



PEACE, PROSPERITY AND
REGIONAL INTEGRATION



POLICY BRIEF



Priority Intervention Area 1: Increasing Access to Natural Resources for Women in the IGAD Region

Introduction

The IGAD Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative (IDDRSI) has since 2013 inspired and guided regional and national priorities to counter drought emergencies in East and Horn of Africa countries. The IDDRSI Strategy (2019-2024) acknowledges that gender issues impact the **Natural Resources and Environmental Management** priority intervention area (PIA 1). A gender analysis was undertaken for the IDDRSI Strategy, Regional Programming Paper (RPP) and the Country Programming Papers (CPP) (IGAD, 2016).¹ This brief examines the critical gender issues relating to access to natural resources, pasture, rangeland development, and environmental management. It is based on the review of the gender analysis report mentioned above.

Gender impacts of natural resources extraction

Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs) occupy a vast proportion of the IGAD land area. At least 70% of the IGAD region comprises ASALs, which receive less than 600mm in annual rainfall, and are characterised by recurrent droughts (Stark, 2011).² The livestock economy predominates the East and Horn of Africa's rangelands, which is the most appropriate form of utilising these areas. However, the lack of water, inadequate area-specific government policies and increased human population pressure have accelerated these lands' impoverishment.

Women dominate small scale agriculture in the IGAD region. For example, in Kenya, women provide 80% of the rural agricultural labour (Republic of Kenya, 2018).³ Over time, drought has affected the pastoral economy with implications for women. Recurrent drought has led to livestock loss, reduced pastoralists' purchasing power through livestock mortality, deteriorating terms of trade between livestock and grain, and the decline in household nutritional status. The ASALs are also characterised by the increasing loss of vegetation cover, land degradation through soil erosion, fragmentation, and water catchments degradation. This is partly exhibited by both human and livestock inability to cope with drought.

The consideration of unique gender issues on environment and natural resource management is premised on two broad principles, namely that (i) gender mediates human/environment interactions and all environmental use, knowledge, and assessment; and (ii) gender roles, responsibilities, expectations, norms, and the division of labour shape all forms of human relationships to the environment (UNEP, 2012). This raises the need to (i) document women's experiences on natural resources and environment; (ii) establish the knowledge of women on the environment and natural resources based on their daily interaction with the environment; and (iii) document women's knowledge of trees, crops, wild fruits and vegetables, medicinal shrubs, soils, etc. that can withstand harsh climate conditions.

1. IGAD (2016) Gender Analysis of the Country Programming Papers (CPPs): To End Drought Emergencies in the Horn of Africa. Vol 2.

2. Stark Jeffrey, (2011). Climate Change and Conflict in Uganda: The Cattle Corridor and Karamoja.

3. Republic of Kenya (2018) Sector Plan for Drought Risk Management and Ending Drought Emergencies: Third Medium Term Plan 2018-2022.

Critical issues in natural resources and environment management include the fact that men and women have different experiences and knowledge of the environment, specific resources, and environmental issues and challenges. Livelihood strategies are rooted in particular uses of the environment that are different for men and women. On the other hand, the utilisation and management of natural resources emanating from the unequal gender relationships in the community constrain the influence and control of women and girls over (i) decisions governing their lives; and (ii) their access to resources of production such as finances, agricultural inputs, land, and property as well as technologies.

Furthermore, land is a critical enabler for women to build assets and capacity for resilience as it offers an opportunity to diversify livelihoods. For example, Ethiopian women engaged in rangeland rehabilitation integrated with fodder development have benefited from such land-related intervention - especially women from Borena zone in Oromia region - who can feed their animals during a dry spell period. Beyond providing for their animals, they sell fodder, through which they generate income.

The poor - most of whom are women - resort to overly destructive survival/livelihood strategies such as felling indigenous trees to burn charcoal for sale in urban centres, riverbed sand harvesting and the cultivation of marginal and fragile lands, which aggravates environmental destruction (Republic of Kenya, 2018). Other negative social burdens exacerbate environmental destruction; for instance, women must walk long distances searching for fuelwood and water, leaving little time for other productive engagements. Ecological and socio-economic changes occurring in the ASALs have also led to shifts in gender roles. Women, who were previously viewed as vulnerable and in need of care and protection, are now playing key roles in ensuring their families' survival. On the other hand, with the depletion of livestock, some men have migrated to other areas either in search of pasture or to pursue wage employment, leaving women to act as heads of households. Enhancing afforestation practices in the ASALs will benefit women by creating access to fuelwood in the nearby areas and, as such, require consideration.

Women's time burden for water and firewood collection

Due to reoccurring droughts, poor households face an increasing time burden for collecting water (Somalia CPP, 2012).⁴ Poor women spend a considerable amount of time searching for water for household consumption, which negatively affects their ability to invest in other productive activities, including participating in decision-making institutions and processes. Simultaneously, women spend a lot of time on the triple roles, i.e. **productive, reproductive and community roles** which leaves them with little time for self-development and participation in other areas such as decision making, that would promote their strategic interests and needs. Therefore, reducing distances for fetching water is a critical intervention that would address women's time burden.

The heavy dependency on firewood has aggravated deforestation in the ASALs. Domestic roles are of a gendered nature; women are responsible for collecting firewood for cooking. Also, women are increasingly required to travel long distances to collect firewood. Long durations away from home can be a source of gender-based violence. Beyond firewood for home consumption, charcoal burning is another source of household income - arising from the sale of charcoal destined for exports.

Supporting women to address natural resource degradation

Some IGAD Member States have established and supported women's organisations to address natural resource degradation. Such organisations have made progress in the increased representation of women in political leadership and other decision-making positions and increased access to resources. The following example from Uganda illustrates what women's groups can do.

4. Somalia Country Programming Paper to End Drought Emergencies in the Horn of Africa. Document prepared with the support of the Technical Consortium (CGIAR & FAO), 26 September 2012.

Box 1: Case Study: Women adapting livelihood strategies in response to unpredictable rainfall in Uganda

In **Caicaoan**, a village in Karamoja in north-eastern Uganda, the climate is changing in unpredictable ways. For three years, the rain came late, and when it came, extraordinarily little rain fell. But then 2007 saw the worst flooding in 35 years. Harvests were destroyed, and grain stores stood empty. With men spending weeks away from home tending cattle, women were left caring for families and struggling to find alternative income sources. Collecting and selling firewood was one option, but firewood became more and more scarce, and women had to travel further and further to find it in unsafe places. Deforestation and lack of water are two of the many problems that the local women's group in Caicaoan decided to address. They successfully planted evergreen and mango trees to replace those cut down for fuel and charcoal. This reduced soil erosion and helped women earn an income. They also built a borehole so that the seven-hour round trip they used to make to collect water was reduced to 30 minutes. The women's group's work has given women a vital leadership role in finding sustainable livelihoods solutions for the community.

Source: Oxfam (2007)⁵

The Somalia CPP notes that there has been a general decline in both quantity and quality of water both for production and domestic use (Somalia CPP, 2012). During drought, reduced water tables are typical, leading to low yielding boreholes and longer waiting times at the few available water points. Consequently, equitable water resource management and linking water use with community livelihoods are critical factors in developing the regions' water resources.

Recommendations

One of the priority intervention areas of IDDRSI is the protection of natural resources through the development of forests, pastures, rangelands, re-establishment of the vegetative cover to combat desertification. Community inclusion and participation in planning for the rehabilitation, development and management of rangelands and forests in the drought-prone areas will ensure ownership and form the security and sustainability for continuous regeneration of these essential resources. Support through technical assistance and access to technologies will be required to ensure range re-seeding, bush control and clearing, fire-lines implementation. This will also protect natural vegetation, development of grazing areas, soil and water harvesting and conservation. Supporting the cultivation of non-forest timber by women, which does have an implication on the improvement of women's livelihoods, is another dimension that can be considered.

Water Resources Development

There is need for increased access to and sustainable management of the natural resources and increased control of women's resources. Specifically, Member States should consider the following:

1. Promote women's participation in water committees, reducing distances for women's fetching water, and developing appropriate water technologies for women;
2. Increase access to water for irrigation for food poor households;
3. Develop gender-sensitive approaches for capacity enhancement and awareness building;
4. Document and utilise women's knowledge and experiences with natural resource management;
5. Support rainwater harvesting for women and food poor households; Also, target food-poor families to ensure they utilise rain and downstream water harvesting techniques.

5. Oxfam (2007) Sisters on the Planet.

Renewable Energy

Member States should promote and expand the use of environmentally friendly renewable energy and wood-fuel saving technologies. There is an urgent need to provide energy-saving equipment to free more time for women to enable them to participate in other areas that will address their strategic interests, e.g. improved stoves. This could be supported by providing micro-loans that can allow households to acquire these energy-saving technologies. The focus should be on developing and adopting women-friendly renewable energy technology. Member States should also initiate biomass programmes and invest in alternative renewable energy technologies (e.g. promoting biofuel from less desirable and invasive biomass). Potential interventions can include developing policies and incentives favouring community and small entrepreneur-owned renewable energy resources that are more competitive and accessible than charcoal. Finally, Member States should attract private investors in energy supply (solar and electricity generation) for rural areas and pastoral communities.

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1. Support civil societies capacities to enable communities to use alternative sources and methods to access safe energy and technologies.
2. Document women's experiences with fuel-saving technologies.
3. Document and utilise women's knowledge in water harvesting technology, conservation, protection, and water catchment management to ensure that natural resources benefit women.
4. Within the IDDRSI strategy, there is a need to include affirmative action for women's natural resource management as an indicator.



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