

2nd Indigenous Women's Dialogue on Forests and Gender¹

Summary

Background

With the adoption of a Sustainable Development Goal on gender equality (SDG-5) in 2015 and the recent adoption and signing of the Paris Agreement on climate change, key foundations for promoting gender-responsive transformational change in the context of sustainable development, including addressing climate change and reducing deforestation (REDD+), have been laid. Delivering on these goals and promises will require going beyond business as usual to achieve meaningful engagement and collaboration among women and men stakeholders across all levels and sectors.

To help promote such efforts, and acknowledging the critical role indigenous women play in achieving effective, equitable and sustainable REDD+ action, the UN-REDD Programme, during the 15th Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), organized a *2nd Indigenous Women's Dialogue on Gender and Forests* on 12 May 2016. Bringing together indigenous women leaders, with a background on gender equality and women's empowerment issues, the dialogue built on the guidance provided by indigenous women leaders at the first [UN-REDD event on gender and forests](#), held during the previous UNPFII, in 2015. The feedback obtained from participants during last year's event revealed the need for continued engagement on gender and forests, from an indigenous women perspective. The guidance acquired helped to inform UN-REDD's efforts in mainstreaming gender into national and local REDD+ processes as well as the new UN-REDD 2016-2020 strategic and reporting frameworks, wherein gender is placed as a crucial cross-cutting theme.

In this vein, the UN-REDD Programme continues to see the pressing need to better integrate gender-responsive activities in a more cohesive and systematic way within its support to partner countries. To proactively support such work, **the UN-REDD Programme is in the process of revising its Gender Approach and developing an action-oriented methodological strategy** to guide its implementation. The revised Gender Approach is centred on five core work streams: gender-responsive assessments and gender-specific analyses; awareness raising and capacity building on gender equality and women's empowerment concepts; gender-responsive participation; gender-responsive planning and monitoring; and knowledge management on gender.

Dialogue Discussions

Within this context and backdrop, this year's Dialogue with indigenous women leaders dug deeper into policy issues around REDD+, particularly discussing how to effectively mainstream gender within the REDD+ policy cycle. Through in-depth knowledge exchange, the dialogue's objectives focused on 1) exchanging good practices and lessons learned from indigenous women leaders on integrating gender equality and social inclusion concepts into sustainable management of forests and REDD+; and 2) seeking indigenous women leaders' feedback on UN-REDD's draft methodological strategy on gender – currently under consultation – to help ensure it adequately reflects and responds to indigenous women's issues

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and concerns.

To guide discussions, the Dialogue was structured around a menu of gender-responsive activities for each of the five core work streams of the revised UN-REDD Gender Approach. Feedback from participants on the streams and their suggested activities was then sought, including on their relevance and whether other key activities or processes should be included.

The proposed five core work streams of UN-REDD's revised Gender Approach were welcomed and well received by Dialogue participants. Over the course of the 1 ½ hour Dialogue, indigenous women leaders also made diverse, insightful interventions, provided feedback on the five work streams of the Gender Approach, and shared their experiences in promoting the effective and meaningful inclusion of indigenous women in the sustainable management of forests and REDD+. Key recommendations, guidance and feedback shared by the participants are summarized below.

Operational Recommendations

- Involve indigenous women in gender-related assessments: When undertaking gender-responsive assessments and gender-specific analyses, ensure the active involvement of local and indigenous women in analysis design, data collection and validation processes. Doing so can help promote that the data collected and analysis conducted more appropriately reflect on-the-ground realities and accordingly, accurately feeds into national REDD+ policies and links these to the needs and gaps present at the community level. In this work, it is helpful to maintain a roster of women researchers to aid in this work and necessary to ensure that sufficient resources (i.e. funding, training, capacity building, etc.) are in place to support grassroots women's roles and involvement in such assessments. Disseminating the results to women stakeholder groups in a format and manner which is accessible to them can also empower and encourage additional women to engage in REDD+ activities.
- Support women's empowerment through the creation of women's groups and alliances: Given socio-political and cultural barriers, it can be the case that many indigenous women face discrimination and threat from harmful social norms if they raise their voice. Thus, bringing women with similar priorities and interests together in a group can help to develop a safe environment for them to create a collective and unified voice, foster alliances, develop the confidence and skills to strategically engage in REDD+, and access and influence decision-making processes. To assist in this process, seed grants could be offered to help provide a means to form such women's groups and alliances and enable women to come together.
- Raise women's awareness on their rights: Women at the grassroots level can often be unaware of their rights both at the international level (e.g. human rights and climate change/environment conventions, SDGs, etc.) and national level (e.g. national laws/guidelines on gender equality, REDD+, land tenure, etc.). As such, awareness raising efforts with indigenous women on their rights continues to be needed, so that they are equipped with the appropriate tools and knowledge to effectively raise their voice, exercise their rights and hold governments accountable. Supportive and accessible legal services for indigenous women can further assist in such awareness raising efforts to help women learn about their rights, as well as obtain tools on how to exercise such rights and seek justice.
- Integrate local contexts and knowledge into capacity building on REDD+: Structure and design

capacity activities based on local and indigenous women's existing knowledge, local terminology and language use, being mindful to also distinguish between women's specificities and not treat women as one homogenous group. Doing so can help ensure that women from different stakeholder groups understand the topics being discussed and their capacity can accordingly be properly built. Here, a multi-level process is advised, wherein national level trainers can be utilized to help translate international REDD+ concepts and terminology into understandable terms at the grassroots level. Adapting the terms and concepts to the reality, culture and context of local and indigenous women can help encourage and support their meaningful and active participation in REDD+.

- Increase knowledge exchange on good practices on gender equality and women's empowerment in REDD+: Concrete good practices across regions, demonstrating how indigenous women are engaging around REDD+ and advocating for their increased involvement in such processes, can serve as an effective vehicle to drive change. It can also illustrate to peers what innovations are possible and empower others to undertake similar action in their countries/communities. They can also serve as an advocacy tool to demonstrate the role indigenous women play in the sustainable management of forests and in traditional forest management systems. The method, availability (e.g. in local languages) and accessibility of these good practices are also critical in dissemination processes. Furthermore, it is critical to ensure that indigenous women have the opportunity to exchange such good practices amongst one another. Options for having the women, who have undertaken the good practices, hold the knowledge exchanges themselves should also be explored and supported.

Institutional Recommendations

- Seek harmonization on gender approaches across REDD+ initiatives at the country level: An aligned and common approach on gender and women's empowerment within REDD+ policy and action continues to be a challenge in many countries. Agencies and organizations supporting governments on REDD+ often undertake action on gender and women's participation in a more isolated manner. To avoid uncoordinated activities on gender, and to maximize the impacts of such efforts, synergies in gender approaches between entities, such as the UN-REDD Programme, World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, Climate Investment Fund's Forest Investment Program, bilateral agreements, etc., should be more proactively sought and implemented at the country level.

This guidance shared by indigenous women during the Dialogue will help to inform the work undertaken by the UN-REDD Programme in supporting national and local REDD+ processes in integrating gender equality and women's empowerment issues, particularly in the context of moving from advocacy to delivering action and results on the ground. The knowledge shared will also be incorporated into UN-REDD's revised Gender Approach and corresponding draft methodological strategy as well as its efforts to identify synergies and collaborative opportunities with other partners and agencies working on gender within partner countries.