

GENDER MAINSTREAMING STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

Introduction to project

In Liberia it is estimated that the rate of mangrove deforestation could be as high as 65% since 1980 (FAO 2007). The greatest threat to mangroves in Liberia is land degradation due to urbanization, transportation infrastructure development, and mining and oil exploitation. A secondary cause related to habitat loss is the overuse and overexploitation of natural resources, specifically around urban areas, through the practices of hunting, firewood collection, charcoal production, and timber extraction. Finally, pollution of the water, air and soil from chemicals released from agricultural pursuits, oil exploration, mining, and the effects of climate change also contribute to the loss of mangroves in Liberia.

Against this background of continued degradation and over-exploitation of mangrove resources, there is a vital need to advance a holistic, integrated approach to better identify mangroves areas vital for biodiversity and community well-being. This project, combining research, policy recommendations, technical advice and practical tools coupled with small-scale interventions provide such an approach. This project provides an opportunity to enhance the protection of mangroves already in multiuse protected areas, provides decision support tools for incorporating additional highly threatened mangroves into new marine protected areas, will work with local communities and other stakeholders to educate them on the importance of mangroves, and will provide guidance and recommendations on best practices for protecting mangroves, their biodiversity, and the services that they provide. Gender is an incredibly important element in this project and as a result the following Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and Action Plan has been developed.

Objectives of the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and Action Plan:

The objective of this gender mainstreaming plan is to outline specific actions that will be taken within the project to ensure that both men and women have the opportunity to equally participate in, and benefit from, the project. Along with the stakeholder engagement plan, this plan is part of the project's commitment to equitable stakeholder participation. The plan takes into account that project activities cover a range of operational scales from communities to global agendas with components that fund field based implementation and broader knowledge management and capacity building. Gender implications and considerations will be different within each of the project components in this project

Gender dynamics within the project

Liberia's population is highly dependent on forest resources. Liberia is well endowed with natural resources and economic growth is primarily based on the use of these resources. In Liberia, about half of the population lives in or near forested areas and the forests are of great importance to the poor, for instance through the provisioning of food, building materials, wood fuel, medicine, etc. In Liberia, men and women have clear gender divisions that determine how natural resources are utilized at the household and community levels. Women in rural settings in Liberia are often highly dependent on natural resources for their livelihoods, and are therefore particularly susceptible to changes in the availability and quality of these resources. Despite their reliance on natural resources, women have less access to and control over natural resources than men. Due to structural injustice, social norms and traditions, women have limited access to land despite the fact that the farmers often are women.

Usually it is men who put land, water, plants and animals to commercial use, which is often more valued than women's domestic uses.

Men and women in Liberia, with different positions in society, use mangroves differently and have unique perspectives about why mangroves are important and how they should be protected. Access, and the ability to restrict it, is vital for the ability of local communities to properly manage mangrove forests. During the PPG phase of this project, explicit attention was given during community meetings and one-on-one interviews to document and understand the different ways in which women and men access and utilize mangrove resources in Liberia and to identify any obstacles to equal participation in conservation. It was clear that both men and women living near Mangrove ecosystems in Liberia use mangrove resources in different ways. Based on data collected, it was understood that men were more likely to harvest wood in Mangroves based on the level of physical effort required to fell mangrove trees. Women were more likely to fish for crustaceans in Mangroves ecosystems by setting out woven palm traps. Men were more inclined to cut channels through the Mangroves and line them with nets to catch different species of fish. These same channels were used by women to gain access to Mangroves that grew closer to the water's edge. Clearly both women and men are using Mangrove resources in different ways and any restriction on access to Mangrove resources would have a negative impact on both sexes. Based on these key differences in the use of mangrove and coastal resources by both women and men in Liberia, a gendered perspective on mangrove conservation must be adopted. Strategies to avoid inequality in this project will be explained in the next section of this document. This strategy will outline a set of actions that signify a shift away from the focus on simply including greater numbers of women to a set of actions that will challenge existing power hierarchies. This project will seek to address power differences and recognize the differing levels of control and dependence on mangrove ecosystems.

Strategies to avoid inequality within the project

The project will need to ensure that there are a number of different strategies in place that will allow women to openly voice their opinions on specific issues. At the same time, the project will have to ensure that these strategies are sensitive to local cultural norms and don't inadvertently encourage a deepening of power imbalances. These strategies cannot exclude men and discourage their support for the project by singling out women as primary agents responsible for conservation and resource management decisions. The Project will adopt the following strategies to avoid inequality within the project:

- 1. Collect detailed sex-disaggregated data on project beneficiaries as the Full Project commences*

Whilst some of the baseline data collection did occur during the PPG phase of the project, there remains a need for more data collection as part of the Full Project. Detailed gender specific data on project beneficiaries will need to be collected at each local project site once communities have provided their Free, Prior and Informed Consent to participate as part of the Full Project. This will include more detailed information on gender roles relating to mangroves (such as use patterns and participation in management/decision-making), as well as possible positive/negative impacts on men and women.

Actions:

- Information/data will be collected with oversight from CI's Technical Director. This staff member already has time built into the project to oversee this work.

- The Project Manager will develop the protocol (questions, information gathering system, etc.) for collecting the gender information, with the suggestion that it be based on CI's Gender Integration Guidelines.
- Following the information gathering stage, the Project Manager will be responsible for interpreting the information and reviewing the Gender Mainstreaming Strategy and Action Plan to ensure that no negative gender-based impacts will occur during the project. Again, the Gender Integration Guidelines will be of some help, but this is ultimately something that someone familiar with the local socio-cultural landscape must develop.
- The CI-HQ Gender and Conservation Specialist (CI-HQ Policy and Practice Unit) as well as any local NGOs working with experience related to gender issues are resources that can be used to help fine tune a gender strategy for the particular site level project at hand.

2. *Ensure that women's representation on project management decision making bodies in this project isn't limited to nominal positions*

Women are often chosen to sit on decision making bodies but tend to be offered nominal positions with little decision making power or influence. This can mean that women often hold positions as tokens or fronts for men. This Project will seek to address this tendency and ensure that women have equal access to important positions that hold influence.

Actions:

The Project Management team will ensure that project management decision that any decisions making bodies that are established at community level will have fair representation by both genders.

3. *Establish separate project decision making bodies for both men and women in target project sites*

The involvement and participation of marginalized groups, such as women and youth, in public meetings concerning the management of mangroves and marine resources isn't sufficient. This strategy has identified specific actions to ensure equitable representation and participation in decision making by both men and women. In the local context in Liberia, it may be countercultural for women to openly disagree with their male counterparts. Efforts to increase gender equality in decision making about coastal and marine resources by mixing men and women in public forums may not create the enabling environment for women's participation, because the presence of men may serve as an intimidating factor.

Actions:

- In addition to establishing a central project decision making body in target project sites, this project will establish separate project decision making bodies for both men and women that will report directly to the main project management decision making body. As explained above, every effort will be made to ensure that women's representation on the primary project management decision making body in each community in this project isn't limited to nominal position.

4. *Ensure adequate access to information for both women and men and conduct gender sensitive communication activities in the project*

The few men who have access to information and documents may use them to control and manipulate discussions. The project will need to address these concerns by ensuring that both men and women have access to the same information and that this information is presented in a manner that can be understood by both men and women at a community level.

Actions:

- The Project Manager will ensure that any communications and awareness raising material is distributed equally to both men and women. The Project Manager will also ensure that this material is presented in a manner that is accessible to community members who are illiterate or haven't been through formal schooling.
- The Project Manager will ensure that community meetings will be scheduled at an appropriate time to allow equal participation by both men and women

5. *Consider gender as an important element during the negotiation and design of Conservation Agreements*

The project will utilize the Conservation Agreement methodology to engage with communities. CAs are a form of direct incentives for conservation, in which conservation investors provide a negotiated benefit package in return for conservation actions by communities. CAs link conservation funders (governments, bilateral agencies, private sector companies, foundations, individuals, etc.) to resource owners whose decisions influence conservation outcomes. Benefit packages typically include funding for social services like health and education, as well as investment in livelihoods, often in agricultural or fisheries sectors. Examples of conservation commitments in CAs include forgoing forest clearing, adopting particular farming or fishing practices, and participating in patrolling and monitoring activities. Respecting customary decision-making mechanisms within communities ensures that CAs are adapted to local realities. However, it is important to also remember that some customary decision-making mechanisms do not allow for disadvantaged or marginalized groups to be heard. It is necessary to find culturally-appropriate ways to ensure those voices are part of decision-making.

Men and women interact with their environment in different ways, and therefore have different needs, priorities, and interests in conservation. It is important to consider these differences, and ensure that both men and women are involved with developing and implementing CAs. Conservation actions identified by the community may have a more direct impact on either women or men. For example, if harvesting of mangrove wood is banned under a Conservation Agreement, this may directly affect men who tend to use mangrove wood in charcoal production. At the same time, this restriction on access by men could have an indirect impact on women if less income is available at a household level based on the restriction on charcoal production. Alternatives identified in any Conservation Agreement that is negotiated will need to take in account the different ways that men and women. The project must first ensure that women and men have the same knowledge about the Conservation Agreements.

Actions:

- During the initial feasibility analysis stage, a CI staff member will ask questions about how men and women use the mangrove resource the CA seeks to protect. A woman will lead focus groups or surveys where women's input is sought and vice versa for men to account for the fact that groups or individuals may be more comfortable speaking about these issues with people of the same sex.
- Negotiation of Conservation Agreement conservation commitments and benefits: During the negotiation and design phase of a Conservation Agreement, communities will define the conservation actions in the agreement and the benefits they will receive in return. During this phase the Project Manager or staff member responsible for negotiating the agreement will ensure that conservation actions identified in the agreement are analyzed to provide an understanding of how these actions may impact differently on men and women and ensure that the results of this analysis are reflected in the final benefit packages that are agreed upon with communities.
- Representative community bodies under the Agreements: If communities are to make decisions and choices as a collective whole, then effective and equitable organizations for community representation are required. The Project Manager will ensure that women's representation on Conservation Agreement decision making bodies won't be limited to nominal positions.

Monitoring and evaluation of gender

INDICATOR #1:

Number/percentage of women/men *attending* activities & trainings & meetings.

Logic: Reflects male/ female access to meetings linked with the project, training resources etc. - will also be subject to the local gender and interest group demographics.

INDICATOR #2:

Number/percentage of women/men *actively participating* in activities & trainings & meetings.

Logic: An indicator for the relative involvement and interest of men and women in the context of the exercise at hand.

INDICATOR #3:

Number of men/women benefitting from the project.

Logic: An indication of equal opportunities and access to benefits (excepting any activities specifically designed with stakeholders to redress a gender equity issue).

INDICATOR #4:

Number of men/women demonstrating leadership in project implementation.

Logic: An indication of how gender influences decision making processes.

Budget and resources

Gender mainstreaming actions and activities are largely the responsibility of the Project Management team. Responsibility for gender mainstreaming in the Project will rest with the Project Manager and Technical Director. The project has allocated sufficient resources to support both the Project Manager and Technical Directors responsibility to manage gender mainstreaming activities. At least one quarter of the Technical Director's budgeted time on this project will be dedicated to mainstreaming gender in the different components of the project.