

Enhancing the Role and Impact of Gender Equality in the ACP-MEAs III project



(Credit: Climate Technology Centre)

Operational Note

Prepared by United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) under the EU funded ACP MEAs 3 Project



Foreword

The role and relevance of gender in effectively realizing the objectives of the EU funded ACP MEAs 3 project is an important consideration while implementing the project activities by various partners in the project. Realizing the need for promoting a common understanding of addressing gender specific issues and roles to come up with an impactful deliver of the project, the present 'Operational Note' has been developed in consultation with gender experts both within UNEP and outside, including the project partners.

Launched on 8th March 2021 to commemorate the International Women's Day, this Note is intended to provide guidance to project partners and their collaborators on using specific gender considerations within the objectives and provisions of the ACP MEAs 3 project.

The Note does not provide any prescriptive approaches to dealing with gender in the project implementation but merely provides an overview of issues to be considered. It is up to the implementing entities and individuals to use the elements in the Note and come up with workable solutions that will be captured in all reports of actions. Annual assessment of actions and impacts will be attempted, after which the Note will be updated on a yearly basis.

We hope the 'Operational Note' helps us all to focus on gender equity and equality issues in the project that is timely, predictable and impactful.

Grateful acknowledgements are due to all the project partners for their comments and suggestions in finalizing the Note.

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Operational Note

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1. Introduction

This operational note has been prepared to help strengthen the implementation and impact of the European Union funded ACP MEAs 3 project with support from the Secretariat of the Organization of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (OACPS) in Africa, Caribbean and the Pacific countries to mainstream and operationalize the gender dimensions of compliance and enforcement to multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and strengthen environmental governance.

The project has a priority to serve as a conduit to develop coherent policy approaches to gender-specific environmental issues and aims to reduce gender inequalities in policies, laws and institutions in the field of environment.

Given this, this note highlights some key issues for consideration by project partners who are involved in designing implementation actions and ensuring impactful results are achieved. It is pertinent to clarify that this note is not suggesting development of a gender strategy for the project or a specific action plan nor aims to provide prescriptive options for project partners to implement the activities, since the partners have their own institutional strategies and plans.

It is intended to provide an operational focus on how to consider gender issues, as elaborated in the subsequent sections, while designing and delivering activities that are gender-responsive, using principles of equality and women's empowerment within the project.

Each partner can choose to develop an appropriate framework to decide on how their actions under the project contributes to gender, suggest ways to measure the impacts during the project implementation. Doing so, all the activities undertaken under the ACP MEAs 3 project, to the extent possible and needed, will focus as well as report on actions related to gender issues identified here.

2. Role and impact of gender equality in the project

The opportunities to contribute to and benefit from sustainable environmental management differ for men and women in many parts of the world. While the women play an important role

in sustaining communities and households and managing natural resources, their contributions are often overlooked and undervalued. Environmental hazards such as climate change, biodiversity loss, impacts of pollution may affect women more than men, exacerbating pre-existing vulnerabilities arising from inequalities in access to and control over resources including land, and due to factors such as socio-economic status, race and ethnicity, among others.

Mainstreaming gender equality within institutions and projects is critical to achieving Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals and fulfilling the mandate of the UN. There is a growing body of knowledge that demonstrates how gender equality is an important element in realizing environmental objectives.¹ In light of this, a set of specific objectives have been identified for taking gender responsive action in the project.

A summary of these objectives can be clustered as (a) equitable access to resources, (b) inclusive governance, (c) increased resilience towards sustainable and equitable natural resource-based growth, and (d) equitable decision making at all levels.

At the project level, the following objectives are to be advanced while implementing project activities

- a) *Equitable access to resources* - address women's opportunities to access, control and own land, natural resources with improved access to environmentally-friendly technologies, enterprises and options to deal with natural resources, reduce impacts of chemicals and wastes that are harmful to humans and nature. Support women managing common property resources for both sustenance and economic well-being. These are to the extent possible, be reflected in the activities such as preparing for decision making processes, capacity building, influencing policy and implementation plan development.
- b) *Inclusive governance* - Ensure gender is mainstreamed across all activities, policy tools and updating the policy frameworks and ensure full and effective participation of both women and men in design, delivery and impact assessment of actions. Such

¹ https://www.cbd.int/gender/doc/cbd-towards2020-gender_integration-en.pdf;
<https://environmentalevidencejournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13750-016-0057-8>;
<https://www.unep.org/resources/report/global-gender-and-environment-outlook-ggeo#:~:text=The%20Global%20Gender%20and%20Environment,environmental%20assessment%20and%20decision%20making.>

mainstreaming should be based on enhanced awareness of gender-responsive approaches and opportunities and needs for re-orienting necessary capacities. Within the project, actions related to developing operational frameworks - ranging from technical to legal - will include a specific focus on advancing gender equality.

- c) *Increased resilience* -Activities under the project need to consider gender specific issues when developing action plans and implementation criteria, taking into account the local context in which the different project activities will be implemented.
- d) *Equitable decision making* - Ensure project actions and implementation are based on consultations with women, as appropriate, and enable Work towards sustainable and equitable natural resource-based growth and support fair and free consent-based access to resources. supported by mechanisms that focus on sustainable management of environment against negative impacts of biodiversity loss and hazards due to chemicals, pollution and wastes. them to play an equitable role in decision-making processes. Activities under the project will go beyond considering the number of women participating in decision making to providing support to ensure they have the capacity to play an equitable role in determining decisions that address their needs, priorities and interests.

3. The project background

The programme on capacity building related to Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries results from a partnership between the European Commission (EC), the Secretariat of the Organization of the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (OACPS Secretariat), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The aim of this Programme is to empower key stakeholders to address environmental challenges and to reap the benefits of improved environmental management at the national and regional levels.

Since its initiation a decade ago, two phases of the programme have been implemented in the ACP regions, in which environmental management issues were mainstreamed into institutions and national development plans of the ACP countries. The Programme has further promoted an integrated and synergistic approach to effectively implement the relevant Conventions on biodiversity and chemical and waste management. In the current and third phase, the ACP MEAs programme enhances the mainstreaming and implementation of MEAs related to biodiversity and chemicals and waste, oceans governance and the mainstreaming of biodiversity in

agriculture with a focus on enforcement and compliance of MEAs at regional, sub-regional, national and local levels.

4. Project objectives and implementation

The overall objective of the project is to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through the attainment of environmental sustainability in the ACP countries. The project promotes the enforcement of environmental treaties and goals in ACP countries by way of influencing policies and legislative frameworks for ACP countries. Specifically, the project strengthens the implementation of MEAs in the chemical and waste, marine and biodiversity clusters at the national and regional levels in ACP countries through the development of stronger compliance and enforcement measures. These actions are to contribute to support ACP countries in addressing the challenges associated with the sound management of chemicals and waste, marine issues including pollution, coastal erosion and loss of biodiversity.

The implementation of the project activities focus on endogenously strengthening and enhancing the capacities of national governments as well as regional and sub-regional organizations, related institutions and stakeholders on compliance with, implementation of, and enforcement of biodiversity, marine and chemicals and waste MEAs, including strengthening negotiation skills, awareness raising, support to the development of information systems, environmental assessments, establishment of marine protected areas and sharing of relevant experiences. This is expected to result in effective integration of environmental concerns identified in the relevant MEAs into national and regional policies and laws. The project has an explicit focus on gender mainstreaming and sees women empowerment as key to achieving better environmental governance.

5. Project partners' gender mainstreaming actions and or plans

The project is being implemented with several partners, including MEA secretariats belonging to biodiversity, chemicals and waste clusters, in the ACP region. Several of the partners have their own gender strategies and action plans that are consolidated here with a view of considering these elements while implementing the project.

The project partners have therefore developed strategies and/or action plans to mainstream gender issues into their organizational programme activities and structures to achieve the ACP MEAs project's objective of long-term environmental sustainability at the regional and national levels.

Project Partner's Gender Actions	Goal	Expected Outcomes	Key focus	Specific actions envisaged	Links with other global actions
SPREP Gender Policy	<p>(i) To strengthen and maintain an institutional environment that supports and encourages gender mainstreaming;</p> <p>(ii) To improve the effectiveness and sustainability of SPREP's projects and programmes; and</p> <p>(iii) To promote the integration of a gender perspective into the programmes and projects of Member countries and cooperating partners.</p>	<p>(i) increased knowledge and skills among SPREP staff for addressing gender in policy development and programming;</p> <p>(ii) improved and sustained gender mainstreaming in SPREP projects, programmes, and activities; and</p> <p>(iii) increased capacity in Member countries to incorporate a gender perspective into policies, plans and projects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Mainstreaming and integrating gender into SPREP's work ▫ Performing gender analysis ▫ Pursuing an inclusive approach to foster equality ▫ Building partnerships ▫ Measuring performance for the achievement of gender equality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Strengthening and maintaining an institutional environment that supports and encourages gender mainstreaming ▫ Promote the integration of a gender perspective into SPREP supported programmes and projects ▫ Building capacity in Member countries to incorporate a gender perspective into policies, plans and projects. 	Rio Declaration and Agenda 21
Nairobi Convention Project Gender Strategy and Action Plan	To promote the integration of gender in all project interventions and contribute to more	▫Reduced gender gaps in participation in decision making and in management and governance of the resources	▫Making fisheries management and governance people cantered and gender aware	▫ Ensuring the representation and equitable participation of women, young people and discriminated and highly vulnerable groups in decision-making and governance	SDG5

	efficient and sustainable development that considers the needs, priorities of men and women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Gender equality in opportunities and strong contribution to social, political and economic empowerment of women ▫ Change processes have resulted in less inequality in norms, the way governance, management, services and institutions deliver as well as the practices at HH and community level. ▫ Positive change in norms, socio cultural practices and institutions, systems are documented and shared. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Data gathering and dissemination to ignite change ▫ Mechanisms for consultation and participation and transformative processes on key gender issues at household level, institutions and policies and regulations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ A gender responsive data system and a monitoring and evaluation system in place and a mechanism to associate gender advocates to influence at the right time the right processes and strengthen change. ▫ Use of a transformative impact pathway and change behaviour that is cause of gender-based discrimination ▫ Ensuring gender sensitivity in all project communication and documentation as well as in agreements and partnerships 	
CBD 2015-2020 Gender Plan of Action	The four strategic objectives of the plan are: a) To mainstream a gender perspective into the implementation of the Convention and the associated work of Parties and the Secretariat; (b) To promote gender equality in achieving the	Gender is mainstreamed in the implementation of the Convention	Proposed objectives for Parties include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Integration of gender in the development and implementation of national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs) ▫ Identification of potential policy obstacles to integrating gender in 	There are numerous specific actions proposed for Parties to implement the objectives identified. A number of these are included below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Account for differences in biodiversity use between women and men in stocktaking exercises for NBSAPs. ▫ Engage women in all stakeholder consultation groups ▫ Include sex/gender-disaggregated data collection and/or gender-specific indicators for national biodiversity targets 	Related to Rio Conventions gender action plans (UNFCCC, UNCCD)

	<p>objectives of the Convention, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets; (c) To demonstrate the benefits of gender mainstreaming in measures towards the conservation of biodiversity, the sustainable use of the components of biodiversity and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources; and (d) To increase the effectiveness of the work under the Convention on Biological Diversity</p>		<p>implementation of the Convention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Ensuring political will for integrating gender in the implementation of the CBD Convention ▫ Supporting organizations' staff on gender issues ▫ Provision of adequate financial resources for integrating gender in implementation of the Convention ▫ Ensuring full participation of both women and men in implementing the Convention ▫ Consideration of the different needs of women and men in designing and undertaking actions for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity ▫ Building partnerships and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Engage indigenous and local communities' experts on gender and diversity and make use of women's and men's traditional knowledge and customary practice. ▫ Review and consider steps to address gender differences in relevant policies, including related to tenure and use rights, literacy, employment, education, health, local governance and decision-making and access to financial resources ▫ Assess potential to integrate biodiversity considerations into national gender policies and action plans ▫ Collect and disseminate case studies ▫ Ensure awareness of decision makers of national and international gender commitments ▫ Provide training and raise awareness on gender and biodiversity of staff, indigenous peoples and local communities and policymakers ▫ Ensure adequate funding for actions related to the 2015-2020 Gender Plan of Action ▫ Consider adopting gender-responsive budgeting, to ensure that budgeting or financial policies take into account the needs and interests of both women and men, and support gender equality 	
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			<p>ensuring consistency with related conventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Benefiting from lessons learned and good practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Ensure gender balance in capacity-building, and offer capacity-building for women’s groups, to enable effective participation ▫ Consider the different risks for women and men resulting from actions to implement the Convention ▫ Engage ministries of women’s affairs- or equivalent- in planning and implementation 	
<p>Cartagena Regional Strategy and Action Plan for the Wider Caribbean 2021 - 2030</p>	<p>To improve science-based decision-making and use of local or traditional knowledge in policy, planning, and management of coastal ecosystems</p> <p>To improve the effectiveness of resource and protected area management institutions and the impact of management interventions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Regional knowledge management system established ▫ Guidelines and procedures for MPA management and gender consideration are published and made available to managers ▫ Capacity building programme implemented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ knowledge management systems for translating data and scientific research for uptake by policy makers, the private sector, and the general public ▫ Strengthen MPA planning and management processes to address the needs of local communities, indigenous peoples, women, youth, and other vulnerable groups ▫ Maintain and enhance effective networks of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Strengthening centralized data management systems and developing protocols for inclusion of local knowledge ▫ Establishing a comprehensive online regional data and knowledge management platform/portal with linkages to national and regional knowledge systems ▫ Develop platform for resource managers and decision makers to include scientific and local/traditional data, information/knowledge products on several MPA development and management including special groups (indigenous peoples, gender, youth, etc.) ▫ Develop guidelines and conduct training to support participation of local communities, indigenous peoples, women, youth, and other vulnerable groups in MPA planning and management. 	

			professionals and institution		
BRS Secretariat Gender Action Plan	To promote gender equality within the Secretariat and gender mainstreaming in its programme of work and activities, including those undertaken in partnership with other stakeholders.	The principles of gender equality are firmly embedded in the activities undertaken by the BRS Secretariat and partners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ BRS gender mainstreaming activities within the Secretariat ▫ Implementing gender mainstreaming activities with partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▫ Establishing baseline of gender-related issues within the Secretariat ▫ Communication of BRS-GAP and other gender-related information to BRS staff, Parties and partners ▫ Training and skill development on gender-related issues Gender equality in human resources management ▫ Promotion of gender equality through the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) of the Secretariat ▫ Monitoring and reporting on mainstreaming activities within the Secretariat ▫ Include gender components in Secretariat's programmes and projects Awareness-raising and outreach ▫ Promote the consideration of issues of gender and vulnerable groups in hazardous chemicals and wastes management at the national and regional levels ▫ Promote gender-balanced participation in meetings of the Conferences of the Parties and subsidiary bodies ▫ Cooperation with other partners on gender-related activities 	Gender side event at COPs in 2015, 2017 and 2019. UNEP/FAO/RC/COP.7/INF/3.

6. Gender responsive implementation

Integrating gender considerations in the ACP MEAs project is necessary for the effective implementation and achievement of the project objectives. Recognizing the opportunity and the need to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 5 on achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, equitable access to resources, inclusive governance, increased resilience towards sustainable and equitable nature resource-based growth, the ACP MEAs project shall promote full and effective engagement of women in decision-making processes linked to environmental matters at all levels. The project will also seek to ensure gender considerations are addressed in supporting policy development, institutional change and related processes across the whole ACP region through the project.

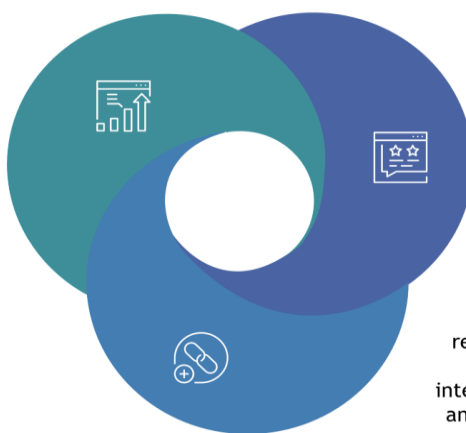
Operational Recommendations

1. Establish gender targets supported by success criteria, management oversight and expertise of project staff.
2. Allocate necessary resources, including finances for gender mainstreaming in the design and implementation of activities.
3. Ensure gender responsive actions are identified and integrated in the design and implementation of project activities.

Gender Within the Project Operational Guidelines

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Allocate necessary resources, including finances for gender mainstreaming in the design and implementation of activities.



Establish gender targets supported by success criteria, management oversight and expertise of project staff

Ensure gender responsive actions are identified and integrated in the design and implementation of project activities

7. Dealing with equity and equality

Though they may sometimes be used interchangeably, the terms gender equality and equity differ. Gender equity pertains to being fair to both men and women, while equality is typically defined as treating everyone the same and giving everyone access to the same opportunities and reduce any gender gap.² A gender gap is a gender-based inequality. It can be any disparity in treatment or situation between women and men, often rooted in social, cultural and legal norms and customs. Gender gaps create barriers to effective sustainable development and livelihoods by limiting or restricting women's access to resources and decision-making opportunities³.

The project builds on the fact that good governance in sustainable ecosystem management can only be achieved by understanding gender gaps and addressing the specific barriers. Without doing this, sustainable ecosystem management approaches risk exacerbating gender inequalities to the detriment of conservation goals, community wellbeing and human rights.

The equality principles for the ACP MEAs 3 project could include:

1. Women and men have equal rights and self-determination in all aspects of project implementation, including related actions to define technical and policy outcomes of the project.
2. Women and men have equal access to resources and tools for decision making.
3. Women and men are appropriately oriented, sensitized and trained in project implementation measures, as appropriate, and
4. Women and men are able to participate fully, effectively and on an equal basis, and have the necessary capacity and support to contribute to the implementation of and benefit from all project activities and plans on an equal basis.

Experience shows that the effects of measures like gender equality training and orientation may not be impactful if they are only delivered as a one-off session or if they constitute the only measure for introducing gender mainstreaming. The project needs to plan and develop the

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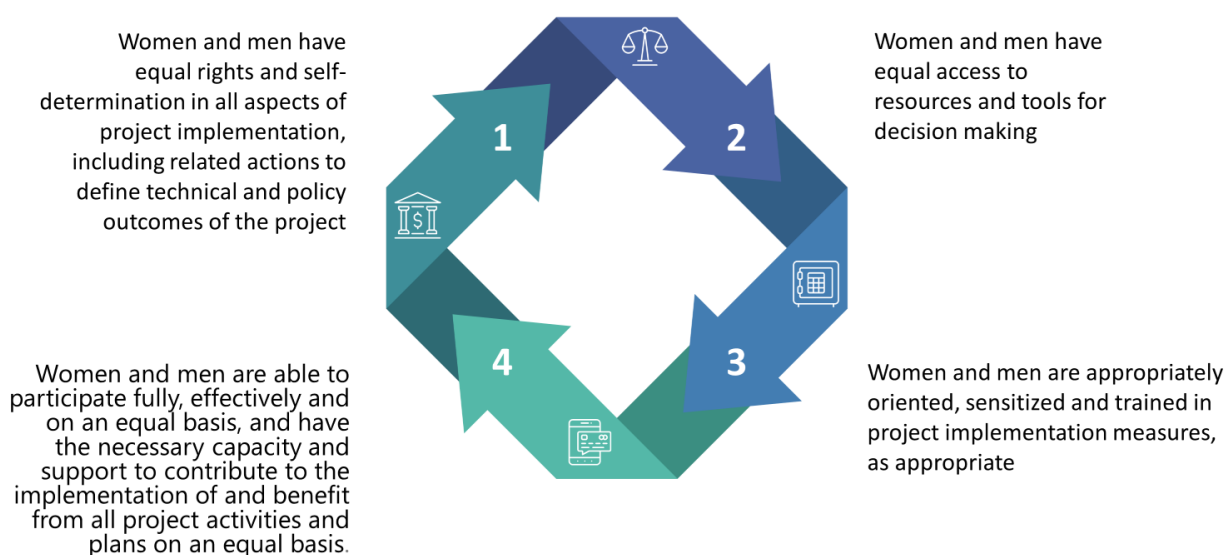
<https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm#:~:text=Equality%20between%20women%20and%20men,men%20and%20girls%20and%20boys.&text=Gender%20equality%20is%20not%20a,men%20as%20well,%20as%20women.>

³ <https://www.iucn.org/news/gender/202001/gender-and-environment-what-are-barriers-gender-equality-sustainable-ecosystem-management>

requisite gender equality competencies in a systematic fashion and synchronize competency development closely with the overall gender mainstreaming strategies? of all implementation partners, as available. Gender equality competencies comprises commitment, methodological expertise and specialist knowledge⁴. All project partners are encouraged to work in close cooperation with their in-house gender expertise and gender mainstreaming support structures. To the extent possible, all activities envisaged under the project need to focus on necessary legal framework(s) and policy commitments that support equality of women and men.

Addressing Gender Equality

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8. Gender responsive communication

Gender is a critical determinant of both development and positive environmental outcomes. However, gender biases and discriminatory actions persist all over the world. Substantial evidence has demonstrated the impact that effective communications interventions implemented through a mix of approaches and channels aimed at different participants and

⁴ <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gender-institutional-transformation/step-9-developing-gender-equality-competence>

stakeholders can have in promoting gender equality and transforming unequal and harmful gender norms in society^{5, 6}.

Communication is pivotal in promoting gender equality by informing, influencing, motivating, engaging and empowering various stakeholders to develop confidence and skills that transform negative attitudes and norms that perpetuate gender-based discrimination and enable them to negotiate options? and raise demands for equal access to and control of resources^{7,8,9}.

Gender communication shall be part and parcel of the ACP MEAs project at all levels of the implementation process. While communicating the project activities, the project partners shall ensure that:

1. Principles of gender equality are embedded in all communication materials of the project to create awareness of the important roles women play in the development and implementation of gender responsive policies, programmes and projects.
2. Communications materials are inclusive and give a balanced portrayal, to represent both women and men as equal decision and policy makers with equally valuable contributions to project development and implementation.
3. Monitoring and reporting on mainstreaming activities are consistent with the project gender targets and assess staff awareness of gender equality, and
4. All communications will assess the impacts of actions, monitor and report on such actions.

⁵ UNICEF ROSA (2018). Integrating Gender in Programming for Every Child in South Asia. Available online at <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/research-and-reports>

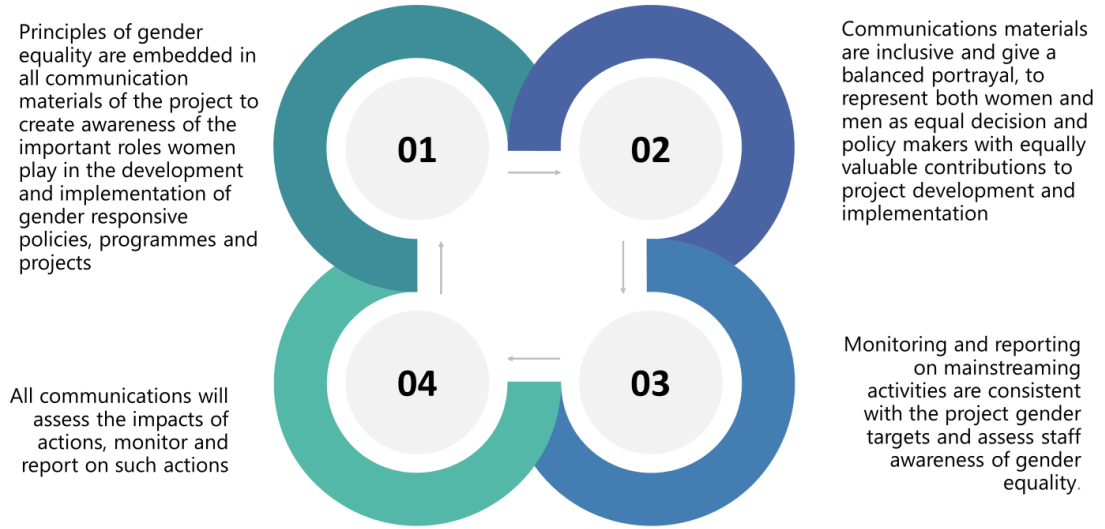
⁶ UNICEF ROSA (2018). Gender Responsive Communication for Development: Mapping and Assessment of UNICEF Initiatives in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan. Available online at <https://www.unicef.org/rosa/media/1746/file/Gender%20responsive%20communication%20for%20development.pdf>

⁷ Naugle, D. A., & Hornik, R. C. (2014). Systematic Review of the Effectiveness of Mass Media Interventions for Child Survival in Low- and Middle-Income Countries. *Journal of Health Communication*, 19(sup1), 190–215.

⁸ Usdin, S., Scheepers, E., Goldstein, S. and Japhet, G. (2005) 'Achieving Social Change on Gender-Based Violence: A Report on the Impact Evaluation on Soul City's Fourth Series'. *Social Science and Medicine* 61: 2434-2445.

⁹ Wakefield, M.A., Loken, B., & Hornik, R. (2010). Use of Mass Media Campaigns to Change Health Behaviour. *The Lancet*, 376:1261-2171.

Gender Responsive Communication



9. Monitoring Actions

The brief is intended to provide an overview of issues specific to the ACP MEAs 3 project and proposes a number of principles and objectives to advance gender mainstreaming. It is strongly encouraged that all project partners take active measures to mainstream gender into project implementation plans, actions and follow up. Project partners are all encouraged to apply the operational elements presented in the brief in their actions as appropriate.

Action	Indicator(s)
Training programmes for building capacities and awareness raising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Number of men and women participants; b. Nature and level of participation; c. Inputs received during the training; d. Articulation and consolidation of ideas before and after the training; e. Identification of options for continued use of training.
Workshops for providing inputs to policies/programmes/frameworks and the related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Assessment of expectation of participation before and after the workshop; b. Documentation of specific needs and inputs;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. Articulations provided for gender-sensitive implementation; d. Inputs to deal with gender equality, if any.
Development of policies, laws, regulations and the related	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Nature, level and type of participation; b. Gender specific inputs; c. Suggestions/ recommendations for actions, that are gender sensitive.
Regional actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Nature, level and type of participation; b. Nature and type of experiences shared; c. Identification of options for networking and support, if any; d. Suggestions for follow up for impact assessment.
Strengthening and establishing gender specific actions/ideas at individual and institutional level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Nature and type of idea; b. Assessment of feasibility; c. Suggestions for follow up; d. Identification of capacity building needs.

10. Conclusions

The brief is intended to provide an overview of issues specific to the ACP MEAs 3 project but builds of number of principles and objectives of gender mainstreaming strategies. It is strongly encouraged that all project partners of this project will appropriately use and mainstream the issues identified in the brief into project implementation plans, actions and follow up. The project partners are all encouraged to use the operational elements presented in the brief in their actions as appropriate.

This brief will be reviewed periodically using the implementation experiences from project partners.