



Mainstreaming **gender**

in Large Marine Ecosystems

This advisory note provides practical recommendations on how to integrate gender considerations into Large Marine Ecosystem projects



Gender mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is “the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetrated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality¹.

Gender mainstreaming is not an end in itself, but a means to achieve the goal of gender equality.



Large Marine Ecosystems

All over the world, Large Marine Ecosystem (LME) projects are seeking to introduce ecosystem-based assessment and management practices for the long-term recovery and sustainability of marine and coastal ecosystems. Very often, the important roles that women take on in the coastal communities of LMEs are not well recognized. For example, not only are women heavily involved in fisheries, they are often responsible for farm work and domestic food production and, as such, they carry a broad range of social and economic responsibilities.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF), which has provided substantial funding to support LME projects, recognizes gender equality as an important goal for the projects that receive its support. Through gender mainstreaming, the GEF advances its mission of achieving global environmental benefits, while at the same time contributing to the goal of gender equality and social inclusion.

GEF partner agencies are required to have their own policies and strategies for gender mainstreaming and promoting gender equality in the context of project interventions. Within LME projects, gender mainstreaming may include: activities to identify gaps in gender equality through the gathering and analysis of sex-disaggregated data; developing strategies and policies to close the gaps; devoting resources and expertise to implement such strategies; monitoring the results of gender mainstreaming; and encouraging individuals and institutions to take responsibility and ownership for the delivery of outcomes that promote gender equality.

This publication provides practical tips on how gender can be mainstreamed into LME projects

¹ Formal definition of the UN Economic and Social Council. For more information and resources: <http://www.unwomen.org>

Mainstreaming gender in Large Marine Ecosystem projects



The following practical steps can help ensure gender issues are incorporated into LME projects

1. Reviewing and understanding gender issues

Study first, then decide

What do you really know about the role of women and men, their access to resources, participation in decision-making, empowerment and local gender relationships? A gender analysis should take place as early as possible, so that activities that respond to specific needs can be planned and implemented.

A gender analysis is a tool for examining the differences between the roles that women and men play, the different levels of power they hold, their differing needs, constraints and opportunities, and the impacts of these differences on their lives.

Undertaking a gender analysis is good practice because it can help to uncover hidden assumptions and values that may be sustaining inequality, and assist the design and improve the outcomes of gender-based project activities.

Examine legislation through a gender lens

A gender audit of legislation related to fisheries and environmental management is important to assess the gender-sensitivity of national legal and regulatory frameworks. It could result in LME initiatives that support legal and regulatory revision and/or the promotion of new and gender-sensitive laws.

2. Plans, strategies and proposals

Make sure that gender matters when drafting plans, strategies and proposals

Fully involve women in drafting teams and provide gender training for all team members as early as possible. Involve a gender expert (at least at the review stage) and use a gender checklist to ensure that gender becomes an integral part of any plan, strategy or proposal.

Add a statement of political will or a commitment to gender

Include a specific objective about progressing towards gender equality. For example, rather than saying that an intention is to alleviate poverty and improve the lives "of coastal populations" you might say "of men and women equally in coastal areas".

Ask the "gender" question

When deciding on what project activities are to be undertaken, ask the question: "will this activity affect men and women differently?" If the answer is "yes", it may mean that the planned activity needs to be modified (you can undertake a gender analysis to help you do this).

Gender, gender everywhere

Gender needs to be everywhere and part of everything; don't let it stand-alone. Make sure gender is included in all cross-cutting areas such as capacity development, legal and institutional issues, awareness and communication. You can do this most effectively during planning by considering three questions: what is the activity or plan trying to achieve in terms of gender? What changes in people do you expect to see? How will these changes come about?

Consider quotas

Setting aside seats specifically for women in decision-making bodies or providing for women's participation in project activities can be an effective way to ensure representation. However, efforts need to be made to ensure active, rather than token, participation.



3. Money

Earmark sufficient budget for gender activities

Ensure that commitment to gender equality is backed by appropriate financial resources. Budget allocations for gender mainstreaming can support the implementation of activities, or the hiring of experts, monitoring and evaluation, etc.



4. Training and capacity development

Every little effort counts

Gender concepts will become more effectively “anchored” and translated into action if gender awareness and training courses are part of longer-term capacity development programmes, rather than “one-off” events. However, every little action counts; don’t let limited time or resources become reasons for inaction.

Keep it simple

Don’t over-complicate gender issues or bog things down by being overly academic; use simple terms and words. Giving examples from everyday life will help people understand.

Make gender everyone’s business

Gender training – and more generally, raising awareness about gender issues, their importance and ways to tackle them – is key to making gender everyone’s business.

Avoid “policy evaporation”

Consider training or promoting gender awareness among those in leadership positions so as to gain high-level management support for gender activities and avoid the evaporation of good gender intentions before they reach the ground.

Forge partnerships

If gender training proves difficult to implement, consider establishing partnerships with institutions, organizations or individuals familiar with managing gender issues. Ensure there is sufficient budget for such partnerships to be ongoing.

Use incentives and flexibility to enable women to play a role in LME projects

Incentives such as professional recognition, increased budgets or promotions can encourage the involvement of women in gender-related activities. Flexibility around timing, the location of training and other project activities can also promote the participation of women. On the project management side, having flexible work environments that include part-time employment or childcare facilities can help to attract female staff.

5. Develop champions

Identify gender focal points

Identify gender focal points to share and disseminate information and provide encouragement and advice. These people don't have to be experts, just keen – but make sure they have a clear mandate and responsibilities. Recognize that their gender-related work is a key part of their job.

Find government champions

Identify government champions who will push forward the concept of gender equality. The higher these champions are in the hierarchy of government, the greater the possibility of achieving gender equality.

Lead by example

Identify women and men who have been successful and are willing to share their experiences and support for gender equality. Such people are often very influential in a community setting and can invigorate an audience and encourage women to speak up or get involved in gender matters.

Provide mentoring

Encourage women in high-level positions to mentor women in junior positions, but also encourage men to mentor women who are up and coming or succeeding in their careers. This can take pressure off the few women in high-level positions who are often over-burdened, particularly if there are no other women in their field.

6. Monitoring

Ensure data is gender disaggregated and gender sensitive

Data, figures and facts collected should be attributed separately to both men and women. Importantly, the data collection process should not be biased; for example, by ensuring that women are able to attend and fully participate in meetings, focus groups and surveys when information is being collected.

Keep track of gender expenditure

It is important to keep track of how much money is spent on gender mainstreaming and gender-related activities. This can help to ensure that sufficient funds are available to support gender-related activities and gauge the efficiency and impact of the gender activities themselves.



A final word

The housekeeping (washing, cooking, etc.) still needs to be done and chances are it will be women who do most of it. Take care to ensure that any initiative aimed at women does not create unrealistic demands on their time and resources.

Encourage men to do more of the housework, to take care of children or look after the animals and gardens – and praise them when they do so. Gender analysis will help to reveal what women's responsibilities, daily routines and aspirations are.



About the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME) Project

The eight countries surrounding the Bay of Bengal – Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand – are working together through the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME) Project. The Project is implementing a wide range of activities relating to the conservation and management of fisheries and the marine environment, so as to better the lives of coastal populations through improved regional management of the Bay of Bengal.

The BOBLME Project was the first LME project to undertake a gender audit (see www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2211464514000487).

The BOBLME Strategic Action Programme includes a range of gender activities, such as:

- a gender equality review and gap analysis of policies, regulatory and legal frameworks and institutions (this review will also provide recommendations for best practice and initiate actions for mainstreaming gender);
- installing gender focal points in all relevant agencies/institutions; and
- developing the capacity of key change agents and stakeholders to implement the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Small-scale Fisheries which also support gender equality.



Food and Agriculture
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For more information please visit the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME) Project website:
www.boblme.org

FAO gender in fisheries website:

<http://www.fao.org/gender/gender-home/gender-programme/gender-fisheries/en/>

