

CASE STUDY

HOW WOMEN BUILD RESILIENCE:

Inclusion of gender in understanding and adapting to Myanmar's climate change impacts





OVERVIEW

Climate change often impacts the lives of women and men differently due to existing inequalities and gender-based roles and responsibilities.

Understanding those differences can help to inform how we plan for adaptation and how we build resilience. In Myanmar, women on average have lower levels of educational attainment, less land ownership, and lower participation in formal employment.

In addition, the MCCA vulnerability assessment consultations revealed that the economic contribution of women is not always captured in formal statistics. Almost 50 percent of women are considered “economically inactive” according to the 2014 census, which therefore does not recognize their contribution in sectors such as fishing, agriculture and other income-generating activities.

These factors contribute to women having fewer opportunities to participate in decision-making and less access to markets, capital, training and technologies.

This case study looks at the importance of gender in climate change adaptation efforts and shares the process and lessons learned from Myanmar Climate Change Alliance’s (MCCA) integration of gender considerations into Myanmar policies and actions to address climate change.

MCCA sought to explicitly consider the role of gender in our vulnerability assessment methodology, in our support for climate change policy development, and in our climate adaptation planning.

By considering gender throughout the assessment and policy development process, we hope to ensure that the unique needs and resources of both men and women are addressed in MCCA’s adaptation activities and mainstreamed in the implementation of future climate change activities as set out by the Myanmar Climate Change Strategy and Master Plan.

OUR APPROACH

A **Gender Guidance Kit**, drafted at the start of project activities with the support from a dedicated Gender and Environment Specialist, established the principles of our approach and set out the following basic guidelines:

- Where possible, disaggregate qualitative and quantitative data by sex during collection and analysis.
- Make sure that both men and women have been consulted about climate change, hazards, and livelihoods, partly through women-only consultations.
- Consider how climate change may have an effect on gender roles, and what adaptation actions men and women may take.
- Ensure that women and men's capacities, needs, and perspectives are included when developing interventions and adaptation measures.

Understanding terms:

Gender sensitive

Gender-sensitive activities differentiate between the capacities, needs and priorities of women and men; ensure that the views and ideas of both women and men are taken seriously; and consider the implications of decisions on the situation of women relative to men.

Gender responsive

Gender-responsive activities take actions and implement the needed interventions to address inequalities or imbalance between women and men to the advancement of gender equality.



INTEGRATING GENDER INTO ACTIVITIES

Using these guidelines, the MCCA team integrated gender considerations into the following program activities:

Gender analysis as part of the Vulnerability Assessment (VA) in three townships

Separate consultations were held with women as part of the climate change VA, with around 50 women sharing information about their livelihoods, roles and responsibilities, along with their perspectives on climate change and hazards. Quantitative data on education, economic activity, employment, head of household and migration was gathered and disaggregated by sex.

Training on climate VA and adaptation includes Gender and Climate Change

MCCA's Climate Change Training and Toolkit on conducting Rapid Vulnerability Assessments includes information on how climate change affects women and men, why gender matters in climate change adaptation programmes, how to conduct a gender-sensitive VA, and how to identify gender-responsive adaptation measures.

Integration of gender into the Myanmar Climate Change Strategy and Master Plan (2018-2030) and the Myanmar Climate Change Policy

Findings from community consultations during the policy development process were used to shape how gender considerations were included in the Strategy and Master Plan and the Climate Change Policy.

Integration of gender into the design and implementation of local adaptation projects

Selection and design of adaptation projects incorporated knowledge about gender from the Vulnerability Assessments to address the unique vulnerabilities of women to climate change, and to identify ways to support women to build resilience.



“ When we have bad income from farming and fishing, we plant fruits such as mango, coconut, and bitter nuts, and run small shops, sell food or groceries and make snacks to sell. We also sew clothes that are sold within the village, and we collect shrimp to dry and sell.”

Women's groups speak about their supplementary income activities during consultations in Labutta Township



Myanmar Climate Change Strategy and Master Plan

“ Climate change impacts the lives of women and men in different ways because of existing inequalities, responsibilities and roles.

Women can also lead the way in adapting to climate change impacts – for example, through small-scale entrepreneurship and business.

Ensuring the full and effective participation of women in decision-making means women can act as agents of change in all circumstances.

Myanmar National Climate Change Policy

“ Myanmar will be guided by the following principles:

Gender equality and women's empowerment:

Promote and protect gender equality and women's equal rights through strengthening gender-responsive climate change policy concerning adaptation, mitigation, finance, technology development and transfer and capacity-building, and ensuring the full and equal participation of women in decision-making.

IMPACT

Social Sustainability Plans were developed to ensure that local development plans consider all vulnerable groups, including gender differences.

Local Adaptation Committees selected women to manage adaptation projects.

In Labutta, women on the adaptation committee advocated for planting fruit trees around the shelter in addition to shade trees.

Multi-purpose shelters were constructed in Pakokku (for floods) and Labutta (for cyclones).

In Pakokku, women are leading the management of the shelter and participated in a vulnerability mapping to determine which households should have priority use of the shelter in case of flooding.

Women-headed households were given priority in the selection of which households would receive water storage tanks in Labutta.

Women's Self-Help Groups were created in Labutta and Pakokku to mobilize participation of women and create a platform for training.

The groups have received training on financial management and record-keeping, and operate a collective microfinance mechanism as a financial resource for the group's members.

A total of 151 women are members of 19 Self-Help Groups.

Vocational training on sewing has been provided to women in both project locations, as a way to diversify income and supplement current livelihoods.



VULNERABILITY ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

Conducting the gender analysis as part of the vulnerability assessment was critical for demonstrating the value of explicitly considering the different impacts and roles of women and men. This was valuable for the internal project team, for our partners, and for local and national officials and those involved in development of the national policies and plans.

Women and work



The 2014 Myanmar National Census reported that in Labutta Township, 69% of women are considered “economically inactive.” However, our discussions with women in Labutta showed that women play an essential role in economic activities, performing jobs such as cleaning, smoking, salting and drying fish, as well as selling fish and seafood products in local markets. They also participate in agriculture operations such as sowing, planting, weeding, harvesting and processing. In addition, women are supporting households with supplemental income sources when fishing and agricultural income is low, by producing and selling food and clothing. These economic activities reinforce the fact that women are already playing an essential role in adaptation of livelihoods when fisheries and agriculture are affected by climate change.

Women’s responsibility to care for the vulnerable

In case of cyclones, floods and other disasters that require mobility, women’s responsibility to care for children, sick and elderly people can hinder their timely escape, access to shelter or access to health care.

Making sure women are part of planning for evacuation routes and shelters will help to ensure that disaster management preparations are appropriate for all.



Women and migration



Migration is gender-imbalanced. For Labutta, 27% of migrants are women and 73% are men.

As a result, the remaining population has a higher proportion of women in the labor force and as household heads, which should be taken into account during adaptation planning.

This effect may become stronger due to increased migration because of climate change, as agriculture and fishing become more precarious.

In Hakha Township, women are affected by water shortages during the dry months of March and April, which increases their workload to find and transport water.

As temperatures rise, villagers report that lower water availability is the main impact, especially during the dry season.

Women and natural resources



Our assessment also found that rural women in Myanmar are challenged by their unequal access to natural resources and land rights, and limited participation in decision-making.

Any adaptation interventions should explicitly take these factors into account during consultation and design.

These findings clearly demonstrate the practical value of considering gender as a critical part of vulnerability assessments and adaptation planning, and MCCA has incorporated the learnings into reports, workshops, training modules, and communication materials to be shared with others working on climate change adaptation.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Internal capacity-building and support from a gender specialist helped improve the application of a 'gender lens' on all MCCA activities in the start of the project. The fieldwork and consultation for the vulnerability assessment showed the value of explicitly considering the different roles and responsibilities of women and men, and of dedicating time and resources to convene women-only groups for consultation.
- Separate discussions with women produced valuable findings that informed the results of the vulnerability assessment and local adaptation interventions.
- Without the practical analysis at the village level, the discussion about including gender in the Myanmar Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (Master Plan) and the Myanmar National Climate Change Policy would not have had as much traction.
- Sharing the findings helped to demonstrate the added value and importance to government partners.
- Many projects include gender activities, but the concepts are not always well integrated or understood. MCCA provides an example of how gender can be integrated into diverse climate change activities, from the methodology of the vulnerability assessment to policy development and outreach.
- Technical support is important, and gender is a specific area of expertise. Having a gender specialist support the team was a critical success factor for building the capacity of the project team from the start.
- Ensure that technical support on gender is included in budget planning. Technical support can also be gained through partnerships with local organizations such as government ministries and civil society organizations focused on gender issues.
- Prioritizing gender from the start sets the stage for successful mainstreaming during project implementation.
- Align with other national policies, such as strategic plans related to gender equality, livelihoods, political participation, land tenure, or economic opportunities that may have specific commitments on gender. Myanmar has a National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (2013-2022) that aims to advance women's status in 12 areas to reach substantive gender equality by 2022.
- Combine qualitative and quantitative data analysis to interpret gender implications and understand context. Using focus group consultations to contextualize data on economic inactivity provided important insights on the role of women in generating both primary income from fisheries and agriculture along with supplemental income.
- Integrate gender into core project activities and outcomes, rather than making a separate plan for work on gender. This approach ensures that gender is elevated as an integral component of project activities.
- Ensure that analysis of gender goes beyond the assumption that women are more vulnerable to climate change. The roles and responsibilities of women and men are different, and women may be vulnerable in unique ways due to their role as a household caretaker for children and elderly, or because of differences in education and asset ownership.
- However, women are also powerful agents of change through the knowledge and resources they hold. Actively including women in adaptation activities can increase the effectiveness of climate change policies and programs.



LOOKING FORWARD

Integration of gender-sensitive concepts and approaches into key policies, activities and training materials in Myanmar contributes to future mainstreaming of gender into the country's climate change adaptation efforts.

In the Myanmar Climate Change Strategy and Master Plan, many of the Expected Results and strategic indicators specifically mention gender, which will guide activities to ensure consideration and inclusion of women.

One indicator for the agriculture sector is “number of farmers (both men and women) benefiting from the introduction of climate-smart technologies.”

Gender is also being mainstreamed in national climate change adaptation activities through the Paris Agreement statement that “adaptation action should follow a country-driven, gender-responsive, participatory and fully transparent approach” and through the Gender Action Plan.

As more countries develop their adaptation plans and sector activities, practical experience is useful in understanding how to make these gender-responsive.

In addition, as UN Environment and UN-Habitat continue to support climate change vulnerability assessments in the region, the learnings from MCCA project activities are being transferred to and applied in other countries and contexts.

“ Without understanding the contribution of women to additional income generation, vocational trainings might only focus on training men, and on the primary income sources of fishing and farming, rather than the supplemental income sources that are critical for adaptation.”

Annette Wallgren, Gender and Environment Specialist, UN Environment

ABOUT MCCA

The Myanmar Climate Change Alliance (MCCA) was launched in 2013 as a platform to support the Government of the Union of the Republic of Myanmar in addressing the challenges posed by climate change. The MCCA is an initiative of the Environmental Conservation Department (ECD) of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MoNREC).

It is funded by the European Union as part of the Global Climate Change Alliance, and implemented by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment). The primary objective of MCCA is to mainstream climate change into the Myanmar policy development and reform agenda.

