

Liberia's submission on Decision 23/CP.18

Liberia, a state party to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Kyoto Protocol reaffirms its commitment to decision 36/CP.7 which calls for improving the participation of women in the representation of parties in bodies established under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change or the Kyoto Protocol and the subsequent gender decision 23/CP.18 which was adopted in Doha at COP 18 for the enhancement of decision 36/CP.7 to promote gender balance and improve women's participation in UNFCCC and Kyoto Protocol negotiations, as well as in the representation of Parties in bodies established pursuant to the Convention or the Kyoto Protocol.

As a nation, the issue of gender equality and promotion of women's rights in all facets is considered as critical to the overarching development framework and processes of the country which gains it credence from the various international instruments on gender equality and women's rights.

Hence decision 23/CP.18 is seen as embodying fundamental principles embedded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action, UNSCR 1325 and the Protocol to the African Charter of human and people's rights relating to women, all of which Liberia is signatory to.

Furthermore, the decision reinforces the need for both men and women to participate in decision-making required to adequately combat the negative impacts of climate change by explicitly noting the importance of "informing more effective climate change policy that addresses the needs of women and men equally".

1. PRACTICE- Actions taken by Liberia to implement gender equality in climate change policy and practices.

Actions to ensure gender equality and mainstreaming in climate change policy required the requisite institutional and legal frameworks. Liberia takes seriously her obligation under the UNFCCC and other Rio Conventions like the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity (UNCBD) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and signed onto the UNFCCC and its KP in 2002 and has been active in the Convention and KP process since.

Consequently, initiatives taken by the country are categorized under two themes; institutional arrangement/framework and Legal framework.

A. Institutional

- The Country has a focal point on gender and climate change in addition to the national focal point who are active in ensuring that the Convention's activities are implemented in-country;
- Establishment of the National Climate Change Secretariat, National Climate Change Steering Committee and the REDD Technical Working Group of which have the Ministry of Gender and Development represented;

- Establishment of the Rural Renewable Energy Agency in **January 2010 through Executive order 23 and its follow up Executive order 38 which re-confirming the continuation of the Agency. This Agency** has been collaborating with the Ministry of Gender and Development to ensure that people in the Rural Areas , including women and children have access to sources of alternative power(**Solar power**)

B. Legal Framework

Although the country utilities international instruments and standards as the foundation of most of its legal framework, the national constitution and other framework like the National Gender Policy, the CEDAW Recommendation, Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS 1&2) the new development agenda for Liberia, the Agenda for Transformation provide the basic principles for mainstreaming gender equality in all policies and programs, as well as climate change policy.

However, further efforts been made by the government to implement interventions to combat climate change at the national level which have had gender equality perspective mainstreamed .

- In 2008, Liberia completed a National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA) with funding and technical support from the Global Environmental Facility and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).The NAPA implementation is currently being funded by the Least Developed Countries Fund. Two projects are currently being implemented :
 1. Coastal Adaptation: Enhancing Resilience of Vulnerable Coastal Areas to Climate Change Risks in Liberia
 2. Agriculture adaptation: Enhancing Resilience to Climate Change by Mainstreaming Adaptation Concerns into Agricultural Sector Development in Liberia

The third project, Strengthening Liberia's Capability to Provide Climate Information and Services to Enhance Climate Resilient Development and Adaptation to Climate Change will shortly commence implementation.

- Finalization of the REDD Preparation Proposal (RPP):
 - Liberia REDD+ Preparation Proposal was approved in June 2012; Grant Agreement signed in March 2013 and first disbursement have been made;
 - Recruitment of the proposal REDD+ Implementation Unit staff and set- up are in process
 - Liberia has established the framework for the use of the REDD+ Social and Environmental Standards through the formation of a National Standards Committee and a Facilitation Team;
 - The Strategic Environmental Social Assessment (SESA) term of reference has been developed with gender consideration, and the expression of interest is out for application solicitation;

2. BEST PRACTICES- what has worked well in integrating women's and men unique positions , needs and capacities

The goal as defined by Decision 23/CP.18 to achieve gender balance in bodies and improve women's participation in the UNFCCC negotiations required the collective efforts of all parties. Since 2009, the national delegation of Liberia has been structured as such to ensure that gender representation is included, even though the level may be at the minimum.

In addition , the country has received support for its gender focal point from WEDO, an organization responsible for implementing the Women Delegates Fund (WDF), a GGCA project which is supported by Finland and other governments to supports women negotiators from the global South with travel resources, extensive capacity building and a women delegate community network.

The overarching epithet of best practice in integrating women's and men unique positions needs and capacities was the development of the gender and climate change strategy which was done through the support of IUCN and GGCA. The Strategy is focused on six thematic areas: Energy, Agriculture, coastal, Health, Water and Sanitation and Forestry.

The development of the strategy was characterized by a participatory process: bringing together stakeholders from the board spectrum of the country. A training workshop was first held for training of all gender county coordinators from the 15 counties, gender focal points from line Ministries and Agencies and rural women from the 15 counties in understanding the Concept of Gender and climate change, followed by a validation and consultation workshop which brought government, non-governmental organizations, media, academia , youth, local authorities ,community leaders, traditional leaders, youth , women organizations and international partners to discuss and present their diverse views on issues relating to gender and climate change with the objective "To ensure that gender equality is mainstreamed into Liberia's climate change policies, programs and interventions so that both men and women have equal opportunities to implement and benefit from mitigation and adaptation initiatives in combating climate change and positively impact on the outcome of "Liberia Rising 2030".

But it is worth noting that while such interventions may serve as an impetus to achieving gender equality as enshrined in decision 23/CP.18. , the political will must be forthcoming from the decision and policy makers. The country has seen such from the leadership through the Government of the Republic of Liberia. Both the EPA Executive Director and Minister of Gender have demonstrated immense commitment to this process through their engagement during the process, as well of those of the climate change focal point at the EPA and the Gender Focal Point on Climate Change at the Ministry of Gender and Development.

3. CHALLENGES- challenges encountered in the implementation of gender-sensitive climate change policy and pursuing gender-balance in the UNFCCC regime

As a country currently in a transitioning economy and recovering from the ravages of civil conflict, there still exists competing and also lack of adequate resources to fully support a

sustained effort in mainstreaming gender into climate change policy, as well as ensuring and pursuing gender-balance in its delegation. Currently supporting the participation the national delegation remains a profound hurdle as is the case with most LDC, African and developing countries. Furthermore, capacity issues and lack of sufficient understanding and knowledge among relevant and key stakeholders with regards to the gender perspective of climate change.

4. **NEEDS- Tools , resources, or training most valuable to better support and facilitate progress towards gender balance and gender- sensitive climate change policy.**

The country is cognizant that efforts need to be reinforced and redoubled with regards to National government budgetary support to the implementation of gender sensitive climate change policy, as well galvanizing overwhelming support from major government institutions for the implementation of such.

Duly, the establishment of a coordinating division which will encompass of three units tasked with ensuring gender mainstreaming into energy , women's access to land and Land rights , agriculture and other climate change related areas stands as a priority for the Ministry of Gender and Development.

At the UNFCCC level, while decision 23/CP.18 is a step towards improving women's participation in the bodies and in the negotiations, additional mechanisms need to be put into place to ensure this goal. Interventions currently undertaken like the WDF funds need to be replicated to ensure the participation of women from LDC and developing countries.

Indeed other factors like financial resources for, and capacity building needed to gender-sensitive implement adaptation and mitigation actions against climate change cannot be overemphasized. For Liberia it is essential that Women from vulnerable countries, particularly the LDCs working both at the national level and participating as delegates be provided with capacity building opportunities required for strengthening of developing their potential to engage at both the national and UNFCCC negotiations.