

Gender and the Green Climate Fund: From Principles to Operationalization ¹

Under decision 3/CP.17, the governing instrument of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) made history as the first global climate finance mechanism to include gender equality concerns at its inception. As the GCF Board meets for the first time and discusses GCF operationalization, these gender equality concepts must also be operationalized. As an important first step, the GCF Board should ensure that all GCF Board meetings are open to a wide group of observers, including women, that Board proceedings are transparent and web-cast and that key documents are shared for stakeholder input in advance of meetings. The following summarizes the gender equality references from the governing instrument and provides suggestions on how the GCF Board can operationalize and fulfill these commitments.

I. Objectives and guiding principles

3. [...] *The Fund will strive to maximize the impact of its funding for adaptation and mitigation, and seek a balance between the two, while promoting environmental, social, economic and development co-benefits and taking a **gender-sensitive** approach.*

As the GCF Board operationalizes the GCF and defines its activities and procedures, it needs to specify what ‘taking a gender-sensitive approach’ will mean for GCF operations. Implementing such an approach should include the following actions:

- Provide countries and non-state actors with the opportunity to directly access funding without intermediaries as an option and preferred access modality, wherein women’s groups should be encouraged to apply for finance directly for adaptation and mitigation activities, for example, via the creation of a gender-mainstreamed small grants facility.
- Maintain small funding windows and dedicated reserve funds specifically earmarked for women and other marginalized groups within each of the GCFs’ thematic funding windows.
- Play a ‘catalytic role’ at the country level and ensure GCF supported policy, programming, and strategies are gender aware and respond to gender-differentiated impacts of climate change.
- Provide gender training for all GCF staff and make gender expertise an important criterion for staff selection and promotion; identify an internal gender task team to monitor gender capacity building activities; and draw on a network of gender experts, such as a gender advisory group, to provide technical support and ensure gender equality principles are integrated throughout Fund operations and projects.
- Maintain gender balance with and include gender-expertise in the Board, secretariat and general staff.
- Conduct gender-sensitive consultations with women and men, drawing on local expertise in project areas as a requirement at all project cycle stages—identification, design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.
- Develop gender-based criteria for fund allocation, project identification and design and performance objectives. These criteria should require verifiable gender indicators and gender-responsive budgeting, monitoring, evaluation and auditing procedures as well as include a mandatory up-front gender analysis with a gender baseline and demand the generation and use of sex-disaggregated data.
- Establish an external independent evaluation process, in addition to the GCF evaluation unit, to assess the implementation of GCF gender policies and mandates in all GCF programming periodically.
- Implement gender-sensitive complaint and redress mechanisms addressing gender policy violations both at the GCF and the implementing entity level.

II. Governance and Institutional Arrangements

11. [...] *Members of the Board will have the necessary experience and skills, notably in the areas of climate change and development finance, with due consideration given to **gender balance**.*

21. *The secretariat will be staffed with professional staff with relevant experience. The staff selection will be managed by the Executive Director and will be open, transparent and based on merit, taking into account geographical and **gender balance**.*

- The current GCF governing document calls for due consideration of gender balance in the Board and calls for the secretariat to take into account gender balance. Diversity in leadership and decision-making creates opportunities to share knowledge and build upon existing approaches and ensures that the GCF can best address the diverse needs and

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capacities of those impacted by and able to combat climate change. However, currently, of the 24 members of the GCF Board, only 5 are women; three others are nominated as alternative members.

- Going forward, it is imperative that women are adequately represented in all GCF decision-making and governing bodies such as Board Sub-Committees, the Interim and permanent secretariats or advisory groups that will ultimately impact women stakeholders' access to and benefits from climate financing.
- As the GCF is to rationalize the global climate finance architecture and consider complementarity with existing funds, it is important that it establishes best practices and ensures that this significant governing body for climate financing is gender-responsive, balanced to better reflect the gender equality concerns that climate change affects.

V. Operational modalities

*31. The Fund will provide simplified and improved access to funding, including direct access, basing its activities on a country-driven approach and will encourage the involvement of relevant stakeholders, including vulnerable groups and addressing **gender aspects**.*

Building on some of the operationalization recommendations listed above under 'Objectives and guiding principles', below are additional suggestions on how the GCF can address gender aspects within the operational modalities of the GCF:

- In its consideration of funding windows and modalities for funding, the GCF must consider access of funding for the most vulnerable countries and the most vulnerable populations and marginalized groups within countries.
- 'addressing gender aspects' in the operational modalities provides an entry point for the GCF Board to address direct access opportunities for women and gender groups, for example via a dedicated program or funding window, a financial quota or the creation of a small grants facility for women and marginalized groups.
- Given finance mechanisms' often complex application processes and projects' significant upfront costs, women's, grassroots and civil society organizations tend to be precluded from accessing funds due to resource (e.g. time, staff) limitations. Therefore, in developing a direct access modality, it is crucial that the GCF Board streamline processes such as application, registration, approval, implementation, evaluation and monitoring of funds to support women's and small-scale initiatives.

XIII. Stakeholder input and participation

*71. The Board will develop mechanisms to promote the input and participation of stakeholders, including private-sector actors, civil society organizations, vulnerable groups, **women** and indigenous peoples, in the design, development and implementation of the strategies and activities to be financed by the Fund.*

- Stakeholder input and participation, including that of women, must be explicitly addressed in the first four meetings of the GCF and be a key element of the Fund's business model and country program strategies, whereby it draws on lessons learned from other relevant funds and sets new best practices in gender-responsive stakeholder participation.
- The GCF mechanism for the participation of civil society actors must promote gender balance and include key women stakeholders and allow civil society stakeholders, including women, to raise complaints based on country-level gender policy violations with the GCF redress mechanism and have them be addressed by gender experts.
- Stakeholder engagement needs to include genuine and effective consultations with women in project areas at all project cycle stages—identification, design, implementation and monitoring and evaluation, in which gender-sensitive consultations should also be required for project approval. Critical in this process is ensuring that women are adequately represented and their roles, levels of power and constraints are taken into account when designing and conducting consultations, training, workshops, capacity building activities, etc.
- The development of national strategies and plans, and their implementation, must include the full participation and input of women, and key country-level institutions, particularly the National Designated Authorities, should have gender balance and include key women stakeholders.

References for further information and guidance

- Gender Action, WEDO, Oxfam (2011). "Governing Climate Funds: What will work for women?". September.
- Heinrich Böll Stiftung, Overseas Development Institute (2011). "Gender and Climate Finance". Climate Finance Fundamental No. 10. November.
- UNDP (2011). "Ensuring Gender Equity in Climate Change Financing". November.