

# **The Benefits of Gender Balance in Climate Change Mitigation Investments and Sustainable Energy Initiatives**

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## **Abstract**

Cleaner fuels, improved efficiency and adoption of renewable energy technologies offer important possibilities for low-carbon economic development and reductions in overall greenhouse gas emissions. These possibilities are especially important for women in developing countries who currently play critical roles in supplying and managing traditional biomass fuels. The UN's Sustainable Energy for All initiative is highlighting the importance of universal energy access, and mobilizing strategically targeted public and private investments. At the same time, climate-related financing holds significant promise for promoting greater access to energy in under-served areas in developing countries – thereby also supporting economic and social empowerment of women – particularly if funding mechanisms such as the Climate Investment Funds and the new Green Climate Fund effectively support the engagement and participation of women.

As a member of the Sustainable Energy for All Practitioners Network, as well as the Global Gender and Climate Alliance, ENERGIA is providing guidance on how to achieve gender balance and equality in the context of sustainable energy and climate change mitigation. This paper outlines practical information about gender-aware policies, procedures, and tools that can make energy and climate change mitigation activities and investments more successful and effective – and provide greater benefits for both men and women. It also presents some brief descriptions of successful gender mainstreaming activities in the energy sector.

## **Gender considerations in sustainable energy and climate investments**

In countries where there are currently low levels of energy access, increased public and private investments in energy are closely linked to prospects for economic development, especially for women collecting and managing the wood, dung, charcoal and crop residues widely burned as fuel in households and small-scale enterprises. Most investments in electrical grids and fuel distribution systems have tended to focus on urban and industrial development, often leaving rural areas and peri-urban settlements literally in the dark. Due to women's traditional responsibility for fuel supplies in rural areas, the burdens of unpaid work related to energy scarcity fall more heavily on women than men.

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A widespread transition to modern energy alternatives would benefit many women in developing countries by freeing up their time and labour, improving their health, enabling them to achieve higher levels of education and employment, and allowing them to be more productive in their business activities, thus providing major benefits to families, communities and national economies. However, the distinct perspectives of women have too often been missing in energy and climate change investment decisions.

ENERGIA, the International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy, is committed to promoting gender mainstreaming in energy and climate policies, programmes, projects, institutions and investments. This work integrates an emphasis on human rights and empowerment of women with a practical focus on increasing the effectiveness of energy access and climate change mitigation programmes and investments.

The UN's new Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) initiative clearly recognizes that increased access to energy is necessary for creating economic opportunities for women in developing countries. It also recognizes that women's engagement is essential for the successful design, marketing and adoption of new energy technologies and climate-responsive innovations. The UN Secretary-General has particularly emphasized the impact of energy poverty on women's employment. "Women spend hours each day on routine daily subsistence activities—pounding grain, hauling water and gathering firewood. They have little or no time for earning income" (Ban Ki-moon, 2011a).

At the same time as SE4All activities are beginning to be implemented, a new Green Climate Fund is being set up within the context of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). This fund is expected to mobilize up to US \$100 billion per year in public and private financing for climate change mitigation and adaptation in developing countries by 2020. Investments in sustainable energy options in developing countries will be a main focus for climate change mitigation funding.

It is important to note that due to gender and climate change advocacy efforts, the Green Climate Fund's governing instrument specifically calls for taking a "gender-sensitive approach" within the broader objective of pursuing environmental, social, economic, and development co-benefits from climate change mitigation and adaptation actions. Reinforcing the recognition of the gender issues in the climate context, at the December 2012 Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC governments adopted a new decision on promoting gender balance and improving the participation of women in climate change negotiations and decision-making bodies (UNFCCC, 2012).

The current process of setting up the operations of the Green Climate Fund could provide a breakthrough opportunity for channelling energy financing into gender balanced investments, if the Advisory Board actually adopts and implements an effective gender-sensitive approach. Although there have been some efforts to incorporate gender considerations within the activities of the existing Climate Investment Funds managed by the World Bank, the potential of gender mainstreaming to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of climate mitigation investments has not yet been fully realized.

As the operating frameworks for the both the Green Climate Fund and Sustainable Energy for All investments are established, it is important to highlight and apply lessons regarding gender mainstreaming drawn from successful projects in the energy sector that can serve as examples of gender-sensitive investments.

## Gender mainstreaming in the energy sector

Gender mainstreaming is still relatively rare in energy and climate change activities and institutions. Gender mainstreaming has been defined as *“the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies and programmes, in all areas and at all levels, and 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 policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated”* (ECOSOC 1997/2).

In response to requests for guidance on how to mainstream gender considerations in the energy sector, ENERGIA produced a handbook which offered tools and methodologies, as well as examples of gender-sensitive projects (ENERGIA, 2011). Some important elements of plans for gender mainstreaming are:

- conducting gender audits of decision-making and management processes;
- engaging gender experts to assist with institutional and project-level gender mainstreaming plans;
- collecting gender-disaggregated data;
- incorporating gender-sensitive budgeting and accounting approaches; and
- using gender-based indicators and evaluation procedures.

Attention to the impacts of gender roles and promotion of women’s participation in the energy sector (including as producers and suppliers of energy technologies and services) has been most evident in the context of cooking energy. However, in addition to more efficient and less polluting cooking fuels and equipment, many women in developing countries also need energy for water pumping to ease the burdens of supplying water for their households, for agricultural production and food processing (to feed their families and for market sales), for other entrepreneurial activities to earn income, for street lighting to promote their safety, for communication technologies that provide information, marketing and banking services, and for improved family healthcare and education.

In terms of promoting women’s incomes and contributions to economic development, ENERGIA has found that energy sector policies and investments need to focus on expanding women’s business activities through use of more energy-efficient processes and equipment. Many of women’s traditional businesses, such as food processing, baking, brewing beer, and making soap and shea butter products, require large amounts of time and heat energy. More efficient types of fuels and equipment allow women to increase the profitability and productivity of these activities, and also move into other types of business enterprises. At the same time, new communications technologies allow them to benefit from better market access and information, as well as banking and financial services.

Since women in all types of businesses currently face difficulties in obtaining the capital they require, in part due to gender discrimination, there is also a need for innovative funding and financial services specifically targeted towards women, to help them make the transition from small-scale, informal operations to larger businesses that are recognized within the formal sector.

With accessible financing opportunities, it is easier for women to get involved in new energy-related businesses, for example by producing and marketing more efficient stoves, selling and installing solar home products, managing village-level power systems (including micro hydropower generators, wind turbines, and multifunctional platforms), constructing and marketing biogas digesters, or producing biodiesel fuels from locally grown crops. However, there is also a need for other business-related

services to encourage women to pursue new economic opportunities. These include technical skills and training, since many new energy-related business opportunities may be in areas that have been traditionally considered men's work. Women seeking to expand their enterprises or start new ones will also need some degree of mentoring in developing business management skills.

At the macro level, ENERGIA has provided guidance to governments and institutions interested in incorporating greater gender balance into their energy activities and investments. In Kenya, an ENERGIA-sponsored audit of national gender and energy policies focused government attention on the different energy needs and priorities of man and women. In 2010, ENERGIA was asked to assist the country's electrical utility – Kenya Power – in developing a gender mainstreaming plan. The plan they adopted included commitments to: ensure that women and small businesses are able to obtain electrical connections; include women on all decision-making panels; provide gender training for all staff; make progress towards a target of 30 percent women for senior management positions; and hire an independent gender expert to support implementation of the gender mainstreaming plan.

ENERGIA is also working with the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), to provide technical advice and support on gender mainstreaming in Norway's international programmes on *Oil for Development* and *Clean Energy for Development*. Norad's Action Plan for Women's Rights and Gender Equality identified gender sensitivity in energy as a priority area for development cooperation, with commitments to support sustainable energy solutions that ease women's work burdens and improve their access to health and education, and to ensure that both women and men participate in decision-making, implementation of projects, and management of natural resources in partner countries. To date, ENERGIA and Norad have worked together with governments in Mozambique, Timor-Leste, Uganda, and Liberia. Norway has also strongly supported a gender-responsive approach to financing energy access for all.

## **Examples of gender-sensitive energy sector activities**

ENERGIA has been assisting a variety of energy projects and institutions in reviewing their specific gender issues, goals, and capacities, and in some cases developing Gender Action Plans. The aim has been to improve project effectiveness and promote participation and benefits for both women and men, by documenting and addressing key gender gaps and opportunities, building gender capacity in the energy projects and their partners, and showcasing how energy access projects can successfully provide benefits to women as well as men. Here are a few examples:

### **A. Bangladesh - Increasing Opportunities for Women in Renewable Energy Technology Application<sup>2</sup>**

In early 2000, Prokaushali Sangsad Ltd. (PSL) was engaged by The World Bank in the design of a national solar programme. Based on energy demand in rural households, modern lighting was identified as a priority. The Gender and Energy Network Bangladesh, which is a member of the ENERGIA network, provided support to the project regarding gender mainstreaming.

During Phase I of the project, 35 women from a remote village on the island of Char Montaz were engaged in the operation of a micro-enterprise called the Coastal Electrification and Women's Development Cooperative (CEWDC). The women manufactured and sold efficient fluorescent lamps operable using 12 volt direct current batteries. The women were given extensive training in

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<sup>2</sup> Excerpt from an unpublished paper for ENERGIA by Lydia Muchiri, Practical Action Kenya.

manufacturing, quality control, business development and marketing of these lamps. They also set up a diesel battery charging station near the local market, and later established solar battery charging stations.

As availability of off-grid electrification services in Bangladesh advanced, the women's cooperative started to provide micro-financing to rural households for solar home systems, acting as a partner organisation of Infrastructure Development Company Limited (IDCOL), a national infrastructure financing institution. CEWDC employs approximately 400 staff to run the solar business venture, and has sold more than 24,000 systems. In 2012, it returned to lamp assembly for use with solar home systems, working with a mainstream lamp supplier. Lack of finance was a constraint for the expansion and growth of CWEDC since micro-financing for solar home systems tied up funds for a long period, but the partnership with IDCOL provided access to low-cost refinancing. The cooperative is the only women-owned enterprise out of the 30 partners of IDCOL engaged in the national solar home system programme.

### **B. Kenya – Upesi Cook Stoves Project<sup>3</sup>**

In Kenya, there is little access to electricity, and wood accounts for about 70 percent of the country's energy consumption. Most cooking is done by women using a three-stone fireplace, which produces a lot of smoke and consumes a great deal of wood. Practical Action Eastern Africa and members of the ENERGIA network have been promoting improved energy access, with an emphasis on gender considerations.

Practical Action Eastern Africa started the Upesi Cook Stoves Project in 1986 with the aim of improving the living conditions of women and their income earning opportunities in rural households by training them to make efficient ceramic cook stoves that require less collection of firewood and generate less smoke. Existing women's groups learned how to produce and market the Upesi cook stoves, and also how to draw up business plans, organize and manage production activities, and access credit facilities. At first women mainly focused on producing ceramic stove liners, but now there are women artisans who also make the outside metal cladding and assemble the stoves, making good incomes. In addition, they have developed new stove designs.

Building on the work of this project, there are currently many improved cook stoves entrepreneurs in western Kenya employing both men and women in the value chain. Several networks have also been established to support potential and existing entrepreneurs, including the West Kenya Stoves Network and the Kisumu Indoor Air Pollution Network. There are more than 300 community stove installers earning incomes from promotion and dissemination of stoves in the region, and about 1.8 million stoves have been produced in Western Kenya and disseminated nationally.

### **C. Nepal – Mainstreaming Gender in the Alternative Energy Promotion Centre, and the Renewable Energy Sector<sup>4</sup>**

Although several ministries were implementing a gender mainstreaming approach in Nepal, the renewable energy programmes were not. As a result, the Gender Energy and Water Network Nepal and ENERGIA began advocating for and working on integration of gender into energy projects. Only about half the country's households have access to electricity (including through off-grid solutions), and wood accounts for more than 70 percent of energy consumption.

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<sup>3</sup> Excerpt from an unpublished paper for ENERGIA by Asma Huque, Prokaushali Sangsad Ltd., Dhaka.

<sup>4</sup> Excerpt from an unpublished paper for ENERGIA by Dr. Indira Shakya.

The Alternative Energy Promotion Centre under the Ministry of Environment has been developing and promoting renewable/alternative energy technologies in Nepal, particularly improved stoves (both clay and metal), biogas systems, solar photovoltaic panels and thermal equipment, and improved water mills and small hydro systems.

ENERGIA supported gender mainstreaming in AEPC and the renewable energy programme by training the AEPC staff on the approach, helping them develop a gender action plan, and providing a gender analysis of the Rural Energy Policy and the Rural Renewable Energy Programme document. As a result, measures were taken towards revising the Rural Energy Policy to include a “gendered agenda” in line with the recommendations from the ENERGIA analysis. In addition, AEPC adopted a gender action plan, and also drafted gender-sensitive strategies for implementation of some of the renewable energy projects. In line with the gender action plan, annual work plans have included gender-sensitive activities and also initiated a database using disaggregated data related to ownership of systems and participation in trainings. Additionally, the organisation made it mandatory to include a gender expert in studies related to different technical, economic and social aspects of the technologies it is responsible for.

#### **D. Tanzania - TaTEDO Integrated Modern Energy Services for Sustainable Development and Poverty Reduction<sup>5</sup>**

In 2007, TaTEDO initiated a project in 19 districts that aimed to contribute to sustainable development and poverty reduction by enhancing energy access for households, small and medium sized enterprises, and social service centres. The project supported enterprise development to empower rural men and women entrepreneurs. The project activities focused on building the technical and business capacity of entrepreneurs as suppliers and users of energy technologies, developing markets, promoting greater use of modern energy technologies in a gender-sensitive way, and facilitating financial support for entrepreneurs.

The TATEDO project staff developed a gender mainstreaming strategy using the training manual on gender mainstreaming developed by ENERGIA for guidance, and also benefited from ENERGIA capacity building on how to implement this approach. A number of women entrepreneurs have been able to earn new income by using various energy-related technologies such as efficient cook stoves, charcoal baking ovens, solar dryers and biogas plants.

The project found that promotion of modern energy technologies is more effective when beneficiaries are enabled to use energy services productively for income and employment generation. However, this requires (1) proven and replicable business practices, (2) technical and business capacity, (3) predictable, supportive and consistent government policies and regulations, and (4) access to finance suited to the various stages and needs of business development. In order to encourage private investments to support enterprises in rural areas, it was important to establish linkages between local micro-financing institutions and national banking and financing institutions.

### **SE4All, gender and financing challenges**

In the UN Secretary-General’s November 2011 vision statement on Sustainable Energy For All, (Ban Ki-moon, 2011b), he cited a special report by the International Energy Agency indicating the scale of the

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<sup>5</sup> Excerpt from an unpublished paper for ENERGIA by Gisela Ngoo, TaTEDO.

challenge: more than 1.3 billion people lack access to electricity, and at least 2.7 billion people are without clean cooking facilities (more than 95 percent of whom are in either sub-Saharan Africa or developing Asia (IEA, 2011).

Reaching the goal of universal access to energy by 2030 will make an enormous contribution to women in developing countries currently suffering from energy scarcity. However, new and innovative investments will be required to meet the energy needs of remote rural communities and informal settlements that are beyond the reach of centralized grid and commercial fuel distribution systems.

The International Energy Agency's New Policies Scenario estimated that achieving universal energy access by 2030 would require incremental electricity generation of about 950 terawatt hours by 2030, at a cost of approximately US \$33 billion per year on average over the period 2010-2030. But only 40 percent of these electricity needs would likely be met by grid electricity due to the challenges involved in serving widely dispersed communities with low population densities, incomes and consumption rates (Ibid., 2011).

More support is needed through SE4All for "bottom up solutions" such as off-grid, small-scale, decentralized and community-based sustainable energy options to serve the needs of hard to reach areas. These have special importance for promoting gender equity because they can support some basic services in places where women's time and opportunities are most severely constrained by energy scarcity.

SE4All activities in this context will promote adoption of renewable energy technologies for productive purposes, and support commercial approaches to the delivery of energy services. If customers can use newly-available energy sources for income generation, then energy distributors will be better able to earn profits by serving these markets, and this will encourage increased private sector investments. However, some public incentives and/or financing are still likely to be needed for "bottom-up" energy suppliers as well as consumers.

Small-scale renewable energy projects generally have more difficulty obtaining commercial loans, attracting investments, and accessing climate change financing mechanisms, than larger, conventional energy systems. There may be high up-front costs for suppliers as well as customers, and potential lenders and investors may be unfamiliar with the technologies or uncertain about potential returns.

The SE4All Practitioners Network has recommended various actions by multilateral and bilateral development organizations, government agencies and national banks to facilitate smaller-scale energy access projects, including: providing grants and technical assistance; incorporating off-grid renewable energy components into larger electrical utility projects; providing funding to local private or public financing companies, NGOs and microfinance organizations that bundle energy demand and services; and leveraging private sector finance for energy access projects through loan guarantees, revolving credit lines, and carbon finance (SE4All Practitioners Network, 2012).

SE4All has the potential to call attention to importance of energy access solutions that have so far not attracted commercial investments – and to help channel new financing into the types of activities that benefit communities where women are most in need of basic energy services.

## **Gender, energy and climate financing**

The climate financing mechanisms set up in connection with the UNFCCC provide potential opportunities for women in developing countries to obtain financing for renewable energy technologies that would otherwise be beyond their reach. Gender-sensitive climate-related funds and investments could simultaneously promote women's economic and social development, reduce emissions and help build community resilience to climate change. However, additional efforts are needed to ensure that women, and women's projects, are able to obtain information about climate-related funds and effectively access these processes. It is quite difficult for women's organizations to be able to (a) identify funds that could be appropriate for them; (b) acquire the technical expertise to develop a proposal that could qualify for and be approved under these funds; and (c) have the financial capacity to present such a project (e.g., to secure emission reduction credits, they would need to have enough funding to sustain the project for the first years, until the certificates can be sold).

In 2008, gender advocates called on the UNFCCC parties to make the Kyoto Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and other carbon trading funds and credits, equally accessible to men and women [Manila Declaration] The inclusion of a specific reference to a "gender-sensitive approach" in the Green Climate Funds was most encouraging. In practice, however, it is a challenge to incorporate gender sensitivity. Many governments, institutions and energy sector representatives are not clear on how to accomplish this, which is why ENERGIA's guidance tools and illustrative examples from the energy sector can be particularly useful.

### ***The Clean Development Mechanism***

The market-based CDM system provides Certified Emission Reductions for qualified projects implemented in developing countries. These can be traded on carbon markets, and have become a significant source of project financing for developing countries. Small-scale projects, including the types of community-based activities women are most often engaged in, have had trouble accessing this financing, due to cumbersome and expensive certification processes and difficulties in determining the amount of emissions avoided. Many CDM projects have involved greenhouse gas emission reductions through energy efficiency improvements in large industrial facilities in China and India, which are easier to measure and produce larger amounts of credits.

To address the challenges of smaller projects, the CDM system began to allow aggregation or "bundling" of small projects, and this has opened up some more possibilities for women to benefit (though the process is still challenging for small groups). In Bangladesh, the Grameen Shakti programme began bundling small solar projects in rural areas and established technical training centre run by female engineers that have trained more than 3000 rural women to assemble, install, maintain, and repair solar systems. In Nepal, the Biogas Support Programme has received CDM credits for widespread production of household biogas plants. ENERGIA has worked with this programme to develop a gender mainstreaming plan, and it now has targets for promoting women's ownership of biogas digesters, and for training women to build and manage biogas digesters. The project has reduced women's fuel wood collection, improved cooking and health conditions, lowered carbon dioxide emissions, and given women more time to engage in income-generating activities (Biogas Sector Partnership Nepal, 2009).

### ***The Climate Investment Funds***



In 2008, the World Bank and regional multilateral development banks approved a set of Climate Investment Funds. These included a Clean Technology Fund focused on large scale national or regional energy investment plans in middle income countries, and a Strategic Climate Fund that is more focused on developing countries.

The Strategic Climate Fund includes a programme on Scaling Up Renewable Energy in Low-Income Countries that is of most relevance to women in off-grid areas. They could benefit from renewable energy options such as wind, solar and small hydro generators for electricity or battery charging, and for motorized power to run water pumps and grain mills. Women could also become suppliers of renewable energy by producing biofuels, and building and/or marketing equipment, if they were able to obtain the necessary technical and business training, and access financing for renewable energy business opportunities.

In 2012, IUCN conducted a CIF Gender Assessment of the group of funds and concluded that while “there has been a concerted effort towards including gender considerations in the CIF”, further work is still required (IUCN, 2012). The assessment found that all of the country-level investment plans for the fund on Scaling Up Renewable Energy do reference women, but primarily as beneficiaries of energy programmes rather than as active participants, and noted that greater gender equality could increase overall productivity and advance development outcomes (Ibid.).

The IUCN report recommended that the CIF develop a more comprehensive gender strategy and take additional steps to support gender mainstreaming, including: engaging a gender specialist; harmonizing and institutionalizing gender considerations more effectively; promoting additional knowledge, innovation and cooperation regarding gender issues; harnessing capacity within governments and multilateral development banks to strengthen CIF plans and programmes through technical approaches linking gender to climate change and specific sectors; and strengthening gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation (Ibid.).

### ***The Green Climate Fund***

At the UNFCCC conference of the parties in 2009, an agreement was made by a group of industrialized countries to mobilize funds to address climate change mitigation and adaptation in developing countries – up to US \$100 billion a year by 2020. A Governing Instrument for the new Green Climate Fund was adopted in 2011, and an Advisory Board was selected and began meeting in 2012. The Advisory Board is currently considering the business model and procedural framework for the fund, which is intended to become operational in 2014. It is expected to be the primary multilateral financing mechanism for climate action in developing countries.

The guiding principles set out in the fund’s Governing Instrument call for a balance between financing for adaptation and mitigation, “while promoting environmental, social economic and development co-benefits and taking a gender-sensitive approach (GCF, 2011). The Governing Instrument also contains provisions for environmental and social safeguards and stakeholder input and participation (including women) in the design, development and implementation of the strategies and activities financed by the fund (Ibid.). Another provision relevant to women’s access is one that calls for simplified approval processes for small-scale activities (Ibid.).

The fund’s specific requirements for gender-sensitivity and participation of women provide a critical opportunity to put forward information and methodologies to ensure that gender considerations are

actually incorporated into the fund's management and operations. It is also likely that the UNFCCC's 2012 gender balance decision will help to heighten the level of attention being paid to this issue.

## **Conclusion and recommendations**

Lessons about gender balance from energy sector and implementation of the Climate Investment Funds are highly relevant for the application of gender-sensitive approaches in activities financed under the Sustainable Energy for All initiative and the Green Climate Fund.

While there are important social equity and human rights arguments for gender equality, there are also more practical efficiency-based reasons to invest in projects that increase women's access to renewable energy resources – thereby relieving women's energy-related household burdens and enabling them to scale up their entrepreneurial activities, moving towards greater national and local socio-economic security and resilience to climate change impacts as well as lower carbon emission levels.

Some of ENERGIA's recommendations for energy access investments, and governance and management of the climate funds, include the following:

- \*Recognition by national and international planners and funders that poor women in developing countries are already active agents of change at the household and community level, and have a strong potential to contribute to national energy security, economic development, and climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts.

- \*Specific attention to women's energy access in international institutional frameworks, and prioritization of gender equality in national energy and climate change plans, investments and policies, including through designation of gender focal points with appropriate expertise and authority to promote gender mainstreaming;

- \* Outreach to women's organizations concerning energy and climate change initiatives, and financial opportunities and mechanisms, in accessible formats and languages.

- \*Adoption of participatory processes that actively involve women in the design, selection and implementation of renewable energy and climate change mitigation projects.

- \* Support for targeted training programs for women in technical skills, business management, and financing options to support their involvement in renewable energy business opportunities.

- \*Adoption of gender audits of management processes; gender-based needs assessments, project indicators and evaluation criteria; gender-sensitive budgets and accounting procedures; and engagement of gender experts and advisors.

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