

Wetlands International Policy on Gender Equality

Vision- the role of gender in sustainable development

Wetlands International works globally, regionally and nationally to achieve the conservation and wise use of wetlands, to benefit biodiversity and human well-being. In order to fully improve human well-being we recognise the different contributions that men, women and children play achieving sustainable development.

We especially recognise in our community-based approaches that women play a key role in the management of wetlands. We consider that the wise use of wetlands makes significant contributions to several of the Millennium Development Goals that have strong gender relevance, such as maternal health, universal primary education, the eradication of extreme poverty hunger and thus ultimately the advancement of gender equality.

Mainstreaming gender equality within our programme goals

Wetlands International recognises within its projects and programmes the fact that varying roles, responsibilities and behaviours of men and women are created in families, societies and cultures.

Although it is our understanding that gender roles and expectations are learned and that they can change over time and vary within cultures, sensitivities to existing cultures and traditions need to be applied at all times.

In all of Wetlands International's programmes the role of women is identified and equality in the design and structuring of projects and interventions is actively encouraged.

Within project learning cycles, we examine whether project objectives include or address issues such as the following:

- Do project objectives explicitly refer to men and women?
- Are target beneficiaries described/analysed according to gender?
- Have target groups and others directly or indirectly associated with the project identified their own needs, concerns and priorities?

Lessons learned from projects are incorporated back into the organisation's own learning through two way dialogue with project coordinators, assessments and evaluations. This learning is shared with partners and other organisations.

Mainstreaming gender in our projects

As a learning organisation we have looked not only to our partners but also to our offices in Southern countries who have led the way in incorporating gender concerns and equality into our programmes over the last ten years. Below some examples:

- In West Africa we organised courses specifically for women, in response to an unfavourable gender imbalance in the participation in our wetland management training courses.

- In many of our community-based wetland management projects we work with or through local women associations.
- In the Inner Niger Delta project in Mali, we provide funding to local women associations for investing in alternative livelihood activities, which has proven very successful (measured by profits and continued investment capacity).
- In Senegal we have supported projects of local women's groups to restore a number of coastal wetlands as part of local/village based development strategies.

The Green Coast Project

A clear focus on gender is articulated and reflected in the objectives of the Green Coast project set in the tsunami afflicted region of South and South East Asia. The Green Coast project stresses the importance of gender equity throughout the project, covering all its components, starting with the collection of gender-segregated data. The project takes into account the specific roles, rights and responsibilities of men, women, boys and girls and the degree to which gender concerns are addressed will be used as a benchmark to both measure policy plans, and impact and effects of the small grants of this project.

It is noteworthy that in November 2006 an external mid-term evaluation of the Green Coast project noted that "although past experiences have shown that gender, in particular addressing women's issues in disaster situations, is a key area where gaps generally remain unless given specific attention, the Green Coast Project has been able to sufficiently mainstream concerns and well-being of women in meeting its objectives of ecological restoration and livelihoods security after the tsunami."

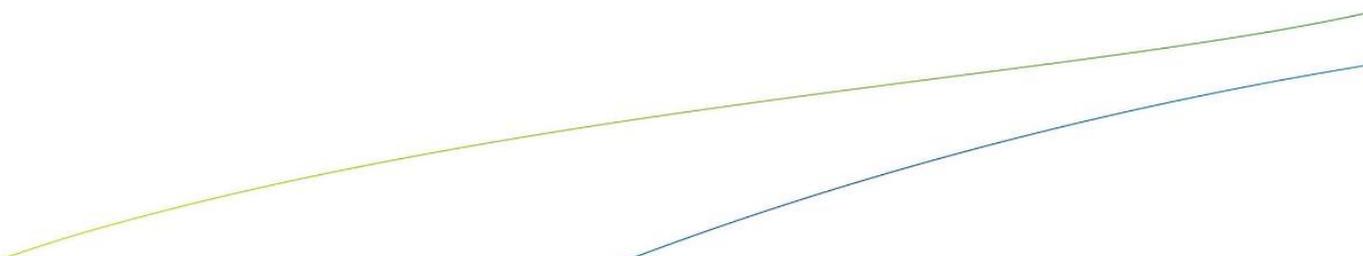
To a large extent, this success was due to the extensive gender training provided for all project partners and the provision of useful frameworks to conduct livelihoods analyses and to monitor gender sensitivity and inclusion. These frameworks are included in a full package of guidelines for the integration of gender issues in the various components of Green Coast.

The following practical tools and approaches come from this field work:

- Gender sensitive appraisal of small grants projects checklist.
- Framework for livelihood analysis.
- Gender Mainstreaming in Green Coast Package
- Training of Wetlands International project staff and demonstration project partners by the Women for Water Coalition.

Partnership development

In order to mainstream gender effectively, Wetlands International have found it crucially important for all project partners understand why a focus on gender is important in their project(s), and how to integrate a gender sensitive approach in a practical and effective way. Well-established networks of experts and close partnerships with key organisations provide Wetlands International with the essential tools and perspectives for delivering our sustainable development activities worldwide.

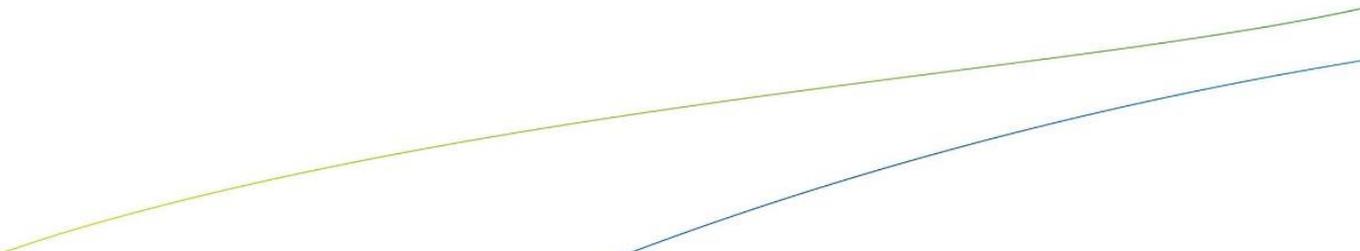


About this policy

The following paper has been developed by Kemi Seesink, Policy Officer for Wetlands and Livelihoods, in line with the vision of Wetlands International to provide a situation statement and policy document on gender for the programmes and projects of Wetlands International. Wetlands International strives to have a gender balance in our staff and outreach and also have staff members with gender equality expertise.

The draft policy has also been shared with key staff from the Wetlands and Livelihoods Inter-Office team to try to ensure perspectives and practices from various regional Wetlands International offices were integrated into the draft document. These processes and channels contributed to the formulation of this organisational policy on gender equality and will also contribute to the usage, monitoring and evaluation of the policy.

References

- Mali Projects: <http://www.bio-rights.org/cases/mali/progress.html>
 - Senegal Project: Popenquine project proposal available on request
 - Inner Niger Delta: <http://www.wetlandgf-4847-b28a-8ofdg6da1203>
 - The Green Coast Project, for nature and people after the tsunami www.greencoasts.org
 - Green Coast Midterm evaluation report (available upon request)
 - Gender sensitive appraisal of small grants projects checklist
 - Gender Mainstreaming in Green Coast Package
 - Framework for livelihood analysis
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