

Medprogramme SCCF Project Final Meeting, 4-5 December 2024, Athens

Legacy Meeting - Item 5A - Gender-sensitive climate risk assessments

Under SCCF Component 1, Plan Bleu produced two gender-sensitive climate risk assessments that zoomed in on the SCCF project's two pilot sites: Kotor Bay, Montenegro and the Tangier-Tetouan-Al-Hoceima region, Morocco. Their aim was to better understand the key climate risks and impacts affecting these zones, based on an assessment of their pre-existing environmental and socio-economic vulnerabilities, including in terms of gender. These assessments laid the groundwork for the following activities of Component 1 and, in parallel to Child Project 2.1 Coastal Plan/Climagine activities in both pilot sites, highlighted important lessons learned in terms of local and context-specific regional coastal planning processes and adaptation, which plays a key role in reducing exposure and vulnerability to climate change.

The assessments based themselves on the Multiscale Coastal Risk Index (MS-CRI) (Satta et al., 2015). Climate risk is defined as the potential for adverse consequences for human or ecological systems, taking into account the diversity of values and objectives associated with the latter. Furthermore, vulnerability and exposure are influenced by development (socio-economic pathways, adaptation and mitigation actions and governance). Climate and development changes represent the main drivers of the different essential components (vulnerability, exposure and hazard) that contribute to risk. In sum, risk can be seen as a function of three factors: Risk = f (hazard, vulnerability, exposure). Risk management is thus defined as plans, actions, strategies or policies aimed at reducing the probability and/or magnitude of potential negative consequences, based on assessed or perceived risks. Climatic and non-climatic forcings acting as coastal hazards, i.e. erosion and flooding, generate risk.

The results of the assessments were visualised in vulnerability and risk maps, including ones that integrate gender variables. In this manner, a more complex picture of territorial vulnerability in the pilot sites transpires, highlighting numerous important defining factors to take into account when planning interventions aimed at boosting resilience and reinforcing adaptation. In particular, the following key gender areas were identified: health status, education, job market, family dynamics and territorial placement, with the following variables integrated into the various maps: average life expectancy at birth by gender, illiteracy rate, higher education, activity rate by gender and age, overall poverty rate, distribution of poverty (or monetary poverty) and multidimensional poverty.

These assessments provide a methodological and case-study based illustration of how gender contributes to shaping the effects of climate change vulnerability in a given area, including in coastal communities. Climate change-induced hazards and extreme weather events can even amplify existing gender inequalities. As elsewhere, in Morocco and Montenegro several climate change factors (such as sea level rise, storms and storm surges, flooding, droughts and wildfires) most impact vulnerable groups. Long heatwaves in the summer and heavy snowfall in the winter can increase energy prices, thus worsening energy poverty levels, especially for older women and women living in rural areas. They can also directly damage sources of income and economic activities (crops, livestock, fish, crafts, seeds...) while jeopardizing women's and families' access to health and access to education. Women's limited participation in environmental decision-making processes does not ensure that their needs and interests will necessarily be adequately represented.

Indeed, women and men experience, perceive and identify risks differently. Everyone can be equally exposed to a hazard, but women and men have different levels of vulnerability and access to resources. Adopting a gender-differentiated approach to the impacts of extreme weather and slow-onset climatic events is thus key to achieving effective, inclusive and equitable climate risk management.

Women and men have also developed different coping skills to respond to the multiple effects of climate change, both in the short- and long-term. Women's crucial responsibilities as stewards of natural resources and wardens of their households and their communities make them effective actors and agents of change, often possessing an invaluable body of often community-based and -fed knowledge and expertise that can support climate change mitigation, disaster reduction and adaptation strategies. Building resilience is therefore also about understanding and reinforcing these coping skills: physical skills, social skills, household and resource management roles and skills (water, seeds, soil, energy, health, money...), and skills to work the land (agriculture, forestry, hunting...) and the seas (fishing...) and produce goods (artisanal crafts). Indeed, women-led businesses in vulnerable sectors (tourism, fisheries, agriculture) are more vulnerable to climate impacts due to their lower adaptive capacity, as they are often smaller in size and lack much-needed financing and technology to help them adapt to climate change.

In sum, these assessments serve as a source of information for local, national and regional stakeholders concerning climate risks and adaptation, while contributing to the emergence of common regional methodologies on climate risks and gender, offering a finer, more granular scale of analysis capable of taking local realities and projections into account, based on the quality of local data. The assessments also highlight how understanding general trends while taking local contexts into account is crucial to designing site-specific, context-specific adaptation measures. Nonetheless, the absence or inadequacy of data strongly limits the development of gender-sensitive indicators, especially when due to the lack of sex-disaggregated data. This once again highlights the crucial role of regional, national and Mediterranean data collection, verification, quality control and sharing systems, from Morocco's SIREDD regional observatories to Plan Bleu's Observatory on the Environment and Sustainable Development on the UNEP World Environment Situation Room.

The assessments also prepared further work on coastal adaptation finance and private sector engagement under Component 1.4. Generally speaking, risk considerations underpin all economic decisions, with climate change transpiring as a defining aspect of risk in what can be considered an epochal shift in how economic actors will frame investment decisions from now on. Understanding, identifying and predicting climate risks will increasingly become a run-of-the-mill aspect of investing in coastal zones. Gender-sensitive approaches to risk in investment decisions are also needed, since vulnerable groups should benefit from accessible and inclusive forms of insurance against climate impacts on their livelihoods, health and wellbeing. Conversely, individuals or assets that present valuable adaptive capacities should also be valorised as important contributors to local-scale resilience. Finally, private actors will increasingly steer their investment decisions towards solutions that are resilient to specific climate risks and impacts. Public actors and civil society should both support and expect them to do so, since private funding is crucial to achieving global adaptation funding targets. Governmental efforts to fund adaptation, build capacity at all levels of society to engage in economic opportunities that are climate-proof to the extent possible, and contribute to resilience and share knowledge and data on these themes are also crucial, grounding themselves in the territorial realities that such gender-sensitive climate risk assessments shed light on.