

Policy Brief

How can the United States and Sweden help ensure that women in developing countries participate equitably in helping their countries meet COP21 commitments?

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Key Findings:

- Both countries should improve their alignment when it comes to their environmental aid policy and aid policy for gender equity
- Countries should have a stronger focus on agricultural industry and agricultural supply chain, with particular attention to residue usage and biofuel creation
- Use policy incentives to ensure the empowerment of women
- Sweden and USA should continue their joint effort to create a stronger international cooperation

Creating Synergies and Improving Policy Interactions

Policy Suggestions for Sweden and the United States in Gender and Environmental Issues

Executive Summary

The COP21 agreement has ambitious goals that require the collective effort and engagement of all the societal groups to achieve its objectives. The loss of intellectual and economic resources would be immense if females in the developing countries would not participate equitably in the process to the fulfilment of COP21 agreement. Sweden and the US, both at the frontier of technological and humanitarian development, can help to ensure the equitable participation of females by certain policy adjustments. The overall theme of the policy adjustment is to create a better alignment between their environmental aid policy and aid policy for gender equity. The three underlying policy changes are 1) having a stronger focus on aid and investment into certain sectors and supply chain activities with greater female participation rate, we have identified the agricultural sector as an industry that has great environmental impact and improvement opportunities both when it comes to GHGs emission and gender equality. 2) Gender perspective should be enhanced and incorporated in all environmental aid decisions, the current aid/investment policy and resource channeling (mostly by giving decision makers resources directly) are deemed to be inefficient and sometime even lead to exploitation of women, incentives should be created to ensure that women not only involve in the processes of environmental improvement processes, but also enjoy the benefit. 3) Continuation and improvement of the current collaboration between both countries by leading other countries, exchanging knowledge and creating specific targets. If the policies suggested above are successfully implemented, it would be certain that Sweden and the US will help women in the developing country to participate to a larger extent on the road to COP21 fulfilment!

Background

The Paris Agreement (COP21) marks a historical consensus among 200 countries on tackling climate change together and the convention serves as a starting point for the global outlook for a low-carbon future. The goals and objectives that the countries agreed

upon are to keep the global temperature “well below” 2.0C (3.6F) above pre-industrial times and “endeavour to limit” them even more, to 1.5C (2.5F); as well as limiting the amount of greenhouse gases emission caused by human activity to the same levels that trees, soil and oceans can absorb naturally at some point between 2050 and 2100. The convention also set concrete financial targets by channelling at least USD 100 billion to the developing countries and the most vulnerable countries of climate risks, to help them achieving their goals.

The goals and objectives of COP21 are very ambitious and it definitely requires a collective effort and engagement of all the societal groups to achieve such goals. Women as a societal group represent 49.6% of the global population, research conducted by OECD also shows that women tend to be more environmentally friendly and conscious than men in developed countries, failure to engage women in the environmental commitments will ultimately result in great losses in terms of intellectual and economical resources, thus restraining and delaying the fulfilment of the COP21 convention.



Picture: A historical moment when the COP21 agreement was reached.

Statistics from UN Statistical Bureau shows rather dismal numbers for women’s participation in environmental decision-making (local, regional, national and global) in the developing countries, the underrepresentation of women is demonstrated clearly. In terms of education and formal training, it is also shown that women in the developing

countries have limited access to these, which hamper their possibility to engage in decision-making processes. In addition to that, it is very problematic from a moral and ethical perspective to exclude the perspective of women and girls in developing countries, a group that is most exposed to the damages that climate changes have caused.

Both Sweden and the United States are at the frontiers of social, scientific and technological development and have contributed immensely in the promotion of gender equality and environmental development of the developing world. The US donated the most funds in foreign aid (USD 32 billion) in the world in 2014, and Sweden was rated as the most generous country in terms of aid to developing countries in 2014 (calculated as foreign aid as % of GNI). But the question remains if the countries' policies are effective in promoting gender equity and environmental development (with a particular focus on the clauses of COP21) at the same time, this policy brief will analyse the current situation and make policy suggestions on the issue: **“How can the United States and Sweden help ensure that women in developing countries participate equitably in helping their countries meet COP21 commitments?”**

Current Situation Analysis and Policy Review

A review of the current policy of Sweden and the United States shows that both countries are dedicated to the development of gender equity and environmental development in the developing world, however there are huge spaces for policy improvements and innovations. According to the Swedish aid policy framework adopted in 2013 (Government Communication 2013/14:131), Sweden has six overarching objectives when it comes to international aid, two of those are: strengthened gender equality and improved environment. A policy review conducted by the Swedish government in 2015 shows that the goals of the Swedish aid policy were largely achieved, however the intended synergies and coherence between different policy areas were not satisfactory. The current US foreign humanitarian aid policy as well as the recent effort made by the US government to deposit USD 500 million into the Green Climate Fund (Established as a result of COP21) should be praised since it shows great dedication. It however lacks synergies between its environmental policy and its gender equity policy. According to our analysis on the congressional research report *“Foreign Aid: An Introduction to U.S. Programs and Policy”*, there is a lack of gender perspective in the US Foreign Environmental Aid Program. Future policies of both countries should emphasize on synergies and better policy interactions between the various aid/investment programs, as well introducing a gender perspective into decision making, this should boost the developing countries' women's participation on the road to the fulfilment of COP21.

Policy Improvement 1: Focusing on Sectors and Supply Chain Activities That Have Greater Gender Equity

As discussed in the previous sections, the participation of females in the environmental projects is low in the developing world, as well as their representations in environmental decision making organs. This is mainly due to that the persisting patriarchal values make men initially resist women taking on new roles and having ownership of economic resources, which restrict their participations. The United States and Sweden's effort on education aid have been very successful, and have naturally increased gender equality and environmental awareness in the developing world, this is known as a “down-top” approach and it is well-known that the adoption process for these approaches are very slow. The US and Sweden may have a stronger focus on a “top-down” approach by empowering women directly with economic resources.

Our analysis of the green investments and aid programs of both countries (during 2010-2015) shows that most projects heavily focused on sectors in the developing countries that lack female involvement such as “heavy industrial sector” or “infrastructure and transportation”. Agricultural sector, one of the sector that has the most equalized participation rate (approximately 40% of the agricultural labor force in the developing world are female) has not received a lot of aid and investment attention from US and Sweden, during 1999-2012 approximately 4% of all foreign humanitarian aid and FDI are made into this sector from US and Sweden. When investment or aid are made, the main objective is most of the time (67% measured in monetary units) concerned with crop yield. The focus on improvement of post-plantation processes (a supply chain activity that concerns mainly with the harvesting and the post-harvesting waste handling which has a higher female participation rate) has been relatively low.

Agricultural sector has a strong relevance for the fulfilment of the COP21 agreement by reducing our carbon footprint: improved handling and management of agricultural residues and wastes (e.g. stalks, roots) for example can significantly reduce greenhouse gas emission in two ways:

- 1) More efficient agricultural waste combustion will reduce emission;
- 2) Making use of the biomass to create biofuel, this will give locals an alternative energy sources that is carbon-neutral (even carbon-negative in the future when it is more efficient), thus reducing emission even more.

Case studies in various developing countries conducted in Sierra Leone, Brazil, Mozambique and China demonstrate a clear trend of three key characteristics:

- 1) They have immense amount of resources when it comes to agricultural residues;
- 2) They usually handle the residues by direct combustion;
- 3) The techniques and competences for residue combustion are much worse than developed countries. It can be said that the countries have resources but lack competences when it comes to agricultural activities.



Picture: Corn Residues in China that can be used as an efficient fuel source.

Past projects involving more efficient handling of agricultural waste have demonstrated great results: MPPL 4.5 MW Biomass Power Plant in Karnataka, India for example help the local community to reduce 18,000 tons of CO₂ per year and Addax BioEnergy's project in Sierra Leone reduced the CO₂ emission by an impressive 75,000 tons per year.

A more concrete implementation and operational strategy of this policy is to be discussed, however we propose the following considerations are to be made when it comes to the implementation, based on our experience with previous case studies: 1) providing knowledge on the air-injection and combustion temperature control to local community is highly important, it can create a huge reduction of carbon footprint with very little cost; 2) when the current main energy source is coal, one should invest in torrefaction techniques that can replace coals efficiently; 3) having direct local presence in the country will ensure greater efficiency when it comes to use of funds.

Policy Improvement 2: Ensure That Women Receive the Benefits of Environmental Projects

If women only participate but do not enjoy the benefit of the COP21 related projects and initiatives, there will be no long-term incentive for them to participate, and is very problematic from a democratic perspective.

Unfortunately, the exploitation of women as a free labor source is an existing phenomenon in the developing countries. Creating opportunities for women to work collectively is important to make sure that women in developing countries will participate in the meeting of the COP21 commitments. If women get control over natural

resources they will be able to make greater change and the environmental projects will not be at the expense of women's empowerment. When resources are invested in a local community there is a risk for women to experience disadvantages if the allocation of resources not is regulated and in the attempt to include women in development projects there are risks with exploitation of women in voluntary work without them getting an according proportion of the project's profit. Women are already at a disadvantage when it comes to land owning rights and resources in most developing countries and to ensure that the attempt to invest in women is successful there needs to be a policy change with an increased focus on groups of women to make sure that women build collaborations and successfully can use the bargaining power they will receive if they work collectively. The long term systematic change in investment pattern can be reached through legal and economic incentives to include women, and incentives to make sure that women take part of the project's benefits. There are two ways to achieve this: 1) New directives on public aid/investment: the current directives have indeed a focus on gender perspective, however when economic resources are channeled directly to managers (a group consisting of mostly men), women are sometime marginalized. A new directive can be introduced, to make sure that investments are encouraged to be made in organizations with a balanced management. Some metrics/indexes that can be useful when making such decisions include for example % of female project managers or % of paid female employee in the labor force. The Swedish General Pension Fund (2) is already adopting this approach, it is not unreasonable that this approach are being spread to other organizations and to the US. 2) New incentive system on private investment: to create systematic change in investment pattern, investments into organizations/companies/projects that have an environmental focus and is equalized in terms of gender should be encouraged heavily. Encouragement can be made through financial means such as tax relief or trade subsidies; or through honorary means by giving out governmental certificates.



Picture: Female farmers at a fair-trade farm in Asia.

Collaboration and Future Outlook

The US and Swedish policy framework should continue to emphasize multilateral aid undertakings and continue to collaborate to an even greater extent with international organizations and the private sector. As the world's most generous donor per capita Sweden can have a great impact in multilateral organizations and at the same time make a greater impact than on its own. Global issues need global solutions and there are also benefits associated with a more coordinated effort for the help receiving countries. Collaborations are not only about allocating economic resources, it is also about contributing and achieving synergies through shared knowledge, values and technology. US as the world's most technological-advanced country, setting the frontier when it comes to technology could together with Sweden who has a position as one of the leading feministic countries in the world collaborate in an effort to generate policy solutions for involving women in developing countries to achieve environmental improvements. If the above-stated policies are implemented with success with the joint effort of these two nations, females' participation on the road to COP21 fulfilment will improve significantly in the foreseeable future!



Picture: President Barack Obama and Swedish Premier Stefan Löfven discussing the future of Sweden-US collaboration during the recent week.

Sources Used

The Role of women in agriculture, FAO, 2011

Swedish and US Governmental Communications (2005-2015)

Case Studies on MPPL 4.5 MW Biomass Power Plant, Sierra Leone Energy Farms, Biofuel in China, Mozambique and Brazil, 2007-2015

SEI: Identifying policy instruments to reduce environmental footprints, 2015

Statistics collected from UN FAO, UN Women, World Bank, Swedish Central Statistical Bureau 1999-2016

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Recommended Reading

Integration of Gender and Environmental Perspectives
<http://www.osce.org/gender/36360?download=true>

Global Gender Office and their Site on Gender and Environment Policy <http://genderandenvironment.org/egi/>

Biofuels: Alternative Feedstocks and Conversion Processes

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