Women and the Environment

In this newsletter, we are pleased to share with you some of the insights on gender equality and the environment in the context of inclusive and sustainable development that came out of a recent e-discussion and report back from UNIDO Environmental Management Branch’s gender mainstreaming workshop.

Wrap up: E-Discussion on Knowledge Gateway for Women’s Economic Empowerment

Co-hosted by UNIDO, UN Women, UNEP and the SEED initiative, the e-discussion on “Women and the Environment” was held on the Knowledge Gateway for Women’s Economic Empowerment from the 10 to 24 June 2014.

A panel of 10 experts moderated and contributed to 5 discussion threads that in total attracted 4,070 women and men from 166 countries. The discussion received 179 substantive comments which analyzed the status of women and the environment, shared good practices and innovative initiatives, and showcased workable approaches to make environmental policies and programmes more responsive to women’s needs.

A key theme that was explored was women and green industry; from identifying ways to advance women participation and opportunities in sustainable industrial development and the green economy through establishment of networks such as the Women’s Chapter of the Green Industry Platform, to debating how women can better promote clean technologies and eco-innovation.

Many participants shared examples of initiatives and entrepreneurial activities where green economy is working for women, but underscored that an enabling policy environment coupled with deliberate action by government, the private sector, and development practitioners among others, are necessary to utilize the full potential of women’s participation in green growth.

Another key issue discussed was the impact of climate change, environmental degradation and natural disasters on women’s livelihoods and food security. Women and girls comprise the majority of the world’s poor and are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. In this regard, participants provided examples of how women’s capacity to cope with climate change is actually improving the conditions of their communities in several countries.

Pathways to sustainable development and poverty eradication are shaped by a number of critical factors, including innovation and access to appropriate technologies. However, access to such technologies by men and women is highly unequal across sectors. Backed by evidence, participants agreed that supporting women’s involvement in innovation processes and green technologies will not only enhance their capabilities and livelihoods but also contribute to the well-being of their communities and overall gender equality.

Lastly, the e-discussion tapped into the role and significance of women in sustainable patterns of production and consumption. Participants discussed how women tend to have a smaller ecological footprint than men and are more likely to make sustainable decisions such as recycling and reduction of waste for their households or businesses. The impact that interventions concerning women potentially have on making consumption and production more sustainable is undoubtable as we fully account for the interdependencies that exist between women’s poverty and the degradation of their environments.

E-discussion in full length
Taking Action: EMB Gender Mainstreaming Training Workshop

On 8-9 July 2014, the Gender Mainstreaming Steering Committee (GMSC) and the Environmental Management Branch (EMB) jointly organized a gender mainstreaming workshop for EMB as part of a series of trainings undertaken by GMSC for all of UNIDO’s technical branches. The workshop, which was opened by Heinz Leuenberger, Director of EMB, aimed at facilitating a dialogue on gender mainstreaming and identifying how to strengthen the gender dimension in EMB projects. It was a special honor that Arni Hole from the EU Agency for Fundamental Human Rights delivered an opening statement at the workshop, in which she stressed that gender equality could not move forward without the active involvement and participation of both men and women and the importance of measuring things in order to change them. The latter point reflected one of the main objectives of the gender mainstreaming exercise in EMB, namely to develop applicable indicators and targets for gender equality results in green industry projects. The two-day workshop included practical guidance on ways to strengthen gender mainstreaming in EMB project activities and the identification of gender issues in the context of EMB’s portfolio. The lively discussion proposed the collection of material to make the business case for gender equality as a good entry point for awareness-raising and sensitization of project stakeholders. Participants further identified and developed potential gender responsive outputs and indicators specific to EMB projects as well as tools required to integrate these components.

Similar to the previous workshops, a key outcome of the EMB training will be the development of a Guide to Gender Mainstreaming in Environmental Management Projects. Additionally, a database is underway for all project managers to use as a quick reference for basic gender related data by country to assist them in gender mainstreaming technical assistance projects, the benefits of which were emphasized throughout the workshop discussions.

Women and the Green Industry Platform

The Green Industry Platform, co-chaired by UNIDO and UNEP, has established a Women in Green Industry Chapter, which aims to benefit and connect female professionals who work in green industry. In 2014, activities will focus on portraying success stories of female entrepreneurs and leaders, enabling online discussions on the connection between gender and environment, promoting knowledge sharing and projects dealing with gender aspects in green industrial policy development, along with other outreach activities. The Platform will promote stronger engagement and increased decision-making of women at the level of the GIP and essentially addresses the issues surrounding women’s empowerment and gender equality in green industrial development.

Close the GAP!

Gender Mainstreaming Tools
Where to find them?
Under main topics at UNIDO’s Intranet front page.
What to find?
Tools & trainings, publications & factsheets, links & reference material.

Further Readings and Networks

Further Readings and Networks

The Environment and Gender Index
Knowledge Gateway on Women’s Economic Empowerment.

The reference material covers relevant UNIDO topics, ranging from technology, agriculture, private sector development to energy. Intranet

For any comments, further information or contributions, please contact: gender@unido.org