



Photo: Santiago Torres

Altagracia in the crops

Since 2012, Mexico REDD+ Alliance has built synergies to promote gender equality throughout public policies and projects that boost women's participation in the rural sector; acknowledge their contributions pro forestry conservation and the fight against climate change, towards promoting sustainable rural development.

- *Historically, women have been absent from rural sector policies, programs and projects. The incorporation of women is an opportunity to move forward on sustainable development and forestry conservation.*
- *Women's knowledge and experience has a great potential to improve ecosystem productivity and conservation. It is necessary to recognize and value their contribution to the conservation of forests and their biodiversity.*
- *Incorporating the gender perspective in REDD + interventions may decrease women and men inequality, and help tackle climate change.*
- *Mexico has made progress designing and strengthening legal instruments and public policies on gender equality, in accordance with the international commitments the country has signed on gender equality, environment and climate change.*

## Forests and climate change

Forests and jungles constitute a challenge, as well as an important opportunity, to fight climate change and promote rural sustainable development. On one hand, deforestation and forest degradation generate significant greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and results in high costs; due to the loss of economic opportunities, ecosystems functioning and biodiversity. At the same time, forests and jungles are part of the climate change solution, due to their capacity to capture CO<sub>2</sub>, which is one of the most potent greenhouse gases, through the photosynthesis process, and storing it for long periods.

Additionally, the assessment of forestry and territorial management to ensure their conservation, opens the doors to develop

working strategies that enhance living conditions of women and men who live in rural areas.

Therefore, the fight against deforestation and degradation is key in climate change mitigation and adaptation international agreements and strategies. For this reason, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has defined the REDD+ mechanism as an "approach on positive policies and incentives for the reduction of deforestation and forest degradation emissions in developing countries, as well as the role of forestry conservation, sustainable management and through the increase in carbon reserves".

In Mexico, forests and jungles cover one third of the national territory, amounting to 64 million hectares; two thirds of those forests (some 40 million hectares) are in the hands of (communal land) and agrarian communities. It is estimated that between ten and twelve million people live in forest regions. According to the National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR, for its name in Spanish), Mexico loses 155 million hectares of forest a year due to deforestation and degradation. In terms of global greenhouse gas emissions, Mexico has one of the highest carbon footprints in the world —700,000 tons a year— of which, 17% comes from the land use change in the agricultural and forestry sectors. This equates to the same amount of carbon emissions as the industrial sector.

Since 2010, in order to comply with global climate change objectives as laid out by the UNFCCC, Mexico has actively promoted the construction of the REDD+ mechanism, through a participatory process. In recognition that deforestation and degradation are due to diverse and multifactorial causes, REDD+ in Mexico includes a rural sustainable development vision as the way to achieve the climate mechanism goal. Beside, the emissions reduction goal, REDD+ and social and environmental safeguards, seek to generate economic and social benefits for communities depending on forests for their livelihoods.

### OUR WORK IS FOCUSED ON THE RECOGNITION AND PROMOTION OF:

- Equal rights
- Inclusive language
- Property and land tenure rights
- Awareness and capacity building
- Participation in decision making processes
- Respect for social safeguards
- Equitable distribution of benefits
- Accessible financing
- Analysis and follow up of gender equality
- Experience and knowledge of women in
- forestry conservation

### Women in forests and rural environments

Mexico has inequalities that do not allow equitable sustainable development opportunities for women and men. In rural environments, it is mainly women who depend on products and services that provide ecosystems to meet food, care and energy needs for the well-being of families (firewood, non-timber products, such as medicine or seeds); water and soil protection, and climate regulation (biodiversity). Nonetheless, they are generally excluded from access, use and control of natural resources.

Per the National Agrarian Registry (RAN, for its name in Spanish), in Mexico there are 4.2 million men and women who are communal *ejido* and commoner landowners, out of which 19.8% are women nationwide, but in some parts of the country it's often not more than 4%. Since women are not landowners, they cannot access programs to get equipment, infrastructure, credit, leases and economic support for environment service payments. Furthermore, they are not represented in the decision-making process to organize agricultural and forestry activities.

This exclusion is counterproductive, for it favors the inequality gap which hinders rural development and the fight against climate change. Women's knowledge and experience, in ecosystem and biodiversity management, has great potential to improve their productivity and conservation. However, it is necessary to recognize and value their contribution by, placing women at the center of decisions made on the management of said resources, so that they may become their co-administrators and co-protectors.

**THE MEXICO REDD+ ALLIANCE (MREDD+)** is a civil society initiative comprised of The Nature Conservancy, Rainforest Alliance, Espacios Naturales y Desarrollo Sustentable and Woods Hole Research Center. We work with the community and the owners of forests in Mexico, with local, state and federal governments, especially with the Secretariat of the Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT, for its name in Spanish), and the National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR, for its name in Spanish), to strengthen low carbon rural and forestry development, as well as good practices, that make it possible in Mexico, as a contribution to the process of preparation and implementation of the REDD+ National Strategy.

### A cross-cutting gender perspective for REDD+ policies and projects

The Mexican government has played a leadership role in the international climate change policy framework, thus contributing to ensure the inclusion of relevant decisions on gender equity, throughout the negotiation process of the UNFCCC Paris Agreement. This is a binding instrument for 195 countries to set their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) to reduce GHG emissions, with the purpose of limiting global warming below 2 Degrees Centigrade. In this sense, Mexico is committed to reducing 25% of its countries emissions by 2030, and it includes the human right and gender equity perspective as a cross-cutting principle for the implementation of climate change adaptation and mitigation measures. The REDD+ National Strategy guides its actions, in terms of social inclusion and gender equality, and recognizes women as change agents, with the goal of reaching a 0% deforestation rate for the year 2030. Additionally, the Mexican State has a national and international obligation to incorporate the gender equality perspective as a cross-cutting axis in its environmental policies within a Human Rights framework.

Since 2012, to contribute towards these efforts, the Mexico REDD+ Alliance, in coordination with the Global Gender Office of the International Union Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Pronatura Sur A.C., has promoted actions for a cross-cutting gender perspective on **public policies** and **field projects** related to REDD+ in Mexico.

The incidence process for **public policies** focused on developing a skills diagnosis, a review and preparation of proposals for a legal framework and the design of a Gender Action Plan for REDD+ (PaGeREDD+). Lastly, through the development of technical inputs public policy instruments (such as the National REDD+ Strategy, the Emission Reduction Initiative, and the REDD+ National Safeguard System, among others) were designed.

**Field project work** focused on strengthening skills and awareness of women and men stakeholders on a gender perspective, as well as on creating a methodological proposal to facilitate the incorporation of said work in the design and implementation of REDD+ throughout the Mexican territory.

## WHAT IS THE CROSS-CUTTING PRINCIPLE?

The cross-cutting principle in incorporating a gender perspective consists of a strategy to transform the concerns of women and men and their experiences into an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and assessment of policies and programs in all spheres (political, economic and social) of public and private life, so that women and men may equally benefit and to ensure inequality does not perpetuate (ECOSOC, 1997).

## WHY THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN REDD+?

- a) **Because it is a right:** equality is a human right protected by different national and international instruments. As expressed in the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), inequality goes hand in hand with the principle of non-discrimination. Therefore, in that sense, equality will only be possible through the eradication of discrimination against women. (Facio, s/f). The right to equality is consecrated in Article 1° of the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States.
- b) **Because it is necessary:** In Mexico, there are inequalities that do not allow equal opportunities for women and men in sustainable rural development. For instance, less than one fifth of the *ejido* and communal land property is in the hands of women. This is an obstacle for their expedite access to credit, support, programs and in the decision making process. (PROIGUALDAD 2013-2018)
- c) **Because it is a mandate:** Mexico has made progress in the design of legal instruments, as well as in gender equality public policies. This has been done in accordance with international agreements the country has signed on gender equality, environmental and climate change issues.
- d) **Because it ensures sustainability:** Women and men have different types of knowledge and experiences

in forestry resource management. Efforts for a fair and sustainable future should recognize the rights, skills and capabilities of one half of the population. Women experiences and actions have great potential to improve productivity and ecosystem conservation through the sustainable use of natural resources, and they are an important element in order to accomplish REDD+ objectives. Women are not victims, they are agents of change.

- e) **Because law makes it mandatory to allocate a budget for equality issues:** The 2015 Federal Budget and Fiscal Responsibility Law sets that all budgeted projects should contain actions favoring gender equality, and that the management and distribution of said resources should be implemented with gender equity criteria.
- f) Furthermore, on June 2016, the federal government published **the guidelines to incorporate the gender perspective in the Operation Rules** of all the 2016 federal budgetary programs, with mandatory measures, for all agencies to promote criteria and mechanisms in their rules of operation to favor gender equality.

## REDD+ Public Policy with a gender perspective

The gender cross-cutting characteristic of public policies related to REDD+ was a collective construct. The Mexico REDD+ Alliance facilitated the integration; CONAFOR, as the focal REDD+ point in Mexico, designed the public policy instruments, whereas various social, women and men's organizations participated in forums, workshops, events and consultation processes. The following table describes the initial and final situations, as the result of MREDD+ interventions in relevant public policy instruments for REDD+.



Meeting at the Chamber of Deputies

Instrument	Initial Situation (2012)	MREDD+ Intervention (2012-2016)	Final Situation (2017)
<b>Analysis of skills, capabilities, strengths and weaknesses for the incorporation of a gender focus on REDD+</b>	Existing skills and capabilities to integrate the gender perspective on REDD+ were not known by the institutions.	<b>2012.</b> A skills and capability diagnosis, as well as the stakeholders mapping, were implemented. A baseline was established as a starting point for the intervention.	The skills and capability analysis allowed for the design of the PAgE REDD+ and guided its implementation by prioritizing cross-cutting gender actions in REDD+.
<b>Gender Equality: analysis of the legal and programmatic framework</b>	The national legal framework includes gender considerations, but they are not always fully known and analyzed.	<b>2013.</b> An exhaustive analysis was made of the legal instruments: from the Political Constitution to specific laws related to the environment and climate change, based on a gender perspective. The main federal related programs were also analyzed. The document was presented and analyzed at a forum with stakeholders from the participation of the Legislative and Executive Branches, as well as with civil society.	A document has been drafted with a broad analysis showing gender gaps between laws and programs. It is organized in such a manner, that it can be updated as laws are modified. As for the presentation of the study, the Centro de Estudios para el Adelanto de la Mujer of the Chamber of Deputies or Lower House of Mexico, prepared the <i>Analysis for earmarked expenditure for women and gender equality on the environment, forestry development and climate change</i> .
<b>Special Climate Change Program (PECC, by its name in Spanish) 2013-2018</b>	The PECC 2009-2012 only mentions gender issues three times, in a general fashion and associated to vulnerable populations.	<b>2013.</b> Participation in review actions and making proposals for the PECC 2013-2018 action lines.	The PECC 2013-2018 has four strategies and action lines on gender equality; as well as 11 strategies and 35 action lines in accordance with PROIGUALDAD.
<b>Federal Law on Sustainable Forestry Development (LDFDS, by its name in Spanish)</b>	Article 134bis was the only one that included gender issues, related to benefits derived from land property or possession.	<b>2014.</b> This law was analyzed and suggestions were made for gender perspective inclusion.	There is a document with recommendations to modify the LDFDS, in order to incorporate the gender perspective in eight thematic axes.
<b>REDD+ National Strategy</b>	The first version only had a few references on gender and women's participation.	<b>2013 -2016.</b> A feedback process and input proposal was made together with CONAFOR, to include the gender perspective as the guiding axis. The Rural Women's Consultation Forum was organized and facilitated.	The last 2016 available version substantially increased the number of times gender is mentioned, as well as women's participation in the action lines.
<b>REDD+ (EEREDD+, by its name in Spanish) State Strategies</b>	The EEREDD+ had not been prepared yet.	<b>2015-2016.</b> Preparation and publication of the <i>Guidelines for the design of REDD+ state strategies</i> , that included gender criteria. A technical review was made of the first EEREDD+ versions. Suggestions were made to integrate the gender perspective. A working document was prepared, to identify gender criteria in the ENAREDD+ to facilitate harmonizing the EEREDD+ on gender related aspects.	The EEREDD+ official publication process has not finished, but gender aspects have been included in the most recent strategy versions for Chihuahua, Oaxaca, Quintana Roo and Chiapas.
<b>Emissions Reduction Initiative (IRE, by its name in Spanish) Investment Programs (Pdl, by its Spanish acronym) Methodology for the participatory construction of DB arrangements</b>	The IRE document and associated documents had not been drafted.	<b>2015-2016.</b> MREDD+ and UICN made suggestions and provided technical assistance for the inclusion of the gender perspective, through the participation in workshops, the document review and feedback, as well as through advice to the people responsible for the drafting of these instruments.	The IRE, the Pdl and the Methodology for the construction of DB arrangements include gender criteria.
<b>Articulation of the REDD+ National Safeguards System (SNS, by its Spanish acronym), and the National Safeguards Information System (SIS, by its Spanish acronym)</b>	The social and environmental related instruments had not been drafted. The first versions only mentioned gender in safeguard d), related to participation. "Gender equity" was always referred to as an objective, but equality was never mentioned.	<b>2013-2016.</b> MREDD+ collaborated with the CONAFOR staff, through analysis workshops and the exchange of ideas. Legal fundamentals were provided, to use the equality concept in policy instruments.	The final SIS and SIG versions show substantial progress in the integration of gender criteria. They talk about women and men equality within a framework of rights.

The detailed systematization of this process may be consulted in the document entitled *Igualdad de Género en REDD+: Sistematización y lecciones aprendidas del proceso de preparación de México* or *Gender Equity in REDD+: Systematization and lessons learned in the process for Mexico's preparation* (MREDD, 2016).

## REDD+ field projects with a gender perspective



Photo: Alianza México REDD+, 2017

The incorporation of the gender perspective in field projects included working with fifteen civil society organizations, in charge of the implementation of projects focused on rural development and the reconversion of productive systems —**silvopastoral livestock, holistic management livestock, conservation agriculture, tropical agroforestry and coffee growing industry**— with rural and communal land communities in the states of Yucatan, Campeche, Oaxaca, Chiapas and Chihuahua. Six of these organizations participated throughout the process, which was divided into three major phases:

1. REDD+ and gender based skills diagnosis in the participating organizations, as well as the identification of tools to incorporate the gender perspective in rural projects.
2. Development of three clinics, which included workshops, visits and advisory sessions, for the projects to apply these tools.
3. Systematization of good gender practices, applicable to organizations in their rural development project cycles (analysis, planning, implementation and assessment).

As a result, projects that incorporate said good practices may sensitize the different stakeholders, as well as identify gender gaps, make visible gender associated stereotypes, and have the necessary practical tools, aimed at guiding gender responsive actions.

All **learnings and good practices** of this process are detailed in the document entitled *Buenas prácticas y lecciones aprendidas para la inclusión de la perspectiva de género y el fortalecimiento de capacidades en actores vinculados a proyectos REDD+ (MREDD+, 2016)* or *Good practices and lessons learned for the inclusion of the gender perspective and the strengthening of skills for stakeholders linked to REDD+ projects*. **35 methodological tools** were developed and consultations may be made in a guide called the *Guía Metodológica. Igualdad de género en proyectos que promueven*

*modelos productivos con efectividad climática or the Methodological Guide. Gender equality in projects that promote productive models with climate efficiency (MREDD+, 2016).*

### TOPICS DISCUSSED AT THE CLINICS:

**Clinic I:** A collective reflection on gender gaps and the differentiated relationship between women and men with the environment.

**Clinic II:** Accompanying field processes of organizations, with the purpose of developing and recommending tools or working modes, to strengthen the gender perspective in projects.

**Clinic III:** Reinforcing gender perspective issues and analyzing implementation challenges, obstacles and accomplishments. The clinic was enriched with individual and organizational experiences that each CSO shared.

Some gender equality good practices implemented in REDD+ projects are:

- Making visible and recognizing the contributions made by women and men throughout the project cycle.
- Promoting the exchange of experiences between women and men who are implementing various productive systems.
- Defining disaggregated sex indicators, to understand the project's differentiated impact.
- Including women and youth in the community and communal land assemblies, even if they are not land owners.
- Using inclusive language in all project documents and meetings.
- Facilitating equitable participation: meeting at convenient schedules, day care centers or parallel workshops for children.
- Empowering women and men, through the facilitation of a dialogue and negotiation among groups with diverse interests.
- Promoting spaces in the Assembly to show accomplishments made by women groups or projects.
- Including the differentiated participation of women and men in the Community Territorial Laws, to compare visions, expertise and needs.



Photo: Alianza México REDD+, 2017

Examples of gender differentiated participation in REDD+ projects:

What was seen	Recommendations
<p><b>Cattle Raising:</b> Most of the projects that seek to improve cattle raising productive systems are focused on developing skills and capabilities of men, since work with poultry and grazing animals has been traditionally masculine.</p>	<p>To incorporate the PEG in this issue, it is important to acknowledge that livestock activities are not isolated from the family's well-being. Therefore, contributions made by each family member through their respective roles, are important in the productive value chain.</p>
<p><b>Conservation agriculture: Coffee</b> Because of its type of process, coffee harvesting and marketing are activities that involves the entire family, with a division of labor and responsibilities.</p>	<p>In this type of process, it is important to highlight that coffee plantations or any other agricultural parcel may be considered as Family Labor Units, where each member contributes to the common well-being.</p>
<p><b>Forestry exploitation:</b> To minimize threats that agricultural border expansion constitutes for forests, an alternative may be skills development for the sustainable exploitation and use of forestry products. Nonetheless, this exploitation is implemented by the land owners, i.e., the men.</p>	<p>Strengthening forestry exploitation initiatives, with community development and social organization objectives.</p> <p>Communicating collective benefits derived from these practices.</p> <p>Creating community impact indicators on issues related to organization, participation and gender</p>



Photo: Alianza México REDD+, 2017

Elizabeth Allende at an agroforestry system

### Lessons learned

To distill these lessons learned, it has been necessary to look at experiences within a continuous and complex process, with the intervention of different stakeholders. This has been done in specific political contexts and institutional moments.

- 1. It is fundamental to start with a capacity analysis and to design a critical route map**  
The capacity diagnosis allowed the identification of needs to integrate the gender equality focus on the REDD+ preparation process in Mexico; based on this and through a participatory process, the Gender Action Plan was designed (PAGEREDD+, by its name in Spanish).
- 2. The political juncture counts**  
The beginning of the cross-cutting gender character in REDD+ coincided with the federal government change (2013), which was a favorable juncture to formulate action lines of the PECC 2013-2018, working directly with SEMARNAT. In CONAFOR, the political juncture brought a downsizing of employees. Therefore, the PAGEREDD+ positioning was not immediate. In both cases, the National Women's Institute could have strengthened the process; however, it was not possible for that institution to have an active participation. The international juncture was also favorable, because gender issues became part of REDD+ and the different international agencies supporting Mexico in the preparation stage requested for it to be included as a cross-cutting issue.
- 3. Generating an agenda: having an incidence on public policy formulation and modifying the legal framework**  
MREDD+ found that in order to influence the public agenda and to modify the legal framework to ensure gender equality, it was necessary to generate a working agenda with multiple stakeholders, all with the same objective. The various documents of critical and prepositive analysis on the legal and programmatic framework made by MREDD+ allowed for said influence to be documented with data and facts and for it to become part of a public agenda. MREDD+ was innovative because it brought together the Legislative and Executive Branches, as well as civil society

*"Where we live, I was invited to participate in the REDD+ Mexico Alliance project. We have seen the impact of cattle raising, the land has changed a lot and, what we want through this project is to reforest what was lost. Life in the countryside is very difficult, but at the same time, we are very committed. As female producers, we are working as a team hoping we will be able to support our children so they can go to school and learn to care for and preserve our land. The woman's role has changed since we got involved in the project, because we've been working alongside our husbands, and it hasn't made a difference if we are women or men. The work done by the women's group is a lot more organized, because we are a lot more responsible. We have now learned more things, we focus on our land's crops and harvest and share everything with our family. Now, our husbands value our work more."*

**Elizabeth Allende López, beneficiary of the REDD+ Mexico Alliance, San Martín Soyolapam, Oaxaca**

and other international bodies, to jointly, and with a gender perspective, work towards modifying the legal framework.

#### 4. Land tenure is a structural problem

All documents prepared by the MREDD+ Alliance, as well as all consulted literature and interviews, emphasize that land tenure and access to forestry resources are key for women to get equitable benefits derived from REDD+.

#### 5. The institutionalization level of the gender perspective is critical

In the current administration, the environmental sector has suffered a considerable downgrade regarding the institutionalization of the gender perspective. The process, to include cross-cutting gender perspectives in REDD+ associated policies, requires the full and effective participation of instances responsible for national and state gender equality.

#### 6. Understanding, analyzing and appropriating concepts is important

Beyond mandates, there is an increasingly growing understanding about the relevance of including the gender perspective in policy instruments. Nonetheless, fundamental concepts have not always been understood. For instance, “woman” and “gender” are still being used as equivalent terms. The same happens with “equity” and “equality”. Words are important, because their content and implications are different.

#### 7. Creating networks and working with other stakeholders makes the difference

The collaboration among UNDP, MREDD+ and UICN contributed towards harmonizing international instruments and commitments with national policies. The participation of civil society organizations, and academia, is fundamental to position agendas in public policies.

#### 8. Materializing the incorporation of the gender perspective in everyday activities

By working at the public policy level and in the implementation of field projects, MREDD+ was able to develop an integral focus for gender perspective incorporation. Sensitive gender public policy instruments create a favorable standardization context, so that sensitized field implementing agents may take advantage of the tools to reduce the gender gap in their particular local context.

### Next steps

The MREDD+ work to incentivize the incorporation of the gender perspective in public policies related to forests and climate change, must be considered an ongoing process. The process to build the ENAREDD+ and the REDD+ State Strategies does not end with the publication of these documents. Their implementation poses challenges and opportunities to translate into practice the progress made in all supporting policy instruments, as for instance:

- Reviewing and documenting that detail how the ENAREDD+ and REDD+ State Strategies strengthen, in practice, the participation of women and “specific attention” groups, and which are the contradictions that arise in their execution process.
- The legislative agenda should be reactivated: It requires a closer follow-up and accompanying process, for the better harmonization and implementation of the necessary changes to ensure a framework of rights for women and men.
- The PAGeRERDD+ has covered a cycle linked to the preparation phase. It should be updated and reformulated under the light of the following REDD+ phases in Mexico.
- Guidelines to incorporate the gender perspective in the Operation Rules of federal budgetary programs, especially in terms of strengthening skills and capabilities of all interest groups. To build appropriate, non-conventional, concrete, practical and innovating solutions would be an opportunity to materialize concrete cross-cutting principles in the REDD+ gender perspective.
- It is necessary for the design process of the mechanism to distribute benefits associated to results based resources, to include the active participation of women, as well as criteria to distribute said resources with a gender perspective.
- It is fundamental to continue with a process to sensitize and strengthen skills and capabilities, on issues focused on the implementing agents. This will be an important ingredient for the successful implementation of the Investment Programs in REDD+ territories.
- Identifying and re-targeting the necessary investments for gender perspective projects in Investment Program implementation.
- Guaranteeing that the National Safeguards System and the Safeguards Information System have sex differentiated indicators, to identify risks, impacts and mitigation measures with a gender perspective.
- Looking at the future 2018 government change, it will be necessary to reposition the importance of the gender perspective for the REDD+ implementation, as a strategy to accomplish the goals established in the national commitments and to respond to climate change as set forth by Mexico in the UNFCCC.



## WE ALL STAND TO GAIN WITH THE INCORPORATION OF A GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN ALL REDD+ POLICIES AND PROJECTS:

A cross-cutting gender perspective and the promotion of women's and men's effective participation in the decision-making process will make it possible to:

- **Promote an equitable distribution of benefits.**
- **Generate additional benefits to REDD+ objectives.**
- **Facilitate greater efficiency to reduce GHG emissions.**
- **Contribute towards rural sustainable development.**
- **Contribute towards closing gender inequality gaps.**

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