M-REDD: MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN POLICIES AND LAWS RELATED TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND REDD+ IN MEXICO

A NATIONAL, POLICY-LEVEL INITIATIVE

GENDER & REDD+ CASE STUDY SERIES

M-REDD Mission:

Strengthening Mexico's preparation for and implementation of its national REDD+ strategy

INTRODUCTION:

Forests are one of the planet's greatest environmental opportunities and challenges, as they cover a total of four billion hectares worldwide—31% of the total land area. Forests have the ability to absorb carbon dioxide (CO_2), a potent greenhouse gas and primary component of anthropogenic emissions, and act as carbon sinks—however, when forests are destroyed they release that CO_2 into the atmosphere, a major contributor to climate change. Forest loss contributes as much as 12-15% of total annual greenhouse gas emissions, which is why, without incorporating forests into solutions, it will be impossible to avoid the hazardous effects of climate change and its associated risks.

Tackling the degradation and deforestation of the world's forests is central to any concerted effort to halt climate change. REDD+, which stands for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation, plus conservation, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks, is a framework that seeks to provide financial incentives for developing countries that are making those reductions and conserving forests. The ultimate aim of REDD+ is to foster sustainable forest management, which then becomes a smart economic decision, as well as a smart decision for the environment and the people who depend on it.

Women from forest-dependent communities—communities which are often among the poorest play an integral role in the management of forests, yet they are frequently side-lined in decision-making processes and leadership roles. This exclusion is detrimental, as gender equality is essential for undertaking sustainable forest governance and achieving the goals of REDD+. In order for REDD+ to become a successful mechanism to combat climate change, and in order to provide concrete environmental solutions, gender-responsive standards and safeguards that incorporate gender equality and women's rights must be a guiding principle at the core of REDD+ policies and programmes.

Integrating gender considerations into REDD+ policy, planning, and implementation is a key issue for numerous countries. Leveraging learning and knowledge sharing for gender and REDD+ is essential in moving toward harmonized policy reform across relevant sectors, including natural resource management, climate change adaptation and mitigation, land use and tenure, and benefit sharing. This case study identifies and consolidates existing tools and best practices for greater access and applicability in mainstreaming gender considerations into REDD+.

WHY GENDER MATTERS:

Every day in their roles as farmers, foresters, fishers, caretakers, and household providers, women use and manage natural resources. Women have unique experiences and knowledge with respect to their environments and offer important perspectives in natural resource governance. Specifically, women and men from rural communities often have differentiated knowledge of forest resources and diverse roles in its management. Given their responsibility for meeting food, water and energy needs for the household, women's work and time burdens are increased by the depletion of forest resources. Not only does women's equitable participation and representation in REDD+ uphold commitments to women's empowerment and gender equality, it also makes for better development, more effective and efficient climate change solutions, and stronger sustainability and livelihood outcomes.

FORESTS IN MEXICO

Ranked among the 12 mega-diverse countries in the world and fifth in global species richness, Mexico is home to a wide array of flora and fauna not found anywhere else on Earth. Especially notable for its forest biodiversity, Mexico has over 1,000 native tree species and more than 136 million acres are covered with forests, representing 28.6% of the country's total land area. Approximately 40% of these forests are classified as production forests. Almost 80% of Mexico's forests are under the legal jurisdiction of communities through government-recognized tenure and vast amounts of local decision-making authority. In recent decades, Mexico's forest cover has shrunk dramatically. The main drivers of forest loss have historically been conversion to agriculture, overgrazing, expansion of urban and industrial areas, and illegal logging; the main drivers of forest degradation have been forest fires, pests and hurricanes.

M-REDD BACKGROUND:

The Mexico REDD+ (M-REDD) Program is a six-year project, funded by USAID, that aims at strengthening Mexico's preparation and implementation of the national REDD+ strategy by expanding its institutional and technical capacity, giving input on financial architecture, establishing systems, piloting diverse elements of the implementation of the REDD+ mechanism—including Measurement, Reporting and Verification (MRV) techniques—and contributing to the facilitation of the dialogue and broader public participation and transparency in the REDD+ process. In order to support the government's REDD+ policy, M-REDD promotes and supports knowledge and capacity building, especially in rural and indigenous communities and organizations within Mexico, as well as government entities at the regional, state and national levels. Importantly, M-REDD has integrated a gender perspective from its start and implements gender-responsive strategies, including using REDD+ as an opportunity to enhance implementation of national mandates for advancing gender equality and ensuring women's participation in REDD+ processes. M-REDD project partners include The Nature Conservancy, which is leading the initiative, as well as the Rainforest Alliance, Natural Spaces and Sustainable Development (ENDESU), and Woods Hole Research Center.

M-REDD primarily focuses its work with communities and owners of forests and jungles, with local, state and federal governments, especially with the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT) and the National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR). The project endeavors to mainstream gender through its integration in national REDD+ public policy processes and piloting tools in field projects. This is being done by identifying tools that can make the role of women in different field activities more explicit and can be applied at different stages of implementation of field projects, such as silvopastoral ranching and conservation agriculture, in order to promote gender equality in people's daily activities. With its recent extension, M-REDD will conclude in 2017. This case study highlights strategies for ensuring that gender considerations are understood at a national level and progressively taken into account in Mexico's REDD+ legal and policy framework.

CURRENT STATUS OF REDD+:

Mexico devotes tremendous attention to tackling climate change and has developed a range of national strategies and programmes to combat its effects, categorizing priority actions across sectors, many of which specifically incorporate REDD+. Mexico has been developing its REDD+ Strategy since 2009, and in 2010, Mexico's "Vision for REDD+" (Visión de México sobre REDD+: Hacia una Estrategia Nacional) was presented in Cancun at the 16th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP16) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It included goals for zero net emissions related to land use change and important reductions in degradation rates by 2020. This was groundbreaking at the time, as other countries had been focusing REDD+ strategies solely on the forestry-sector, making Mexico the first to include many other sectors in REDD+ planning. Since then, the National REDD+ Strategy ("Estrategia Nacional REDD+" or ENAREDD+) has been under development—it now includes 12 specific gender equality lines of action. M-REDD and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) have been working with CONAFOR to include gender considerations in the national consultation process for ENAREDD+.

REDD+ planning and implementation in Mexico takes place at the national level, with CONAFOR acting as the Focal Point, and the sub-national and local projects following national guidelines for customized strategies that address deforestation drivers. Within a state, there are REDD+ priority regions in which "investment plans" are established to support actions that reduce deforestation. These investment plans also include activities outside of the forest sector, as the vision of REDD+ in Mexico is to achieve its objectives through sustainable rural development. Mexico is a member of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) and is a United Nations REDD Programme (UN-REDD) partner country, as well as a Policy Board Observer. Mexico has been selected for the Carbon Fund and under the FCPF, Mexico's Readiness Plan Idea Note (R-PIN) was accepted in 2008, its Readiness Preparation Proposal (R-PP) was evaluated in 2010, including a grant for readiness preparation, and its Emission Reductions Program Idea Note (ER-PIN) and letter of intent were presented in 2014. The Forest Investment Program (FIP) has also selected Mexico as a pilot country and it is implementing approved projects under this program. Sub-nationally, "early action" priority areas are located in the states of Oaxaca, Jalisco, Chiapas, and in the Yucatan Peninsula. At the state level, many initiatives are underway, including the development of State Level Action Programmes on Climate Change ("Programas Estatales de Acción ante el Cambio Climático" or PEACC) and State REDD+ Strategies. At the local level, a number of activities are being implemented by NGOs, with some forest carbon projects already engaged in the voluntary carbon market.

OBJECTIVES, STRATEGIES AND ACTIVITIES

M-REDD's vision is to get Mexico ready for REDD+ by building the value of its natural resources and the country's commitment to sustainable rural development, as well as to cultivate national-level gender-responsive programming. This has being accomplished by contributing to knowledge generation, strengthening capacity to achieve the goals of ENAREDD+ and implementing integrated sustainable rural development experiences.

To influence policy to be more gender-responsive, an initial analysis of the existing legal and policy framework on gender, forests, and climate change in Mexico was undertaken by MREDD+ team, as well as an evaluation of existing capacities of key actors from academia, civil society, and government, whom were interviewed to identify outstanding challenges and gaps.

The next step was to establish a common knowledge base by training those key actors, including several women's organizations and institutions, to improve knowledge and understanding of climate change and forest-related issues.

In order to assess the situation, identify priority issues, and agree on next steps, workshops and consultations with various stakeholders, including government, civil society, international organizations, and academia, were conducted to capture diverse voices and perspectives following the trainings.

Finally, priorities were established and adoptable measures were determined. This included preparing proposals for mainstreaming gender in policies and laws related to climate change and REDD+, and conducting a validation process with a range of stakeholders to ensure that the appropriate recommendations were included. Throughout this process, M-REDD developed technical inputs and recommendations for including criteria related to human rights, gender equality, and the rights of indigenous peoples within the General Law on Climate Change (LGCC) and the General Law for Sustainable Forest Development (LGDFS). M-REDD has also contributed to building a National Safeguards System that includes gender considerations through the identification of four cross-cutting themes: social and environmental safeguards, pilot projects, communications, gender and indigenous peoples.

M-REDD FOCUS:

- Mainstream gender in policies and laws related to climate change and REDD+ in Mexico
- Strengthen inter-institutional coordination, collaboration between the executive branch and the legislature
- Increase participation of different sectors to achieve greater synergies between public policies

STRATEGIES EMPLOYED BY M-REDD:

- Foster an inclusive, participatory approach with local partners in different regions and capture diverse voices in planning and programming
- Increase awareness and knowledge regarding challenges and opportunities related to gender and climate change at federal and state levels with the SEMARNAT, the State Women's Institutes and CONAFOR
- Strengthen women and women's organizations participation in Mexico's national and subnational committees that serve as REDD+ technical advisory boards
- Analyze public expenditure labeled for gender equality (which will potentially be considered in the Investment Program)

GENDER INCLUSION IN MEXICO'S LEGAL AND PROGRAMMATIC FRAMEWORK:

Under Mexico's law, gender equality is one of the four pillars of national development planning. From a technical perspective, this ensures development plans and programmes include gender from the outset. M-REDD demonstrates this and has been effective in enhancing the synergies, capacities, and implementation of the various gender frameworks in Mexico, including the following key mandates:

Legal references:

- General Act on Equality between Women and Men (LGIMH) (2006): Guarantees equal opportunities through the adoption of policies, programmes, projects, and compensatory measures such as affirmative action
- General Act on Equality between Women and Men (LGIMH) (2006): Establishes the need to incorporate the allocation of resources in the expenditure budget of the Federation and the generation of sex-disaggregated data, performance indicators, and management
- Planning Law (LP) (1983): Notes that planning should ensure gender equality, inform the application of policy instruments with specificities related to the differential impact the instrument could have on women and men, and develop indicators to facilitate the assessment of this impact
- Federal Budget and Fiscal Responsibility Law (BFRL) (2006): States that the administration of federal revenues and public expenditures must be done with accountability and gender equality
- Federal Budget and Fiscal Responsibility Law (BFRL) (2006): Evaluations on the exercise of these resources should include sex-disaggregated data related to beneficiaries of programmes and measure how the programmes impact women and men differently
- Federal Budget and Fiscal Responsibility Law (BFRL) (2006): Performance evaluations should incorporate specific indicators to assess the impact of budgetary programmes on equality between women and men

Programmatic references:

- National Development Plan 2013-2018 (NDP): Mandates the inclusion of gender as one of the cross-cutting issues that all institutional, regional, and special programmes should contain
- National Program for Equal Opportunities and Non-Discrimination against Women 2013- 2018 (PROIGUALDAD): "Ensuring environmental sustainability requires a set of measures to boost clean energy production and ecosystem protection, which together form the basis for achieving sustainable development. The goal is to incorporate the gender perspective throughout the environmental sector. Encourage the participation of women and their role in access, use, control, and management of natural resources, and position them as key decision-makers in the conservation, care, and use of natural resources and in environmental management and actions related to climate change"
- Strategy 1.1: Harmonize national legislation with international conventions and treaties related to the human rights of women, in accordance with Article 1 of the Constitution
- Strategy 5.5: Incorporate the gender perspective in environmental and sustainability policies, including the legal framework for environmental matters
- Cross-cutting Objective 6: Incorporate gender equality policies in the three branches of government and strengthen its institutionalization in organizational culture

RESULTS:

Thus far, accomplishments have included the creation and exchange of knowledge, skill development, formulation and implementation of public policies that include a gender perspective, and the documentation and promotion of good practices. This work has been the result of a combination of efforts by civil society, academia, government, and international organizations and has specifically had an impact on both climate change and REDD+ policies in Mexico, specifically:

CLIMATE CHANGE POLICIES:

- Incorporating a gender perspective in the Special Climate Change Program 2014-2018 (PECC) through the development of lines of action and cross-cutting targets. For example, action line "5.4.1 to implement training programs on climate change and forests to forest communities, including the equal participation of men and women"; and action line "5.1.3 To operate the Climate Change Fund and other financial resources with priority criteria, gender equality, transparency and efficiency"

REDD+ POLICIES:

- Developing technical inputs to ensure that legal and policy frameworks related to REDD+ in Mexico include gender criteria
- Including gender perspective in ENAREDD+

SPECIFIC M-REDD RESULTS TO DATE:

- Development of the PAGeREDD+ Gender Action Plan ("Plan de Acció de Género y REDD+")
- The PECC includes an entire section devoted to gender and climate change in the first chapter and lays out 11 strategies, 8 specific gender lines of action, and 34 cross-cutting lines of action aligned with the PROIGUILDAD. These actions seek to reduce the gap between men and women and also to face gender-differentiated impacts of climate change
- ENAREDD+ includes 15 references to gender equality, with 12 lines of action related to gender equality
- A working group within the Mexican Congress was set up to develop technical inputs and integrate gender criteria in LGCC and LGDFS
- In 2014, the Center for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equity in the House of Representatives (CEAMEG) produced the study "Analysis of earmarked expenditures for women and gender equality in the field of environment, forestry, and climate change"
- Assessment of the federal budget and how gender has been applied in climate change funding
- Conducted an internal gender training for the entire staff of M-REDD
- Eight projects throughout regions in a small grants program will include gender considerations, with specific MRV gender indicators—currently clinics are being run with these projects in order to focus on ranching and agriculture as the link between ranching and gender is often not clear
- Adapting a benefit-sharing mechanism from the international community to ensure that national criteria is equitable and transparent to comply with standards including gender-sensitive policies and indicators
- The government REDD+ group in the Climate Change Committee includes women and women's organization representatives
- In September 2015, more than 100 women from rural areas participated in the consultation forum for ENAREDD+. The forum was organized by CONAFOR and with the collaboration and participation of M-REDD, as well as the technical support of IUCN. Through this process, ENAREDD+ is expected to incorporate a gender perspective and to guarantee that the voices of women are reflected in this strategy

GENDER-RESPONSIVE REDD+ POLICY IN MEXICO'S STATES:

An important element of M-REDD's work moving forward will be documenting best practices that are occurring on the ground and linking them to policy and what is taking place at the national level. Additionally, the ongoing process of strengthening capacity on gender equality within Mexico's Ministry of Environment and CONAFOR is paramount for raising awareness of the importance for gender equality in REDD+ planning, policy and implementation.

NEXT STEPS

Next steps for the M-REDD project need to be implemented by M-REDD partners, as well as other stakeholders. These include:

- Bringing more women's organizations to the table
- Monitoring the gender earmarked budget for the implementation of the lines of action of the PECC that promote gender equality
- Promoting the generation of sex-disaggregated data and indicators to identify the differential impact of public policies on women and men
- Strengthening the review criteria and integrating gender into all legislation related to climate change and REDD+ to achieve greater alignment with public policies and programmes and harmonize national legislation with the UNFCCC
- Promoting the review of operational rules from programmes in regards to sustainable rural development and climate change in order to reorient priorities related to the challenges on the ground and challenges that impede women's participation
- Systematizing the lessons learned that promote gender equality on the ground in order to foster practices or actions within government programmes

CONCLUSION:

Since its inception in 2012, M-REDD has helped Mexico achieve great strides in progressing the design and consolidation of legal instruments and policy on gender equality and climate change. Mexico's institutional structure and comprehensive legal framework offers the country unique opportunities for designing and implementing gender-responsive REDD+ policies and programmes.

M-REDD, along with IUCN, the Environment Commission and the Gender Equality Commission and the Gender Equality Commission of the Chamber of Deputies, held a forum to address the legislative agenda related to gender, climate change and forests. The event concluded with agreements to create a working group made up of experts to generate proposals to reform and include a gender perspective in LGCC and LGDFS, as well as to carry out a detailed study on how the federal budget has been applied to gender and climate change. Continuous efforts and collaboration between Mexico's government, civil society, academia and international organizations have resulted in innovative partnerships join resources on REDD+ and these related achievements.

Challenges for the M-REDD project have included communicating to and involving men in understanding the importance of women's leadership in the REDD+ process, as well as making linkages between policy and practice, as most of M-REDD's efforts have been implemented on the ground without clear ties to policy work. Additionally, establishing steady funding has been a hurdle, as most project-related impacts are seen four to five years after implementation and M-REDD in the next few years.

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More information about GECCO can be found on the IUCN Global Gender Office's website at http://genderandenvironment.org/; more information about gender and REDD+ can be found on the REDD Desk at http://theredddesk.org/; and more information about USAID's climate change work can be found at www.usaid.gov/climate.