



SEPTEMBER 2023

Climate and Energy

Photo: Mercy Corps, Kenya/P. Meinhardt 2023

Background

Mercy Corps works with people and communities deeply affected by climate change. The climate crisis is not borne equally, affecting those with existing socio-economic vulnerabilities more than others. Climate-related shocks and stressors (such as recurrent drought and extreme flooding) have led to millions of climate migrants, increased displacement, disrupted livelihoods and risks loss of life and assets. As a result of the climate crisis, existing inequalities and discrimination are exacerbated and are particularly pronounced for women and girls and other marginalized groups, such as refugees.

Millions of households still lack access to modern, affordable, and safe energy, and the situation is even worse in humanitarian situations. Yet, sustainable development and effective humanitarian response require affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for everyone. Mercy Corps' Pathway to Possibility identifies inclusive access to sustainable green energy as a key climate adaptation and mitigation measure as well as a main driver of green economic growth.

WHY IS GESI IMPORTANT TO THIS TOPIC?

According to [UNDP](#), as a result of extreme weather events, women are more vulnerable, experience greater risks to life and recover more slowly than men. For example, mortality rates from disaster occurrences are exponentially higher for women than for men, with some studies claiming that women and children are 14 times more likely than men to die when a disaster strikes.¹ Low-income women in climate hotspot areas, who rely on natural resources for their livelihoods are especially vulnerable. Since women are often the primary caretakers within their households, disasters can increase their unpaid care and domestic work. Violence against women is also exacerbated by disasters and displacement. Conversely, communities that have shifted beyond traditional gender roles are more resilient and more effective at recovering from disasters.

A group of well-renowned academics in the gender and climate field have explored how women's agency can contribute to wider adaptation capacities.

“Confronted with issues of everyday survival, in the absence of supportive infrastructure and services, women often work harder, in poorer conditions, and for lower wages, across the hotspots studied”. However, both within the academic and development fields, women's agency is not yet captured and explored as a vehicle to building longer-term adaptive capacity for women and their families.²

Energy issues are mostly addressed through technical and economic lenses while overlooking their social dimension. This truncated perspective contributes to gender disparities in both access to energy services and economic and decision-making participation in the energy sector. Women and girls feel the impact of lack of energy more keenly given their role as household resource providers. Lack of electricity, for example, makes health and water, sanitation and hygiene services unavailable and exacerbates women's time poverty by causing them to spend more time on household chores. To the detriment of women and girls, energy policies and programs that do not consider how gender translates into differentiated energy needs remain the norm.



Photo: Mercy Corps, Kenya/E. Millstein, 2018

1 Brearley, E. Kumapley, T and Vincent, K. Enhancing Gender Responsive Disaster Risk Management: Why a Change of Mindset is the first step? Worldbank, January 2020. Available at: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/african/enhancing-gender-responsive-disaster-risk-management-why-change-mindset-first-step>

2 Nitya Rao, et al. A qualitative comparative analysis of women's agency and adaptive capacity in climate change hotspots in Asia and Africa, University of East Anglia (UK). Available at: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/237179143.pdf>

What Have We Done?

One of the four principles of Mercy Corps' Climate and Disaster Resilience Approach is gender and inclusion. Mercy Corps recognizes that gender, ethnicity, age, education, socioeconomic status, and culture influence marginalization. **We ensure that all of our climate adaptation approaches and programs are aware of and designed in respect to, GESI implications of climate change hazards and focus on creating adaptation pathways which are inclusive to all.** Meanwhile, the Inclusive Energy Access Handbook, developed by Mercy Corps in 2020, guides the organization's GESI approach in the program assessment, design and implementation phases. Various GESI approaches relevant to climate and energy along with programmatic examples are presented below.

Climate

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY TO BUILD RESILIENCE TO CLIMATE-RELATED DISASTERS

Mercy Corps invested in generating knowledge around the intersection of gender and resilience in practice.

The [Building Resilience through the Integration of Gender and Empowerment Program \(BRIGE\)](#) (2015-2018) worked alongside resilience-focused programs in Nepal, Niger, and Indonesia to refine gender-sensitive approaches to building resilience to natural disasters. The program identified three critical areas for women's participation in building resilience: household decision-making, meaningful participation in community groups, and access to market linkages. The program used a Gender and Resilience Development Model by which women's groups were created in Indonesia to enhance their access to financial and social services based on three processes: engagement, trust-building and empowerment. The intra-household dialogue piloted in Nepal and Niger led to a shift towards more gender-equitable attitudes to overcome barriers to women's participation, including increased women's confidence to participate in household and community decision-making and increased men's trust in women outside the home, thereby improving women's mobility. Finally, the program promoted the involvement of women as agents of flood resilience in Indonesia by supporting their activities and leadership in waste management at the community level.

The multi-country program [Managing Risks through Economic Development \(MRED\)](#) has been implemented by Mercy Corps in Nepal, Indonesia and Timor Leste since 2012. The program is currently in its fourth phase, which will span until 2025. MRED uses a nexus approach that combines community-based disaster risk reduction and market system development to ensure that economic recovery and resilience are program outcomes.



Photo: Mercy Corps, Nepal/E. Millstein, 2021

The program identified ten capacities required for communities to be considered as “disaster ready”. Through various assessments, the program determined that the level of disaster readiness of communities is directly linked to their level of inclusiveness and gender equality. The team thus adapted the methodology of the gender analysis so that it is structured along the ten capacities and that it is community focused.

Building Resilience and Adaptation to Climate Extremes and Disasters Program (BRACED) aimed to contribute to household well-being by enhancing the resilience capacities of pastoralist communities in semi-arid and dryland regions of Karamoja, Uganda and Wajir, Kenya. The program integrated gender throughout its activities. Through Gender Responsive Budgeting training, government officials were equipped to develop a gender-inclusive policy that would guide investment in new services and opportunities that would assist women and girls in dealing with new economic and ecological challenges. A Gender Desk—which serves as a one-stop shop where people can go with their gender-specific grievances and interests—was also opened by BRACED in Wajir County to facilitate the development of the county’s first Gender and Resilience Strategy. Finally, using community-led dialogues and community prevention and response plans, BRACED aimed to reduce harmful cultural practices.



Photo: Mercy Corps, Yemen/E. Millstein, 2021

Energy

ADDRESSING WOMEN’S AND GIRLS’ ENERGY NEEDS IN HUMANITARIAN CONTEXTS

The 2-year program **Energy in Emergencies: Reducing Risks of Gender-based Violence (EEMRG)**³ aims to improve safety and opportunities for women and girls through access to energy in emergencies. It developed training and technical resources on energy access, gender, and Gender Based Violence (GBV) risk reduction tailored for humanitarian practitioners working across sectors. A report was produced on the state of knowledge and practice surrounding energy access during emergencies and how access to energy intersects with gendered opportunities and GBV risks. An Inclusive Energy Access in Emergencies Handbook was also developed to equip humanitarian practitioners with practical tools to address energy-related needs, safety considerations and empowerment opportunities for women, girls and other commonly marginalised groups. Workers are encouraged to use the guide to reach out to women not only as recipients (vulnerable people) but also as stakeholders (opportunities) e.g. women selling charcoal, and women designing fuel-efficient stoves.

INVOLVING WOMEN AND GIRLS AS ACTIVE STAKEHOLDERS IN THE ENERGY SECTOR

The USAID-funded Feed the **Future Nigeria’s Rural Resilience Activity (RRA)** worked on creating income-generating opportunities for women in rural, conflict-affected communities in Northeast Nigeria through clean energy production. The program involved women as Direct

3 The initiative was funded in 2019 by the U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration, and implemented by Mercy Corps and the Women’s Refugee Commission (WRC) with implementation in Jordan and Uganda.

Sales Agents (DSA) to reach last-mile communities with climate-smart products such as solar lights and charcoal briquettes. 1,500 women were reached during the sensitization phase and the seeded female DSAs realized a profit amounting to 14 million Nigerian Naira (USD 18,000), and have re-invested the profit by acquiring more solar products. These interventions enabled women to participate equally in existing marketplace opportunities, have access to and control over productive resources, have access to decent work and income, have control over their own time and income, and increase their voice, agency, and meaningful participation in economic decision-making at all levels, from the household to institutions.

Through innovative, market-based renewable energy programs, **POSSIBLE** (“[Productive Horticulture Solutions for Senegal and Benin that Leverage Clean Energy](#)”, funded by the Women’s Philanthropy Group) seeks to increase local food production, decrease imports, and improve food sufficiency and economic opportunities. Utilizing renewable energy applications and technologies to increase productivity is intended to increase resilience and improve economic opportunities for 100 smallholder women farmers and micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises.

What’s Next?

PROMISING INTERVENTIONS

- › The GESI and Climate Technical Support Unit team will partner to develop our agency approach and guidance document on conducting ‘climate vulnerability assessments’ that embed GESI considerations and future climate scenarios, to support all our ongoing and future programs with a focus on climate vulnerability.
- › Mercy Corps is exploring the opportunity to partner with Practical Action to launch an inclusive energy assessment in Africa with a strong GESI component.

Areas of Investments

The energy team developed the [Inclusive energy access—Proposal Tipsheet](#) to help writers integrate inclusive energy access concepts in their proposals and a [Tipsheet on Developing Adolescent Girls’ Negotiation Skills for Energy Access](#) to guide the humanitarian program teams in supporting adolescent girls to successfully and safely negotiate for energy access within their household.



FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

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