



**Covenant of Mayors**  
in Sub-Saharan Africa



# **GENDER INCLUSIVE PARTICIPATORY APPROACH GUIDE FOR PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**

A practical resource for  
Sub-Saharan African cities to  
mainstream gender in their  
climate and energy actions

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## What is a gender-inclusive participatory approach?

The Covenant of Mayors in Sub-Saharan Africa ([CoM SSA](#)) is an initiative launched by the European Union (EU) to support local authorities in sub-Saharan Africa in their efforts to tackle climate challenges and ensure access to clean energy. Following the completion of their Sustainable Energy Access and Climate Action Plans (SEACAP), the next steps for CoM SSA signatories is to expand upon the actions of their SEACAP and develop them into full scale projects to implement the actions and achieve the targets set out in their SEACAP. This guide aims to provide an overview on how signatories can co-create gender-responsive climate and energy projects with all relevant stakeholders following a **gender-inclusive participatory approach**. It will also present different gender-inclusive participatory tools that local governments (LGs) in SSA can use to identify and design climate and energy projects that are inclusive, as well as provide case study examples on how these tools can be utilised.

Currently, climate and energy projects are often developed in a gender-neutral<sup>1</sup>, top-down manner with little involvement of marginalised voices. Not everyone is necessarily represented equally or fairly, which can contribute to widening existing gender inequalities. Fair participation of all project stakeholders, (including marginalised groups) and gender equality are closely linked, representing significant objectives of CoM SSA for a just transition. As such, climate change and access to energy projects developed from SEACAPs need to be inclusive throughout the project cycle to contribute to reducing gender inequalities.

A gender-inclusive participatory approach to project development advocates for actively involving project stakeholders (beneficiaries, experts, relevant departments, private sector and civil society actors) in co-designing the project. The inclusion of women, girls, and gender minorities of all ages and abilities in project development decision-making processes is an opportunity to not only meet the project beneficiaries' needs but also combat the gendered inequalities experienced by these population groups. A gender-inclusive participatory approach for developing climate change and access to energy projects is particularly useful for understanding gender norms in terms of governance and control of resources, and for identifying opportunities for transforming these norms.<sup>2</sup>



Figure 1: Levels of participation

<sup>1</sup> Please refer to the [glossary](#) document for the definition of key concepts.

<sup>2</sup> Kristjanson et al., Gender and Inclusion Toolbox: Participatory Research in Climate Change and Agriculture, 2014. Available at: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263712578\\_Participatory\\_approaches\\_for\\_gender-sensitive\\_research\\_design](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/263712578_Participatory_approaches_for_gender-sensitive_research_design)



## Tools to utilise when undertaking a gender-inclusive participatory approach

Specific groups of people might be negatively affected or excluded by the project development process because of the time and place of participatory activities, or barriers to participation. For example, gendered roles and responsibilities have an effect on women not being able to join a workshop during the day because of their caretaking responsibilities<sup>3</sup> or not being able to travel long distances to participate in activities because of the limited time and resources available to them. Similarly, low levels of literacy or illiteracy can act as a barrier to participation.

As a way to involve all relevant stakeholders in the development of a project in a gender-inclusive participatory way, there is a wide range of concrete tools to choose from to support the process throughout the project lifecycle. These are illustrated in the table below and how they fit together in the project lifecycle is illustrated in Figure 2. For all tools, women and marginalised groups' participation should be encouraged and the project team is responsible for creating a safe environment for their participation to ensure that their voice and experience is heard and informs the project development.




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<sup>3</sup> Please refer to the [glossary](#) document for the definition of key concepts.

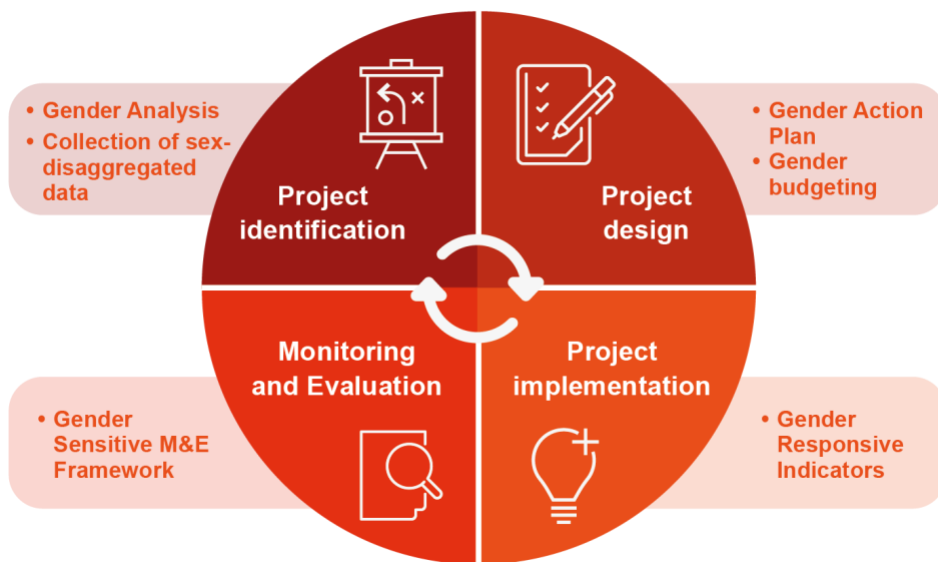
Tool	Short Definition
 <b>Project identification</b>	
<b>Stakeholder analysis/ mapping</b>	A stakeholder analysis is the process of identifying the people affected by the project idea; grouping them according to their levels of participation, interest, and influence in the project.
<b>Stakeholder engagement strategy</b>	A stakeholder engagement strategy determines how best to involve identified stakeholders in the project development, in a gender-sensitive and culturally appropriate way.
<b>Household survey</b> <i>(see case study 2 below)</i>	Household surveys are questionnaires that are given to a representative sample of the targeted population. To ensure that this tool is gender-sensitive, the survey enumerators can be women, ensure that at least 50 % of the participants are women, data is sex-disaggregated and questions on gender roles and responsibilities are included.
<b>Community hazard mapping workshops</b> <i>(see case study 3 below)</i>	This tool involves working with small groups representative of the project beneficiaries to identify on a map important livelihoods and resources in the community, who has access and control over them, and delineate areas they perceive as vulnerable and prone to climate hazards. From these different lived experiences, the group can plot desired and useful risk reduction measures.
 <b>Project design</b>	
<b>Exploratory walks</b>	Exploratory walks enable women and other marginalized groups to link how they feel in urban public space with urban planning and also making it possible to understand how unsafe they can feel. For instance, a diverse group of about fifteen participants travel for two hours along a predefined route. A facilitator leads the walk and initiates discussions between participants.
<b>Women focus groups</b>	A focus group is a planned discussion among a small group of stakeholders (4-12 persons) facilitated by a skilled moderator. It is designed to obtain information about various people’s preferences and values pertaining to a defined topic and why these are held, by observing the structured discussion of an interactive group in a permissive, non-threatening environment <sup>4</sup> . Women-only focus groups can help create such a permissive, non-threatening environment especially: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to identify or discuss specific challenges for women and the possible means to address them (affirmative action for women’s empowerment)</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup> To read more on how group discussions can be exclusive to women, you can refer to this case study: <https://dlc.library.columbia.edu/catalog/ldpd:494935/bytestreams/content/content?filename=Catherine+Wema+-+Dissertation.pdf>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• in settings where public representation and decision-making is male-dominated, and women are not used to speaking publicly, especially in the presence of men</li> <li>• for questions that address power relations between genders</li> <li>• for questions that address personal or sensitive issues (gender-based violence, harassment, intimate and health issues, cultural and social norms etc.).<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>
<p><b>Co-design workshops</b> <i>(see case study 1 below)</i></p>	<p>Co-design workshops are a step-by step process involving a series of activities to firstly co-identify challenges and secondly, co-design solutions. For instance, during an initial workshop, beneficiaries address the important challenges of their urban area and propose project ideas while the facilitator takes notes. <b>Graphic facilitation and schematization</b> are effective activities in creating a visual map of challenges, without needing to know how to read or write.</p> <p>During a second workshop, beneficiaries create a <b>participatory mapping of potential solutions</b> to shape project ideas in response to the challenges identified during the first workshop. When the result of this mapping is presented to other inhabitants, participants can themselves express their opinions about the proposed ideas and how they can be implemented. The project management team can get a grasp of how those co-created ideas are received among other inhabitants.</p> <p>Another way of using co-design workshops is presented in Case study 1 below.</p>
<p><b>Participatory scenario-planning workshops/ forums</b> <i>(see case study 1 below)</i></p>	<p>In a scenario workshop, a moderator facilitates a group discussion between 20-35 stakeholders with different knowledge, views and experience on a specific scenario (e.g., A day in the life of an imaginary family of neighbourhood X in the year 2030) in order to stimulate common vision making and dialogue.</p>
<p><b>World Cafe</b></p>	<p>The World Café is a creative process for facilitating collaborative dialogue and the sharing of knowledge and ideas to create a living network of conversation and action. In this process, a café ambiance is created, in which participants discuss a question or issue in small groups around the café tables. At regular intervals the participants move to a new table. One table host remains and summarises the previous conversation to the new table guests. Thus, the proceeding conversations are cross-fertilised with the ideas generated in former conversations with other participants. At the end of the process, the main ideas are summarised in a plenary session and follow-up possibilities are discussed.</p>
 <b>Project implementation</b>	
<p><b>Grievance Redress Mechanism</b></p>	<p>The main objective of a gender-responsive Grievance Redress Mechanism is to assist to resolve complaints and grievances from project stakeholders in a timely, effective and efficient manner that satisfies all parties involved. To be effective, it needs to be inclusive and anonymous. If possible, the entity to respond to the grievances should be independent from the project implementer to ensure a fair assessment of and solution to the complaint.</p>

<sup>5</sup> UNIDO, Guide to Gender Analysis and Gender Mainstreaming the Project Cycle, 2019.  
Available at: [https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/files/2021-06/Gender\\_mainstreaming\\_Guide\\_1\\_Main%20guide.pdf](https://www.unido.org/sites/default/files/files/2021-06/Gender_mainstreaming_Guide_1_Main%20guide.pdf)

	<p>The grievance mechanism can be tailored specifically to the context of the project and should be made accessible to everyone involved or affected by the project in any way. More powerful or vocal stakeholder agendas are usually heard and addressed in comparison with more vulnerable and marginalised groups. To address these inequalities, the Grievance Redress Mechanism needs to specifically include considerations for capturing and responding to grievances on gender inequalities, such as gender-based violence, which requires the provision of female focal points to ensure easy and unrestricted access for women and a certain level of gender capacity amongst the entity responsible for response mechanism as a whole.</p>
<p> <b>Monitoring and Evaluation</b></p>	
<p><b>Community monitoring and evaluation</b></p>	<p>Community monitoring and evaluation is a form of oversight by communities to increase the accountability, quality and management of the project. Interested project beneficiaries can be designated to contribute to set the project indicators, plan the evaluation design, gather and analyse data over time and determine actions to take with the project team based on the results. For instance, the GCF project ‘Increasing the resilience of ecosystems and communities through the restoration of the productive bases of salinized lands’, community evaluation workshops are planned by the project team once a year to determine how the project can be improved.</p>



**Figure 2: Example of tools for a gender-inclusive participatory approach throughout the project cycle**

## Case studies on gender-inclusive participatory approaches

Meaningful gender-inclusive participation in project development is necessary to render the decision-making process more democratic and improve the efficiency and sustainability of the project. This guide will look specifically at 3 case studies showing how LGs can use **Participatory Scenario Planning (PSP) forums**, **Women-led household survey** and **participatory hazards mapping** as activities to generate inclusive **active participation** throughout **project identification** and **project design**.

These case studies serve as inspiration on how different tools can be used in the project cycle to follow a gender-inclusive participatory approach. What the best suited tool is for your project depends on the project specific characteristics as well as the context that you are planning a project in.

### Case Study 1: Participatory Scenario Planning (PSP) forums

In the **East Mamprusi District in Northern Ghana**, the Adaptation Learning Programme for Africa (ALP) seeks to increase the capacity of vulnerable households to adapt to climate variability and change, by using participatory initiatives aiming to pioneer and deepen practical understanding of Community Based Adaptation (CBA). Throughout this process, a special focus was put on dimensions of gender equality and diversity. The process is aimed at bringing together rights holders and duty bearers<sup>6</sup> from vulnerable communities, to assess climate change challenges together and improve decision-making processes with the goal to more effectively protect and improve livelihoods, reduce vulnerability and increase long-term resilience. As one of the concrete tools to develop a community-based approach to adaptation, the project team organised **Participatory Scenario Planning (PSP) forums** designed for collective sharing and interpretation of climate forecasts with a wide range of stakeholders.

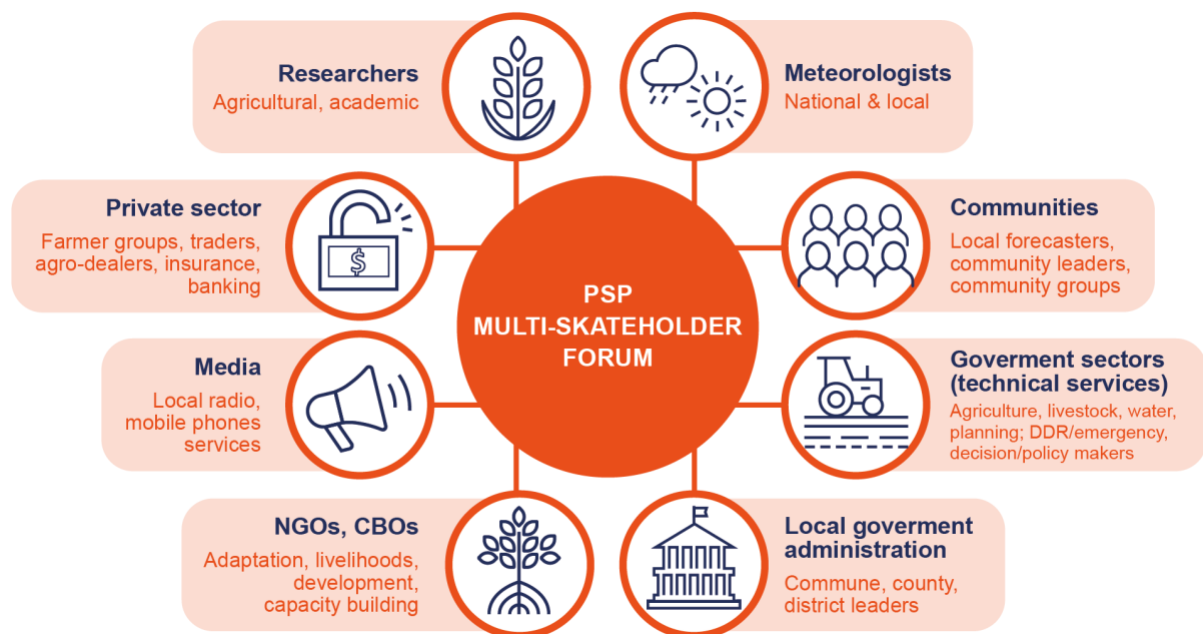


Figure 3: CARE International, Practical guide to PSP: Participatory Scenario Planning using seasonal forecasts, 2017. Available at: [Practical-guide-to-PSP-web-1.pdf \(careclimatechange.org\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> Please refer to the **glossary** document for the definition of key concepts.



Changes in weather patterns impact vulnerable farmers and land users, who need to adapt their practices in order to secure their livelihoods. Effective strategies and plans for adaptation to both climate change and climate variability are therefore of high importance for the local communities. The participatory approach is intended to develop plans that build on risk reduction and implementation strategies that are locally-attuned and owned by the land users themselves. The project team ensured women's active engagement by asking for gender-disaggregated data while reviewing secondary data and validating what they found during the participatory forums, using inspiring stories on gender and climate change and asking gender-specific questions during every tool or session.

In order to be as inclusive as possible and involve those groups that are often left aside, as a strategy to overcome the challenge of high illiteracy in the community, especially amongst women, the project team worked with alternatives to written project materials, such as audio-visual inputs as well as pictograms and symbols.<sup>7</sup> As a consequence of the very inclusive PSP workshops, the knowledge and needs of women were taken into account. Based on their experience as land users and farmers, one of the strategies going forward was to plant indigenous crop breeds to adapt to long periods of below normal rainfall and at the same time withstand very strong winds and heavy rainfall during rain seasons.



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<sup>7</sup> CARE International, Adaptation Strategies Compendium, 2015.

Available at: [Adaptation-Strategies-Compendium.pdf \(careclimatechange.org\)](https://www.careclimatechange.org/Adaptation-Strategies-Compendium.pdf).

## Case Study 2: Women-led household survey for a Community-based Development Plan

The **city of Nairobi in Kenya** has recognized that traditional planning processes do not represent the complex challenges that the cities' informal settlements face and that the inputs of the communities themselves are essential to improve their situation sustainably. The city government therefore initiated a 2-year participatory planning process to develop a community-based integrated development plan in their efforts to become a city that reflects the needs of all of its citizens in its infrastructure and practices.<sup>8</sup> A **household survey** designed to gain inputs from all neighbourhoods and all groups of people was conducted in **the informal settlement Mukuru** to use the communities' knowledge and build consensus towards a development plan. The local government oversaw the survey and existing women-led savings groups were utilized to ensure active participation amongst the communities.

Before the survey took place, community planning forums were held to inform people about the upcoming survey and advocate for their active participation. At these meetings, over 5000 residents from the Mukuru area took part and the communities collectively identified the survey teams and 5 thematic areas that the surveys should cover. Local women's savings groups undertook the household level surveys, which formed the basis of consensus-building within the informal settlement and provided vital data to design interventions. The survey team was made up of 450 data collectors, with 70 % representing women and youth, who are usually underrepresented in decision-making processes.

Residents of informal settlements, especially women and youth lack meaningful participation in urban planning, and top-down interventions may only further marginalise these communities. It is essential for policymakers and local governments to partner closely with these residents and grassroots organizations, so that identified development measures foster social inclusion and do not alienate informal households further. The access to community networks and information of existing women's groups are a valuable resource with regard to collecting rich community data. The high involvement of women and youth led to a prioritization of action areas that represents the needs of underrepresented groups from the communities.

## Case Study 3: Community hazard mapping for EbA solutions co-design

The Ecosystems Protecting Infrastructure and Communities (EPIC) project in **Djilor District, Senegal**, involved and trained local farming communities and specifically women's groups throughout the project development to identify key climate risks and implement tailored Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA)<sup>9</sup> solutions. The strong participatory emphasis of EbA is designed to surface the considerations of women and marginalized groups for the co-design of solutions that specifically respond to these groups' needs.

At the start of the project, tools such as **participatory hazards mapping** were used in a consultative project inception workshop to assess the main climate change threats that different population groups faced and potential solutions. This workshop included representatives from the concerned communities, local women's groups, government technical officers in charge of rural development and technical partners. During the hazard mapping exercise, some risks identified by the women's groups were different from other stakeholders present in the room. For example, women's groups identified increasing soil salinity as a major threat to the rice fields on which many women rely on for their livelihoods.

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<sup>8</sup> SDI Kenya, Mukuru SPA, 2018. Available at: [Mukuru SPA — Muungano wa Wanavijiji](#).

<sup>9</sup> EbA is a nature-based solution that harnesses biodiversity and ecosystem services to reduce vulnerability and build resilience to climate change.

This participatory tool facilitated the integration of local knowledge and practices into project activities. For example, women owning most of the degraded land being restored by the project benefited most from its mangrove-related activities. By interacting with different types of stakeholders and infiltrating existing stakeholder groups, the project surfaced insights that led to interventions that specifically improved women’s livelihoods.



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In your own CoM SSA journey, you can use these case studies for inspiration on how to use participatory tools in a gender-sensitive manner for the successful development of your climate projects. More tools exist and you are encouraged to explore the ones most suited for your LG.



## Links to additional resources

### General guidelines on the gender-sensitive participatory approach:

**Cities Alliance. (2020).**

[Cities for Women – Urban Assessment Framework Through a Gender Lens.pdf \(citiesalliance.org\)](#)

[Online: 22 June 2022].

**World Bank. (2020).**

[Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning Design](#)

[Online: 27 June 2022]

### Other case studies with a gender-sensitive participatory approach:

**AFD. (2021). Gender-sensitive public lighting.**

[User Guide | CoM SSA](#)

[Online: 22 June 2022].

**Womensability Association and Cities Alliance. (2022).**

[Women-Friendly Urban Planning: a Toolkit from Cities of the Global South](#)

### Tool-specific guidelines:

**Participatory Scenario Planning forums:**

[https://www.google.com/url?q=https://careclimatechange.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Practical-guide-to-PSP-web-1.pdf&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1656406277880851&usg=AOvVaw16fM\\_VNiiOWQ1\\_32zfRct2](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://careclimatechange.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Practical-guide-to-PSP-web-1.pdf&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1656406277880851&usg=AOvVaw16fM_VNiiOWQ1_32zfRct2)

**Exploratory Walks toolkit:**

[https://issuu.com/womensability/docs/kit\\_explowalk\\_womensability](https://issuu.com/womensability/docs/kit_explowalk_womensability)

**Community-led resilience workshop:**

<https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/project-documents/48317/48317-004-dpta-en.pdf>

**Charrette, Citizens Jury, Consensus Conference, Delphi, Expert Panel, Focus group, Participatory Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation, Planning cell, Scenarios, The World Café:**

[https://archive.unu.edu/hq/library/Collection/PDF\\_files/CRIS/PMT.pdf](https://archive.unu.edu/hq/library/Collection/PDF_files/CRIS/PMT.pdf)

**Participative tools for risk assessment at community level: Hazard map, timeline, Trend analysis, Vulnerability matrix, Resource map, Transect, Seasonal calendar, Venn diagram:**

[https://www.preventionweb.net/files/globalplatform/entry\\_bg\\_paper~gbclimateproofingmoduled.pdf](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/globalplatform/entry_bg_paper~gbclimateproofingmoduled.pdf)

**Grievance redress mechanism:**

<https://www.greenclimate.fund/document/procedures-and-guidelines-independent-redress-mechanism>



Further questions? Scan the QR code to discover the gender glossary and other resources to help local governments mainstream gender in their climate and energy actions.