

# Gender matters in river basins

## Gender mainstreaming in the ecosystem-based adaptation approach

### The challenge

Human responses to climate stressors are differentiated based on capacities and capabilities that are often influenced by gender. However, gender analyses of climate change impacts continue to portray women and men based on gender stereotypes, missing opportunities for analysing power, social, and political dynamics in understanding vulnerabilities (Udas et al., 2019). For example, access to and control over natural resources is an asset of adaptive capacity, and at the same time, also influenced by gender, class, and race. In agricultural communities, although women play a major role in the provision of household income, the patriarchal culture provides less opportunities for women to participate in decision-making and to access resources (Neffati et al., 2012).

In the Philippines, studies showed that women are more vulnerable to disasters due to differences in employment status, income, gendered social roles, social norms, and restrictions governing behavior. However, limited sex-disaggregated data make it challenging to come up with gender-responsive plans, policies, and program interventions in disasters such as floods (Asian Development Bank, 2018). This is a situation common in the natural resources sector.

#### Vulnerability factors related to women

- High dependency on natural resources
- Limited mobility and gender-based violence
- Limited adaptive capacities due to systemic and cultural inequality and gender-based discrimination

(GIZ, 2017)

### The approach

While river basins provide essential resources to society, they continue facing degradation through uncontrolled and excessive exploitation of natural resources. Deforestation and inappropriate land use practices threaten biodiversity and disrupt the provision of ecosystem services that have adverse consequences on the economy, social and human well-being, and the environment. The situation is further exacerbated by the impact of climate change on communities and sectors.

Nature-based solutions, such as ecosystem-based adaptation (EbA) approaches, present an opportunity for more inclusive adaptation plans and programs. EbA is a people-centered approach that makes use of biodiversity and ecosystem services for adapting to the effects of climate change and building resilience. A gender lens is applied in the vulnerability and risk framework, which provides the foundation of the plans and actions to improve the adaptive capacities of communities.

### The project

Project name	Ecosystem-based management and ecosystem services valuation in two river basins in the Philippines (E2RB)
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) through the International Climate Initiative (IKI)
Project region	Philippines
Lead executing agency	Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) River Basin Control Office (RBCO)
Duration	01.03.2019 – 28.02.2023



*Extreme left: A view of the City of Kabankalan and nearby towns in Ilog-Hilabangan River Basin*

*Left: A woman dries wood for cooking outside her house along Ilog river in Ilog, Negros Occidental.*

The Ecosystem-based Adaption in River Basins (E2RB) Project supports local communities in strengthening ecosystem services, protecting biodiversity, and reducing vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters in the Ilog-Hilabangan River Basin in the Visayas Region and the Tagum-Libuganon River Basin in Mindanao, through integrated management and application of ecosystem services valuation and ecosystem-based adaptation measures.

The project contributes to improved coordination and integration of sectors through an ecosystem-based approach. It will provide impetus for improving the fragmented water governance regime and aims at using the values of ecosystem services as a basis for private sector buy-in, to contribute to the financing of conservation and protection measures that help to maintain ecosystem services and thereby reduce vulnerability to disasters and climate change.

## Opportunities

The project identified the following opportunities for mainstreaming gender into EbA for more inclusive and gender-responsive adaptation plans, policies, and programs within river basins.

### Mainstream gender concepts and policies

1. Ensure alignment of river basin management policies and activities of partner organizations, such as local government units (LGUs) and members of River Basin Management Councils, with the Philippine Plan for Gender-responsive Development (1995–2025).
2. Engage the LGUs and River Basin Management Councils in discussing gender matters to:
  - Develop indicators and/or milestones for measuring gender-relevant outcomes/outputs, and
  - Implement gender-sensitive results-based monitoring through collection and use of sex-disaggregated data.
3. Document gender results as part of the impact logic in relevant reports.

### Capacity development in partner institutions

1. Provide a safe space for women and other marginalized sectors in project activities, and ensure gender- and conflict-sensitive planning and implementation.

2. Build capacities of technical staff and policy-makers to integrate gender in work plans and program implementation to ensure inclusivity and responsiveness.
3. Disseminate information with gender-specific values and perspectives surrounding ecosystem services and natural resource management.

### Analysis and research

1. Recognize gender differences with respect to vulnerabilities and risks from natural disasters, severe weather events, and climate change as determined by traditional gender-based roles in households and communities.
2. Safeguard gender perspectives during ecosystem valuation exercises, particularly the access and rights of women to natural resources such as water.
3. Identify and incorporate practical and strategic gender needs in terms of water and disaster risk management and access to livelihood resources.
4. Apply participatory approaches in research to generate information that will be used for providing reliable water supply, better water quality, and more gender-responsive disaster risk management.

## References

- Asian Development Bank (2018). Initial Poverty and Social Analysis. Integrated Flood Risk Management Sector Project, Manila. From <https://www.adb.org/projects/documents/phi-51294-002-ipsa>
- GIZ (2017). The Vulnerability Sourcebook: Concepts and guidelines for standardised vulnerability assessments (Risk supplement).
- Neffati, M., Abelali-Martinin, M., Abbasi, A., & Soltani, S. (2012). A Gender Analysis Perspective for Improved Livelihoods in the Karkheh River Basin. Arid Regions Institute, Aleppo, Syria. From <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11766/8821>
- Philippine Commission on Women (1998). Philippine Plan for Gender Responsive Development 1995–2025. Manila, Philippines.
- Udas, P.B., Tamang, D.D., Unni, A., Hammal, M., Shrestha, K., & Pandit, A. (2019). Basin level gendered vulnerabilities and adaptation: The case of Gandaki River Basin. Environmental Development, 31: 43–54. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envdev.2019.05.002>

Published by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH  
Registered offices Bonn and Eschborn, Germany  
  
EbA in River Basins  
10th Floor, Bank of Makati Building,  
Ayala Avenue Extension, 1209 Makati City,  
Philippines Phone +63 2 8651 5113  
klaus.schmitt@giz.de  
[www.giz.de/en/worldwide/79964.html](http://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/79964.html)

Printed by VG Printing, Manila  
Design GIZ  
Photo credits GIZ  
Text Marion Daclan

GIZ is responsible for the content of this publication.

On behalf of German Federal Ministry for the Environment,  
Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU)