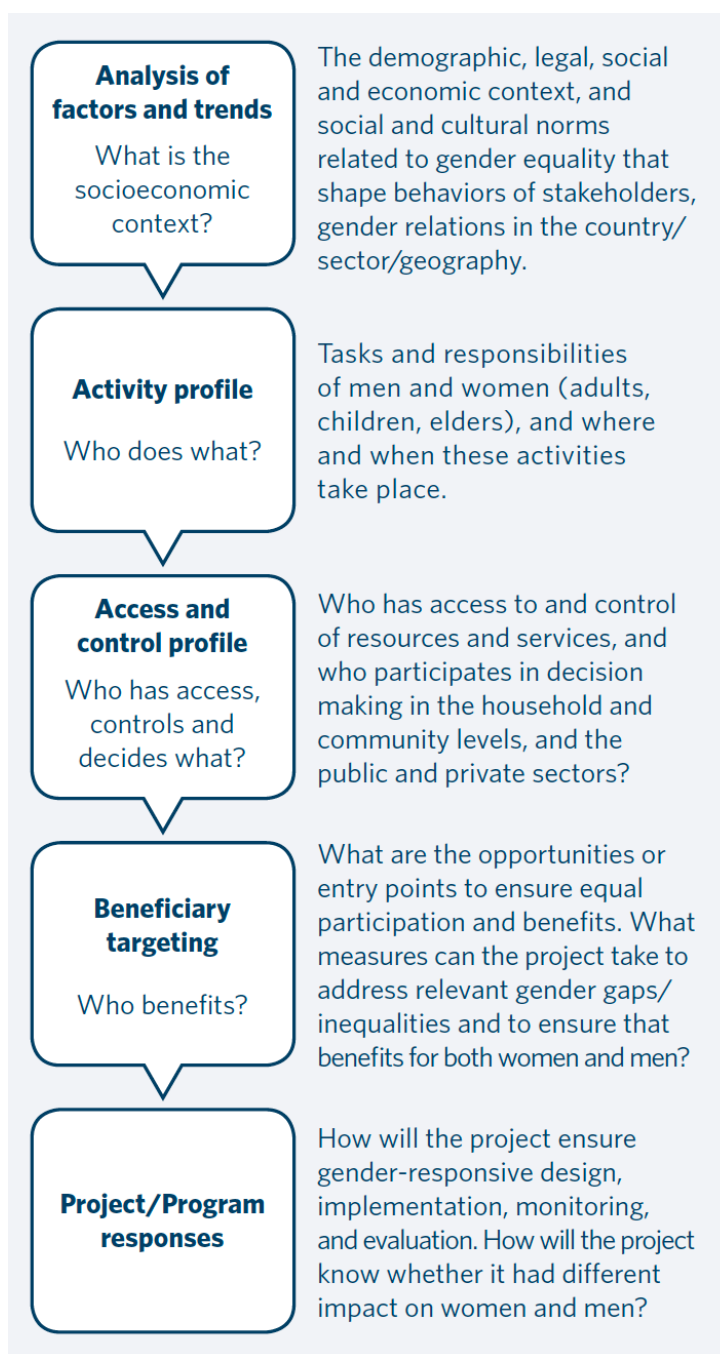


Figure 3:
Elements of a Gender Analysis (GEF 2018)

During the gender analyses, gender should be everywhere and part of everything – it should not be a standalone or an add on. Make sure gender is included in all cross-cutting areas such as capacity development, legal and institutional issues, awareness and communication. To do this effectively women should be involved in all drafting teams and gender training provided for all team members as early as possible. Involving a gender expert up front to provide guidance and feedback on drafts will ensure that gender becomes an integral part of any plan, strategy or proposal. It is much more effective to integrate gender at the design and drafting stage so that existing programs and partnerships of ICM and LME initiatives can effectively integrate gender mainstreaming through adaptive management processes. All programs, whether existing or new, can undertake a gender-specific audit of legislation related to fisheries and environmental management to assess the gender-sensitivity of national legal and regulatory frameworks. This could result in LME initiatives that support legal and regulatory revision and/or the promotion of new and gender-sensitive laws. A statement of political will or a commitment to gender can offer a powerful and unifying call when proclaimed at the national level. This assists the normalisation and acceptance of mainstreaming efforts down to the local levels, especially when it can be agreed across political parties.

The setting of quotas, the number of positions each gender has on a particular committee or management body can provide a rapid improvement in gender equity at decision making levels when implemented correctly. Tokenism must be avoided, where positions

for women are created but these new positions are not actively engaged in the decision making and management activities. The participation of both genders with equal authority and contribution at the management and decision-making level will enhance uptake of gender mainstreaming in all the decisions and actions they take (Figure 4).

Policy Recommendations

It is always the right time to work towards gender equity, in both new and existing policies and programmes. Mainstreaming gender in pursuit of gender equity is an active process that aims for the equal treatment of women and men in development agendas, laws and policies. This equal treatment pertains to the equal access to resources and services within families, within communities and across society at local and national levels. Policy recommendations that will assist in bringing in gender mainstreaming to national and regional development and environmental management initiatives are:

- Make sure gender matters at every step of impending gender mainstreaming. Fully involve women in drafting teams and provide gender training for all team members as early as possible.
- If you do not have the expertise in-house, invite a gender specialist to provide guidance and support at the beginning and to assist with a review of gender interventions and resources, tools and knowledge networks to inform of contextual successful approaches and main obstacles to overcome.
- Develop a gender mainstreaming strategy for policies and initiatives that are context-specific by implementing a gender analysis across the LME or area of focus.
- Conduct the gender analyses using gender-focussed baseline studies, stakeholder mapping and participatory grassroots-level consultation. Make sure gender is central to the design of both the questions being asked, in order to obtain gender-disaggregated data, and those asking the questions, making sure to have gender representation across all levels of management and implementation and the analyses.
- Build gender-targeted inclusive processes for those who have limited means to engage in participatory processes in order to boost local ownership in community-based integrated coastal management projects.
- Ensure that commitment to gender equality is backed by adequate financial and personnel resources in order for a gender aware engagement and approach to be properly implemented.
- Consider establishing partnerships with institutions, organizations or individuals familiar with managing gender issues. Lessons learned are there to make sure the same mistakes are not repeated.
- Use incentives and flexibility to enable women to play a role in LME projects. Incentives such as professional recognition, increased budgets or promotions can encourage the involvement of women in gender-related activities. Flexibility around timing, the location of training and other project activities can also promote the participation of women.
- International and national development and sustainable environmental management activities can empower local women's groups at the community level through consultation and recognition. The role of women in the community and these groups is an important channel for gender mainstreaming as part of integrated coastal management and sustainable development in a way that is meaningful to all members of their community.

Case Study: Bay of Bengal LME

Gender mainstreaming has been implemented across the eight countries surrounding the Bay of Bengal: Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand. These countries have been working together through the GEF IW Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BoBLME) Project. The Project is implementing a wide range of activities relating to the conservation and management of fisheries and the marine environment, so as to better the lives of coastal populations through improved regional management of the Bay of Bengal.



Figure 4:
Gender representation at management level is in practice at the BOBLME 7th Project Steering Committee Meeting

The major social and economic concerns around the Bay of Bengal are the relatively low standard of living and working conditions of people involved in fishing. More than 50% of the world's coastal poor live in countries that border this LME and they lack decent work and living conditions (BOBLME 2015). The vulnerability of coastal communities to natural hazards, climate variability and change further complicates efforts to improve livelihoods and maintain sustainable use and conservation goals for the environment. These challenges are not specific to the BOBLME and coastal fishing communities all over the world are in similar conditions.

Initially, the project and activities to tackle these concerns were blind with respect to gender. This was a typical example of gender being neglected to be considered. Whilst the project had clearly defined human development objectives of “diversified livelihoods and improved wellbeing of small-scale fisher communities” and expected outcomes “enhanced food security and reduced poverty for coastal communities” it was unaware of the issues that need addressing in order to progress towards gender equality and women’s empowerment in these communities (Brugere 2014). However, the omission of gender as a central component of livelihoods and natural resource management in BoBLME coastal communities was identified at the project mid-term review. Active steps were taken to and an audit was commissioned to review gender and conduct a gender analysis of the project (BoBLME 2012). Further, specialist advice and guidance were sought on how to mainstream gender within the project.

It was recognised that the objectives of the BoBLME project were highly relevant to both men and women engaged in coastal and marine resource use activities in each of the eight countries. In these countries, as elsewhere in many fishing communities, men and women have distinct roles (Figure 5), which exposes them to different sets of prevailing issues. Moreover, female fishers of all ages and older fishermen tend to predominate in the poorer or more marginal fishing activities. Gender mainstreaming in the BoBLME systematically analysed all of these issues and their underlying causes to devise and organize effective and appropriate strategies for addressing them (FAO 2016).

The BoBLME Project, through its Strategic Action Programme, has now pioneered a number of gender activities that have proven successful in improving both gender equality and project outcomes. These are a gender equality review and gap analysis of policies, regulatory and legal frameworks and institutions undertaken at the regional LME level. The review provides recommendations for best practice. Further, the installation of gender focal points in all relevant agencies/institutions has proven to be a tremendous success in ensuring that gender mainstreaming did not just exist on paper but was part of the overall project implementation.



Figure 5:
Women are central in coastal fisheries and livelihoods in the Bay of Bengal

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GEF LME:LEARN

GEF LME: LEARN is a program to improve global ecosystem-based governance of Large Marine Ecosystems and their coasts by generating knowledge, building capacity, harnessing public and private partners and supporting south-to-south learning and north-to-south learning. A key element of this improved governance is main-streaming cooperation between LME, MPA, and ICM projects in overlapping areas, both for GEF projects and for non-GEF projects. This Full-scale project plans to achieve a multiplier effect using demonstrations of learning tools and toolboxes, to aid practitioners and other key stakeholders, in conducting and learning from GEF projects. This global project is funded by the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and executed by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. The GEF LME:LEARN's Project Coordination Unit (PCU) is headquartered at UNESCO-IOC's offices in Paris.

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