

FORESTS NEWS

EVENT COVERAGE

How climate finance and technology could better integrate women

COP 25 delegates detail challenges to implementing gender transformative action



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"What is the role of finance and technology in catalyzing sustainable and gender-equitable change?" Speakers at a COP 25 side event jointly sponsored by CIFOR, World Agroforestry (ICRAF) and the Center for People and Forests (RECOFTC). CIFOR/Julie Mollins

Madrid - Amid frustrated negotiations around Article 6 guidance on emissions counting and carbon markets, U.N. COP25 climate talks delivered a decision on a five-year enhanced Lima Work Program on Gender. The work program, initially embedded into

the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2014, is a commitment to advance gender balance and integrate gender considerations.

While recognizing gender-differentiated vulnerabilities to climate change as well as negotiating parties' respective commitments to human and women's rights, the decision text notes that gender-responsive implementation and means of implementation of climate policy and action can enable parties to raise ambition and enhance gender equality, said a leading scientist.

To date, despite potential synergies between gender equality and sustainable climate action, gender considerations have often been addressed superficially in climate policy and programming – if at all, said Markus Ihalainen, co-coordinator of the gender program at the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) at a COP 25 side event jointly sponsored by CIFOR, World Agroforestry (ICRAF) and the Center for People and Forests (RECOFTC).

In the context of climate finance, the picture is even more bleak, Ihalainen said, citing a delegate who said that a 2016 study by the U.N. Development Programme found that projects addressing both climate change and women's rights received only 0.01 percent of international funding.

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“Gender considerations have often been understood in terms of participation in meetings or equitable benefit sharing, which really were introduced as minimum-level procedural safeguards but now are somehow assumed to lead to gender equality,” said Ihalainen, who moderated the event titled “What is the role of finance in technology in catalyzing sustainable and gender equitable change?” which brought together a diverse panel of experts to share their perspectives on what socially transformative climate finance could and should look like.

“However, while important, such safeguards are rarely in-and-of themselves sufficient for challenging and transforming deep-rooted systemic inequalities at root of differentiated vulnerabilities,” he said. “We wanted to explore the role climate finance and technology can play in catalyzing gender-transformative change.”

INVESTING IN WOMEN

The European Investment Bank (EIB), the lending arm of the European Union, is making concerted efforts to tie together its climate action and gender equality goals, said Monica Scatasta, head of the bank's Environment, Climate and Social Office.

In 2016, EIB issued a strategy on gender equality and women's economic empowerment, Scatasta said. We are aware of the difference in the way climate change affects women, she said, highlighting concerns over the lack of access to funds and the impact of the aftermath of disasters, including increased sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation experienced by women and girls.

"In this first gender action plan, we're trying to address some of the challenges," she said. "The focus is really to develop a results framework that's actually robust to track our impacts on gender equality and women economic empowerment."

In its new ambition to be the EU Climate Bank by 2025 the EIB aims to dedicate 50 percent of its financing to climate action and environmental sustainability, she said, with the goal of supporting investment of 1 trillion euros (\$1.2 trillion) in these areas in the critical decade to 2030.

The question is not only about directing more climate finance towards women, but about increasing women's access to economic opportunities and voice more generally, Scatasta said. A central element of gender-responsive climate action is "really about investing in women's economic empowerment. Period."

Through EIB's new SheInvest initiative, the goal is to support investment of 1 billion euros across Africa including a focus on gender-responsive climate investments across sectors.

This implies looking at the types of climate actions we finance and the design of these projects through a gender lens, Scatasta said. It means choosing to finance projects that contribute to climate action while closing gender gaps and designing them in a way that ensures equal access for all to the products, services or benefits generated.

At the Global Environment Facility (GEF) — established in 1992 to assist in the protection of the global environment and to promote environmental sustainable development — approved a new policy on gender equality in 2017, marking GEF's increased ambition to address gender equality and promote women's empowerment across its projects and programs.



The GEF had seen progress in the area of gender equality in environmental work, but many projects were gender blind. The new policy, which sets out strong project and program requirements on gender, will help to increase attention to gender in relation to climate change, said Gabriella Richardson Temm, GEF gender and social issues coordinator.

In its updated gender policy, the GEF explicitly states an ambition to go beyond “do-no-harm” to “do good.” As a way of operationalizing the policy shift, GEF separated its safeguard mechanism from a gender responsive policy, upping the ante by requiring all of its implementing agencies to have policies, procedures and abilities to address gender. It also strengthened and improved its requirements for project design, implementation and evaluation.

“We’ve seen that gender can often be seen in the design, but moving forward we need to ensure that gender is addressed in implementation and reporting,” Richardson Temm said. “What we’ve done is apply much more rigor across the GEF project cycle.”

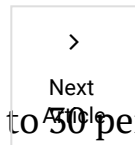
VALUE FOR MONEY

If women had the same access to funds as men, yields would increase by 20 to 30 percent and the total number of hungry people in the world would be reduced by 17 percent, equivalent to 150 million fewer hungry people, said Jenna Jadin, director of program coordination and technical services at RECOFTC, which focuses primarily on land tenure rights.

“That’s a huge number of people and that’s just from giving women access to the resources men have,” she said. “Everything should be gender transformative and everything always should have been gender transformative – we need to get there now.”

However, women’s environmental and social realities are influenced by a number of intersecting forces, including the patriarchy, capitalism, militarism and religious fundamentalism, said Titi Soentoro, executive director of Aksi! and a member of Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD).

“If we really want to find a solution for the climate crisis, we have to look at the full picture of the realities for women,” she said.



“However, the feminist transformative agenda we need does not always rhyme well with the dominant, market-led and carbon-centric responses to climate change,” she noted, alluding to negotiations over Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, which aims to set standards for carbon markets and create a global carbon offsetting mechanism.

Mauren Lazzaretti, Secretary of Environment for the state of Mato Grosso in Brazil, is one of the few women among the government leaders in the Governors’ Climate and Forests Task Force, a network of 38 states and provinces that seeks to promote holistic strategies for low emissions development.

In the session, Lazzaretti highlighted how the state’s world-renowned Produce, Conserve, Include initiative is striving to include gender-responsive policies. As a woman leader, she also stressed how her position in the state government could motivate other women to pursue leadership in civil service.

“If they see me doing it, they could imagine themselves in such a role,” she said.

SPEAKING UP

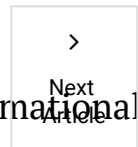
Research shows that investing in women is not enough to result in transformational change if structural issues are not addressed, said Houria Djoudi, a senior scientist at CIFOR.

Djoudi offered an example from Mali, where an adaptation program installed water pumps, so that women would not have to walk long distances to collect and carry water home, reducing drudgery.

However, what the program failed to address was that due to drought, there was increasing demand for the scarce cropland, she said.

Women, whose tenure rights were generally weak, ended up losing much of their lands to more powerful actors. “So now they have pumps, but no land,” Djoudi stated, emphasizing the importance of placing rights at the center of climate action.

“We need to get beyond the numbers, beyond the counting and get more to what are structural reasons for inequities and this needs to be addressed from the beginning because if not, then it is unsustainable for women, men and for the project,” she added.



So while there is a need to scale up gender-responsive finance, investing in women can fail to deliver progress on equality if structural issues are not addressed.

“What we observe is movement back and forth,” Ihalainen said. “The will and pressure to meaningfully address gender equality is beginning to grow among funds and parties, but implementation is still inconsistent and metrics for measuring progress are often missing.”

We need more data, but it is already apparent that gender responsive climate finance could help promote social equity, said Amy Duchelle, team leader of Climate Change, Energy and Low Carbon Development at CIFOR.

“Given the shortage of elected women leaders involved in climate negotiations, we need to establish other ways to mainstream gender and policy,” she said. “Financial investments could trigger change in a deep way.”

It’s clear that in order to produce sustainable and equitable outcomes, climate action must pursue both environmental and sustainable transformation, Ihalainen added.

“So the efforts by some parties to remove references to human rights from the text are really a big step in the wrong direction,” he said, referring to COP25 climate negotiations. “At the same time, our event really shows there is serious commitment among stakeholders at many levels to rights-based, equitable climate action. Now it’s really about making sure these commitments are translated into impacts on the ground.”

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For more information on this topic, please contact Markus Ihalainen at m.ihalainen@cgiar.org.

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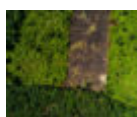


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