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## MASTER THESIS

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Gender and climate adaptation in Small  
Island Developing States (SIDS) –  
operationalizing a gender responsive  
approach on The Global Climate Change  
Alliance Plus Initiative (GCCA+)

I declare in lieu of oath, that I wrote this thesis myself. All information derived from the work of others has been acknowledged in the text and the list of references is given.

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### Zásady pro vypracování

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are extremely vulnerable and one of the key stakeholders in finance for climate adaptation. Nonetheless, climate financing in this region „represents less than 7% of global climate finance for all regions“ (Watson et al, 2016). Gendering climate change (Sultana, 2014) and taking in consideration gender roles, power relations and the non-neutrality of adaptation strategies is an understudied area of research. Climate change adaptation might reinforce gender inequalities and marginalizations. There are also few studies taking a gender perspective in assessing the adaptive capacities of populations in the region of the Pacific (MacLellan, 2011). Women are still neglected as agents and actors in climate policy and this creates questions not only in terms of equality and dignity but also on the effectiveness and efficacy of climate policy (Alber, 2011). Different funds and tools disregard a gender responsive approach in their results framework and policies. This research aims to bring recommendations and practical examples of why and how this scheme can adopt a gender responsive approach to climate change in SIDS through results-based management.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are a group of countries in the Caribbean, Pacific and the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea (AIMS) regions, extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and positioned as key stakeholders in climate adaptation financing. Since 2007, the European Commission has been providing support to SIDS through the Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA) flagship that operates through policy dialogue and effective cooperation in technical and financial terms.

This research aims to highlight the interlinkages between gender and climate change in the context of SIDS and to analyse the status of women and existing obstacles for women's empowerment in these countries. This is done reflecting a feminist political ecology perspective that considers the relevance of issues of gendered power relations and social inequalities in climate change processes.

The subsequent analysis of gender-responsiveness the GCCA flagship offers practical examples and recommendations on how this scheme can adopt a stronger gender responsive approach to climate adaptation funding in SIDS through gender mainstreaming and it contributes to show how the European Union has the possibility to position itself as a global player committed to address gender equality.

### Keywords

SIDS, gender, adaptation, climate change, feminist political ecology

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### Abbreviations

CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
COP – Conference of the Parties
DG DEVCO - European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development
GBV – Gender-based violence
GCCA(+) – Global Climate Change Alliance GGCA – Global Gender Climate Alliance
GCF - Green Climate Fund
GII – Gender Inequality Index
IPCC – Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
LDCs – Least Developed Countries
SIDS – Small Islands Developing States
UN DESA – United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UN OSAGI – United Nations Office of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women
UNFCCC – United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA – United Nations Population Fund
UN-OHRLLS - United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States
UNSSC – United Nations System Staff College
VAW – Violence against women
WEDO – Women’s Environment & Development Organization



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# 1 Introduction

Climate change is one of the main challenges for sustainable and human development of the XXIst century. Climate change adaptation and mitigation are the leading forms of action. While mitigation refers to measures dealing with the reduction of the emission of greenhouse gases, adaptation includes the activities necessary to deal with the consequences of climate change. It focusses on the “adjustments in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities” (IPCC, 2014).

The IPCC (2018) special report on the impact of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, lower than the 2°C agreed by the parties of the Paris Agreement, calls for a global response to the expected climate-related risks for many regions, with adaptation efforts necessary from now. Despite the uncertainty attached to the new climatic circumstances, there is an increasing interest by governments, organizations and professionals to better understand the vulnerability of certain countries, groups of people and communities to these changes and on how to design and implement sound adaptation policies and programmes.

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are a heterogeneous group of countries in three regions; the Caribbean, the Pacific and the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea (AIMS), extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change due to geographic, social, political and economic characteristics that “include low availability of resources, a small but rapidly growing population, remoteness, susceptibility to natural disasters, excessive dependence on international trade, and vulnerability to global developments” (UNFCCC, 2007a). In 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) highlighted the need to take precautionary measures in order to diminish the impact and risks of climate change in this particular group of countries (UN, 1992). The SIDS are strong advocates of their interests and needs and are positioned as one of the main stakeholders in climate adaptation financing (Ourbak et al, 2018).

Nonetheless, discussions on climate finance in SIDS should not only address “how much is committed, but also on the quality of spending” (Canales et al., 2017) through evidence-based data on outcomes produced and analysis of which groups are benefiting, and which ones are not.

To be able to respond to this question, one must look at the gendered dimension of vulnerability and adaptation to climate change due to the existing evidences on a global level of the interlinkages between the two. Women are still neglected as agents and actors in climate policy and this creates questions not only in terms of equality and dignity, but also of effectiveness and efficacy (Alber, 2011). Research focused on the vulnerability of women to the impacts of climate change and women’s role in adaptation programmes has been increasing, recognizing how climate change disproportionately affects them and how it can contribute to widen existing inequalities (Tanjeela et al., 2018; Denton, 2002; Jabeen, 2014; Eastin, 2018; Lambrou et al., 2006).

However, this has not been followed by the creation of conditions and opportunities for decision makers to engage effectively and to incorporate gender considerations when designing policy interventions (Denton, 2002). The lack of understanding from a theoretical point of view and an absent interest and ability of international actors to act financially, technically and politically are persistent. Even when gender is mentioned as an important criterion, many policies fail to address “the complexity of the intersecting power relations that marginalize women and men differently” (Jabeen, 2014).

Feminist political ecology provides a framework for this proposal that highlights the political, economic and social position of women in society and the unequal power structures that shape social inequalities (Rocheleau et al., 1996). Through this perspective, I aim to go beyond an analysis of the vulnerability and virtues of women in face of climate change, but rather to reflect on the persisting issues and constraints that shape women’s political, social and economic position in SIDS. These obstacles are central to understanding the complex interlinkages between gender and climate change adaptation from a feminist political ecology perspective (Arora-Jonsson, 2011; Jabeen, 2014; Sultana, 2014). In fact, the goal is not to advocate for a wider inclusion of women in adaptation programmes as actors and beneficiaries, but to look at this issue from a political way since “there is little logic in involving women in environmental conservation and tree-planting schemes when only a small percentage of women have control over land” (Denton, 2002).

It is also important to assess in practical terms how international actors are integrating gender issues when addressing climate adaptation efforts. As a case study, I analyse how the European Commission, through the Global Climate Change Alliance Plus (GCCA+) has included a gender perspective in climate adaptation programming in SIDS. The GCCA+ climate flagship programme is focused in supporting climate change related actions in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and SIDS and it is active for 2014-2020 period, following the implementation of the preceding GCCA programme (2007-2013).

Adaptation funds can have a role in promoting gender equality and should be put into practice in an equitable way, “so that women and men can complement their efforts and build a sustainable future through using their comparative advantages” (Denton, 2002). Still, these instruments “show a number of blind spots when it comes to a gender perspective” (Rodenberg, 2009).

Based on the afore described problem statement and goals of this thesis, the following research questions were developed:

1. Why is it relevant to consider gender when addressing climate change and climate adaptation in SIDS?
2. Which social, economic and political obstacles do women face in SIDS?
3. How gender-responsive is the GCCA+ flagship and how it could move forward in SIDS?

In section 1, I provide an overview of the literature on gender and climate change and I explore how a feminist political ecology perspective can be relevant in analysis of climate change impacts and adaptation. Section 2 is dedicated to present the characteristics of SIDS and the countries’ vulnerability and present

challenges in addressing climate change. I also focus on analysing important country dimensions from a gender perspective, focusing on key areas and reflecting on the status of women.

On the last section, I introduce the GCCA+ flagship and its work on SIDS and I make considerations based on the programmes being carried out in terms of gender responsiveness mechanisms and practices. I conclude, using a gender mainstreaming approach to propose recommendations directed at this flagship that aim at strengthening the response of the EU to issues of gender inequality and climate change adaptation in SIDS.

## **1.1 Gendered impacts of climate change: a review**

The aim of this chapter is to outline the theoretical and conceptual framework relevant for the research questions proposed. The following concepts will provide the basis to analyse the proposal and the significance of gender issues in climate change adaptation.

It is important to firstly understand that gender is a social construct, based in different societal expectations that vary in time and from society to society. According to UN OSAGI (2001), “gender systems are established in different socio-cultural contexts which determine what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman/man and girl/boy in these specific contexts”. Gender does not correspond to the concept of sex, which refers to biological and physiological characteristics in a binary division between men and women. Instead, gender roles are “institutionalized through education systems, political and economic systems, legislation, and culture and traditions” (OSAGI, 2001).

The impacts of climate change can be analysed through the evaluation of the factors that affect the vulnerable status of different countries and groups of individuals. Climate change accentuates existing gaps between rich and poor, negatively affecting the most disadvantaged groups (Denton, 2002). The IPCC Report (2017) highlights how these differences arise from multidimensional inequalities and uneven development processes, leading to certain groups of individuals being more vulnerable to climate change due to their social, economic, cultural and political positions.

The body of literature on climate change and gender has tackled with an increasing interest the gendered impacts faced by women (Tanjeela et al., 2018; Denton, 2002; Jabeen, 2014; Eastin, 2018; Lambrou et al., 2006) building on the idea that existing unequal power and gendered relations increase women’s vulnerability to negative climate change impacts.

Jabeen (2014), adapting from other authors, categorizes six groups of factors that contribute to gender inequality in climate vulnerability, namely gender roles and cultural patterns, sex-related factors, gender division of labour, gender differences in income and assets, gender bias in power and decision-making and gender-specific data and indicators. The author focuses on the various processes that affect the adaptive capacity of individuals and the impact of “decision-making power, awareness, knowledge and perception of

members of the household” (Jabeen, 2014) in the social production of space and how these can limit women’s capacity to address their vulnerability during climate extremes.

The discrimination of women and girls worldwide is also exacerbated by the risks posed by climate change when not addressed in a consistent manner (Rodenberg, 2009; Sultana, 2014). Research has showed how climate change, not only disproportionately affects women, but it also contributes to widen existing inequalities and disparities. Eastin (2018) assesses this relation empirically in Developing or Emerging Countries (as classified by the IMF) finding that climate shocks are negatively related to gender equality, measured by the society’s adoption of women’s rights and norms of co-equal status. The research evaluates the unequal distribution of costs women bear and gender disparities in vulnerability. Women’s ascribed roles in society, gendered division of labour, women’s asset ownership and control over resources, discriminatory laws and social norms have implications in terms of vulnerability to climate change and can be continuously reinforced because of “rising familial burdens due to male out-migration and declining food and water security coupled with a relative inability to employ productive assets to cope with climatic shocks” (Eastin, 2018).

Women face various constraints in terms of income and access to health services, education and credit, in addition to legal and structural barriers that contribute to their permanence in poverty traps (Denton, 2002). In many countries, women do not have access to land rights due to inheritance laws that, coupled with lack of decision-making power in the community, makes them unable to use their knowledge in a productive way in the face of climatic extremes (Rodenberg, 2009; Lambrou et al., 2006).

In many cases, after a natural disaster, women’s working conditions deteriorate while their workload increases in a disproportionate manner, limiting their long-term recovery and increasing their economic insecure status (Lambrou et al., 2006). Evidences from different countries (Tanjeela et al., 2018, Alison et al., 2008, Denton, 2002) show how water-stresses impact women due to responsibilities that arise from attributed gender roles. There is also a risk of marginalization that can result in increased difficulty in receiving assistance and information, as in the case of female-headed households (Sultana, 2014).

On the other hand, the role of women as proactive agents in adaptation strategies is being acknowledged through different studies (Ravera et al., 2016; Djoudi et al., 2011) that show the value of their contribution due to a “unique knowledge and skill set concerning development and environmental management” (UNDP, 2013). Carvajal-Escobar et al. (2008) describe various examples of women’s specific contribution in adapting to climate change that include “reducing factors of vulnerabilities of their communities in the face of hydrometeorological events (...), establishing networks with other women that increase their social capital”, greater awareness of the pattern of sicknesses of children and greater clarity on the impact of disasters in different social groups.

Women’s valuable knowledge and experience as natural resource managers and in coping with change, come from their involvement in activities such as farming, forestry and fisheries. Women prioritize and find strategies to overcome challenges in agriculture (Brody et al., 2008) through their role in guaranteeing food security in their households (FAO, 2003). The Global Gender and Climate Alliance (2016)

collects various examples from different countries that portray the important contribution of women for crop variety in African countries and women's role in maintaining knowledge about flora and crop plantation that has contributed for agrobiodiversity conservation in Latin America.

Climate change can also create opportunities for changing societal gender roles. Djoudi et al. (2011) research in Mali finds that, although climate events such as drought, increased the work burden for women due to the male migration, this created emerging social roles. In Malawi, climate change also created opportunities for women to take a leading position and for gendered roles to mutate in the society since women smallholders "succeeded in overcoming acute famine by developing ecological cropping techniques that enable them to take advantage of changing rainfall periods to produce a second maize crop" and by finding other income generating activities (Rodenberg, 2009).

In this work, I focus on existing gender issues in the specific context of SIDS, which face common challenges related to climate change adaptation. Despite of the heterogeneity of this group, the SIDS share characteristics that positions them as one of the main stakeholders in climate change adaptation policies and financing (Watson et al., 2016). SIDS comprises countries with small-scale economies dependent on primary activities such as agriculture and fisheries. Issues of poverty, unemployment, education and poor health care are persistent and limited availability of resources, a growing population and dependence on international trade pose constraints to its sustainable development (UNFCCC, 2007a).

I argue that gender inequality and power relations should be also prioritized in these regards. Tanjeela et al. (2018) describe the influence of gender relations in Bangladesh and the challenges that still exist in incorporating women "as distinct actor and active agents in climate adaptation programmes" and how gender power relations still define the type of engagement of women in any programme or project. However, few studies have focused on bringing lessons from other regions to SIDS in order to improve climate financing and implementing actions to assist the most vulnerable, including the "impacts and varying adaptive capacities of men and women in the Pacific" (Maclellan, 2011).

Gendering climate change in the SIDS is important, not only to better understand how it impacts women and girls, but also to "recognize the different roles these groups play and the contributions they make in preparing for and reducing the risk of disaster and adapting to climate change" (Anderson, 2009), while taking into account engrained social and cultural practices and perceptions. In SIDS, women are at a "greater risk of poverty because of labour force discrimination, lack of property rights and lack of legislation to prevent such discrimination" (UNESCO, n.d.), due to the influence of social practices. There is evidence of high rates of gender-based violence (GBV) in many of the countries, as the data from UN Women database on Violence Against Women shows, together with legal obstacles for women to access justice and challenges for countries to comply with their international commitments on gender equality.

There are also examples of issues of gender inequality in SIDS linked to higher vulnerability of women in the face of climate disasters. Joseph-Brown et al. (2012) refers to a research in the Pacific Region, specifically in Samoa, Solomon Islands, Fiji and Kiribati, that portrayed how gender inequality affected the

vulnerability of communities to disaster, since women face more obstacles in decision making but are also the main responsible for the well-being of their families.

Women's greater vulnerability is being acknowledged in some recent strategies such as the Samoa National Adaptation Plan of Action, the Solomon Islands National Climate Change Policy, and the Fiji Climate Change Policy. However, these plans do not tackle the root causes of gender inequality and there is a weak integration of gender dimensions across the design and implementation of adaptation and mitigation initiatives in the region (Secretariat of the Pacific Community et al., 2015).

As a case study, I have decided to look on how the European Commission, as an important global humanitarian and development actor, has incorporated these issues in its climate financing instruments. The EC was one of the first actors to prioritize SIDS through bilateral and regional programmes. Since 2007, it has been financing and supporting climate change projects and programmes in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and SIDS through the GCCA flagship and the succeeding GCCA+.

The analysis of this instrument will be informed by an overview of issues of gender inequality in SIDS and it will consider gender mainstreaming best practices and tools.

## **1.2 Analysing climate change from a feminist political ecology perspective**

Feminist political ecology provides a framework which places gendered relations at the center of the differentiated relations between humans and nature and that informs us on the complex links between gender and climate change adaptation efforts. For a contextual understanding of gender, I will focus in the current political, economic and social position of women in SIDS. I argue that it is not enough to recognize the vulnerability and virtue of women in climate change adaptation, but that we also need to consider underlying unequal power relations in order to better comprehend persistent and interlinking issues (Arora-Jonsson, 2011; Jabeen, 2014; Sultana, 2014).

Feminist political ecology integrates gender as a relevant aspect that shapes access and control over natural resources, bringing feminist theory and practices to political ecology. It was born with Rocheleau et al. (1996) elaborating on the connections between power relations and social inequality and questions of environmental change and decision-making. The authors emphasize the existence of gendered environmental rights and responsibilities in a setting that is inherently political and linked to the positioning of people by gender, race and class. Changes in the environment do not affect society in a homogenous way, but are rather mediated through economic, political and social differences.

Feminist political ecology arises from the multidisciplinary field of political ecology, that originated in the 1970s and 1980s aiming to shadow light on the political dimensions of human and nature interactions while focusing mainly on the factors affecting developing countries (Karlsson, 2015). During the last decades, the field has become more fragmented, or richer, with the contribution of new perspectives (Karlsson, 2015).

In terms of addressing the issues of inequality, Sultana (2014) points out that “patriarchal decision-making structures” are persistent even in local implementation of adaptation programmes and how these “largely fail to address strategic needs and systemic gender inequalities, power structures, and exclusions”. Adaptation strategies are not gender neutral, and in the design and implementation of adaptation programmes, the author calls for the inclusion of multiple voices and concerns so that benefits can be brought for both men and women and not creating additional burden.

In fact, adaptation programmes should take into account gender considerations in a way that does not only looks to integrate women but that looks at gender relations in the society as a whole. As Denton (2002) refers, there is little logic in involving women in tree planting schemes if only a small part of women has access to land. These are the constraints that policies should focus tackle and I argue that it is necessary to analyse and overcome existing political and social and not only to increase the participation of women in adaptation programmes.

I acknowledge that I do not dwell deeply on the specific issues related to intersecting systems of oppression related not only to gender, but also to class, race and ethnicity (Crenshaw, 1989) but I recognize that an intersectional approach in feminist political ecology can shadow further light on “our understanding of the politics of natural resource access and control in the Global South” (Mollett et al., 2013). However, there are few studies focused on analysing intersectional social processes and the way they shape multidimensional vulnerability to climate change (IPCC, 2014). Some authors have provided insights on this issue, such as Ravera et al. (2016) in the Asian context, showing “how gender relationships are crosscut by ethnicity, caste, age, wealth class and capabilities, but also shaped by factors such as knowledge, access to communication networks, risk perception and awareness and social mobilization”. Van Aelst et al. (2016) used an intersectional approach to study the adaptative strategies of farmers in Tanzania, showing that women’s marital status has a role in determining their access to different strategies, whilst this is not the case for men.

In this work I also reproduce a binary approach, that does not consider the entire spectrum of gender but only refers to women and girls versus men and boys.



# 2 Climate change adaptation in Small Island Developing states (SIDS)

## 2.1 Small Island Developing States (SIDS) – an overview

The categorization of SIDS is an issue due to the lack of consensus on the definition of criteria to classify potential countries and territories (UNCTAD, 2004). Often, we encounter different countries belonging to this group, so it is necessary to individuate a clear reference while addressing the SIDS.

Before 1994, the United Nations referred to “island developing countries” as part of a group of least developed countries, but this notion did not reflect specific challenges such as: “smallness and remoteness, constraints in transport and communications, distance from market centers, low resource endowment/narrow resource base, dependence on few commodities as sources of foreign exchange earnings, limited internal markets, and vulnerability to natural and environmental disaster”, including large countries such as the Philippines and Indonesia in this classification (UNCTAD, 2004).

For this analysis and due to the heterogeneity of the different UN agencies classifications, we will be using the UN-OHRLLS list of SIDS, including only the countries currently recognized by the UN. This list is composed by 38 countries<sup>1</sup> located in the Caribbean, the Pacific and the Atlantic, Indian Ocean, Mediterranean and South China Sea (AIMS):

- *Caribbean Islands* – Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago.
- *Pacific* – Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.
- *Atlantic, Indian Ocean and AIMS* – Bahrain, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Maldives, Mauritius, São Tomé and Príncipe, Seychelles, Singapore.

SIDS present diverse characteristics and their heterogeneity is also visible in the classification of countries according to the World Bank Gross National Income (GNI) per capita<sup>2</sup>. From the 38 countries, 68% are Middle Income countries (Upper and Lower Middle income), 24% is considered a High income country and less than 8% is part of the Low Income group.

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<sup>1</sup> UN-OHRLLS list available at: <http://unohrlls.org/about-SIDS/country-profiles/>  
<sup>2</sup> As of June 2018

**Table 1 – Classification of SIDS by GNI per capita**

<i>High income</i> (GNI per capita of \$12,056 or more) – 9 countries	Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Palau, Seychelles, Singapore, St. Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago
<i>Upper Middle income</i> (GNI per capita between \$3,896 and \$12,055) – 18 countries	Belize, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Fiji, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Nauru, Samoa, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Tonga, Tuvalu
<i>Lower Middle income</i> (GNI per capita between \$996 and \$3,895) – 8 countries	Cabo Verde, Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, São Tomé e Príncipe, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu
<i>Low income</i> (GNI per capita \$995 or less) – 3 countries	Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Haiti

*Source: World Bank Country and Lending Groups  
Available at: [datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519](http://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519)*

According to the UN classification of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), 9 SIDS are also LDCs, in particular: Comoros, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, Kiribati, São Tomé and Príncipe, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu<sup>3</sup>.

Due to its diversity, not all SIDS are considered to be islands *stricto sensu* or small (Ourbak et al., 2018), but many of the countries face similar challenges in terms of vulnerability to climate change impacts. The adaptive capacity of each country is linked to its socio-cultural and economic context. The vulnerability of SIDS “include low availability of resources, a small but rapidly growing population, remoteness, susceptibility to natural disasters, excessive dependence on international trade, and vulnerability to global developments” (UNFCCC, 2007a).

Blancard et al. (2013) find that the SIDs do not perform worse and are able to sustain good levels of per capita income and human development, which presents a paradox when considering the fragile structures just described. The authors consider that this can be due to the countries’ “economic resilience” and their small size as source of comparative advantage that can “promote social cohesion, facilitating the setting-up of education, health, ecology and redistribution policies, and ensuring that public transfers really benefit their citizens” (Blancard et al., 2013). However, it is recognized that the SIDS are more threatened by the effects of climate change which will impact their present situation.

<sup>3</sup> UNCDP List of Least Developed Countries (as of December 2018): [www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/ldc\\_list.pdf](http://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wp-content/uploads/sites/45/publication/ldc_list.pdf)

The limited resource base and low adaptive capacity in the SIDS pose challenges in responding to the social and economic needs of population in a sustainable way and absence of data, technical capacity and weak institutional capacities constitute further challenges for climate change adaptation.

## ***2.2 Climate change vulnerability in SIDS***

Many SIDS are low-lying islands, susceptible to soil erosion and loss of land. Due to differences between SIDS, some islands are more vulnerable to sea level rise than others (IPCC, 2001). According to Kelman et al. (2009), based on IPCC report in 2007, “sea level will rise at least 0.18m and perhaps as much as 0.59m”, in which case several SIDS would be expected to lose large proportions of land. However, the risk of partial inundation of SIDS has increased (IPCC, 2014) since almost all glaciers have continued to shrink in the meanwhile. The UN-OHRLLS (2013) finds that “1.8 % of Papua New Guinea’s terrestrial land is below five metres above sea level, while 100% of the Maldives and Tuvalu lies below five metres, rendering these nations critically vulnerable to flooding and sea level rise”. This can result in the displacement of people and have impact on livelihoods due to the concentration of large settlements on the coastal zone (UN-OHRLLS, 2015).

Human assets related to sociocultural and traditional skills will also be impacted through the damage of structures such as “sites of worship, ritual, and ceremony – particularly those at or near the coasts” (IPCC, 2001). The IPCC (2014) notes that the “high ratio of coastal area to land mass will make adaptation a significant financial and resource challenge for islands”.

Most SIDS are located in the tropics, an area that is influenced by severe weather events and large ocean-atmosphere interactions such as “trade winds, El Niño, monsoons and tropical cyclones” (UN-OHRLLS, 2015).

Climate change will impact agriculture due to limited arable land and soil salinization, affecting both cash crop exports and domestic food production and impacting other key industries such as fisheries and tourism (IPCC, 2001). Reef fisheries will be threatened due to increasing sea surface temperature and damage from tropical cyclones that will cause distress on those that depend on this activity as food source or as income. In the Pacific SIDS, the fishing industry contributes up to 10% of total GDP (UN-OHRLLS, 2015) which shows the centrality of this activity in the countries’ economy.

Rising air temperature and sea level will also affect biodiversity, including coral reefs, mangroves and seagrass beds (IPCC, 2001) and both terrestrial ecosystems and coastal ecosystems have been subject to increasing degradation and destruction. Due to over-fishing, pollution and sedimentation, coral cover across reefs in the Caribbean have declined by 80% in a period of 30 years (UNFCCC, 2007b).

Food security and water resources are areas of concern due to limited and vulnerable water supplies and the risks of saltwater intrusion due to storm surge and sea level rise. Availability of freshwater is a limiting factor for economic and social development in the SIDS (UNFCCC, 2005). Some countries depend

on single sources of supply such as groundwater in Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas and Kiribati; rainwater in Tuvalu and the Maldives; surface reservoirs and imports as in the case of Singapore; rivers and other surface flows in Seychelles and Dominica (IPCC, 2001). The IPCC (2018) states that, while some islands may have increased freshwater availability, in most regions it is projected a substantial decline. According to the current trend, “an increasing drought risk is projected for Caribbean SIDS, and moderate to extreme drought conditions are projected to be about 9% longer on average at a 2°C versus 1.5°C for islands in the region” (IPCC, 2018). Therefore, sustainable water management is an important concern for the maintenance of freshwater sources since water scarcity, drought and changing precipitation patterns will impact communities that depend on rainwater harvesting (UN-OHRLLS, 2015). Rising water-borne diseases and deterioration of living conditions due to various diseases and malnutrition will raise issues related to human health (IPCC, 2014).

In the agricultural sector, subsistence agriculture and cash crops (such as sugar, coffee, cocoa) are likely to experience declines in production, yield and quality since the growth of root crops and vegetables will be affected by heat stress, changes in soil moisture and evapotranspiration and due to changes in extreme weather events (IPCC, 2001). Although this might benefit some crops, the overall situation will offset any gains (Secretariat of the Pacific Community et al., 2015). Countries’ dependence on food imports to ensure food security causes further difficulties since it increases their vulnerability to price volatility and fluctuating availabilities. While the world average on total import of food is 7%, in some SIDS such as Guinea-Bissau, Kiribati and Comoros this value is between 30% to 50% (UN-OHRLLS, 2015).

Tourism will suffer from the negative impact of climate change, as a result of the loss of beaches, damage to infrastructures and degradation of coral reefs (UNFCCC, 2007a). Since it constitutes a large part of income and employs a large number of people, climate change will bring negative social and economic impacts and increase poverty in these islands. In the Caribbean SIDS, tourism generates 14% of GDP and it employs 12% of total labour force and (UN-OHRLLS, 2015).

SIDS are also confronted with various issues such as poverty, unemployment, poor health care and education and lack of adaptive capacity, with adaptation costs being high relative to GDP (UNFCCC, 2007a; IPCC, 2001). However, beyond a consideration on the specific challenges of SIDS, we need to analyse the socio-economic nexus of vulnerability to climate change and look at the different situations of social groups, their needs and interests (Rodenberg, 2009; Tanjeela et al., 2018).

### ***2.3 SIDS analysis from a gender perspective***

Feminist political ecology calls for an analysis of the “broader institutional perspective involving government, politics and other institutions that shape the overall social system” (Hovorka, 2006; Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, & Wangari, 1996 in Tanjeela et al., 2018). This type of analysis provides us with a better understanding of the position of women in society, the obstacles they face and the status of their political

and economic empowerment. It also allows us to respond more effectively to their needs and interests, including in the design and implementation of climate policies and programmes.

Evidently, each country presents a different context with its own specificities, so I will focus on providing an overview of some of the most common and pressing challenges that women face in SIDS. It is also important to highlight that the lack of sex-disaggregated data and overall analysis on issues related to the status of women in these countries constitutes an obstacle.

The SIDS face a discontinuity between traditional and modern values which have created frictions in society due to a complex relation between historical and contemporary values and globalization (ECOPAS, 2015). In the Pacific, one of the barriers for gender equality “are created by both institutional and societal factors, such as entrenched stereotyping of the customary and traditional roles of women in society” (UN DESA, 2013), that reinforces patriarchal attitudes. These traditional social structures influence the types of roles women can assume in society in political and economic terms (Government of Samoa, 2016). This is evident in rural areas where customary laws still prevail and often enshrine gender inequalities in cultural practices (Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2010).

The Gender Inequality Index (GII) provides us with an overview on the disparities between male and female in a country showing the loss in potential human development due to inequalities, on a scale of 0 to 1, where 0 is when women and men fare equally and 1 is where one gender is faring worse than the other in all dimensions. The dimensions measured in the indicator are reproductive health, empowerment and labour market.

In table 2, we can find the values for 2017 GII for the 20 SIDS for which it is available<sup>4</sup> from the countries with the lowest scores, where gender inequality is lower, to the ones where it is higher.

**Table 2 – Gender Inequality Index in SIDS (2017)**

<b>Country</b>	<b>GII</b>
Singapore	0.067
Bahrain	0.222
Barbados	0.284
Cuba	0.301
Trinidad and Tobago	0.324
St. Lucia	0.333
Bahamas	0.340

<sup>4</sup> “The GII measures gender inequalities in three important aspects of human development—reproductive health, measured by maternal mortality ratio and adolescent birth rates; empowerment, measured by proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by females and proportion of adult females and males aged 25 years and older with at least some secondary education; and economic status, expressed as labour market participation and measured by labour force participation rate of female and male populations aged 15 years and older.” Data not available for: Antigua e Barbuda, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Dominica, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, St. Kitts and Nevis, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu, Vanuatu. Available at: [hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii](http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/gender-inequality-index-gii)

Maldives	0.343
Fiji	0.352
Samoa	0.365
Mauritius	0.373
Belize	0.386
Jamaica	0.412
Tonga	0.416
Suriname	0.441
Dominican Republic	0.451
Guyana	0.504
São Tomé and Príncipe	0.538
Haiti	0.601
Papua New Guinea	0.741

*Source: UNDP  
Available at: [hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII](http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII)*

Singapore and Bahrain, both High income countries hold the lowest scores, being the countries with higher gender equality, while Haiti and Papua New Guinea hold the highest scores.

The average GII value for the 20 SIDS in the table is 0.39<sup>5</sup>, lower than the average for LDCs (0,559) and the global average (0,441). Despite of missing data, we can take a closer look at these values from a regional point of view. The Pacific SIDS present the highest value (0,469), followed by the Caribbean SIDS (0,398) and the AIMS SIDS (0,309). An analysis from an income level group based on GNI per capita reveals that High income countries average is lower (0,247), compared with Upper Middle income countries (0,390) and Lower Middle income (0,640). Comparing with the OECD countries average (0.186), we see that even High income SIDS present a higher value. However, lack of data for most of the Low income countries limits our conclusions.

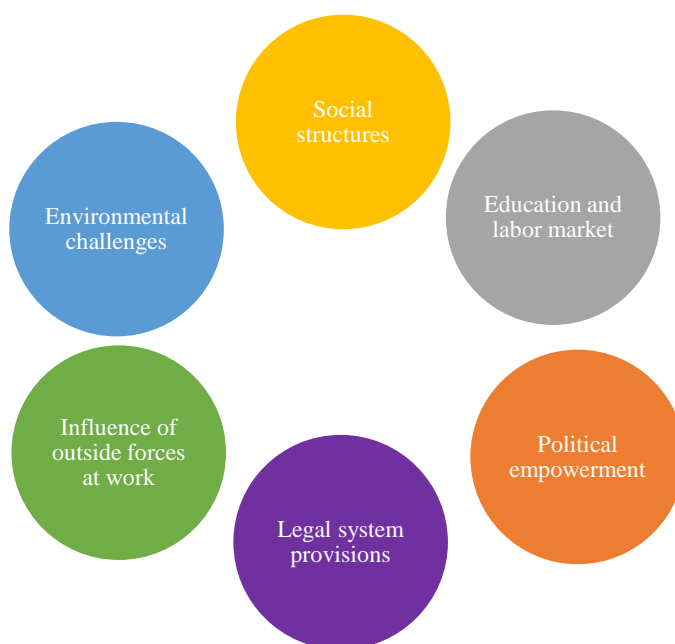
For the purpose of this exercise I will use as guidelines the framework used by UN Women ECA staff during the Training “UN Country Programming in the Context of the 2030 Agenda” facilitated by United Nations System Staff College (UNSSC), that took place in Istanbul from 26-28 February 2019 and that reveals the relevant aspects of a country analysis to be considered from a gender perspective.

As showed in Diagram 1, there are six essential dimensions that should be present in exercises that aim to reflect on the status of women in a country such as: the position of women in social structures, women in education and labor market, women’s political empowerment, gender equality and women’s rights provisions in the legal system, influence of outside forces at work and environmental challenges from a gender perspective. I will provide a summary for each one, focusing on the context of SIDS.

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<sup>5</sup> *Calculation by the author.*

**Diagram 1 – Dimensions of a country analysis from a gender perspective**



*Source: adapted by the author from the UNSSC presentation*

### 2.3.1 Social structures

In 2019, SIDS have a combined population of 67 million people<sup>6</sup>. Between 2010 and 2019, the SIDS average annual rate of population change rate was 1,2%. The highest values are found in Bahrain where this rate was 3,1%, in Comoros 2,3% and Timor Leste and São Tomé e Príncipe 2,2% each<sup>7</sup>. Higher population growth rates pose additional pressure in the capacity of SIDS to provide services to its population and exacerbate sustainable development challenges and climate change risks (UNFCCC, 2007).

In 2019, the average total fertility rate (TFR) per women in the SIDS is 2,4<sup>8</sup>, higher than the replacement level of 2,1 children per women. This value reaches 5,2 in Timor Leste and 4,4 in Guinea Bissau whilst the lowest value is found in Singapore with 1,2. Thirteen SIDS countries presented TFR values below 2.1 and nineteen countries above it<sup>9</sup>.

There is evidence of unmet family planning needs in SIDS and of obstacles in enjoyment of reproductive and sexual rights (UN DESA, 2013). These issues have been present in SIDS development priorities, but lack of capacity to increase health services, especially in rural areas, constitutes a hindrance (UN DESA, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> According to UNFPA statistics available at: [www.unfpa.org/data/world-population-dashboard](http://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population-dashboard) excluding Nauru, Palau, Marshall Islands and Tuvalu.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. Data not available for Dominica, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, St. Kitts and Nevi and Tuvalu.

Household institutions are also critical to understanding gender and power relations in the society. As Table 3<sup>10</sup> shows, female-headed households are prevalent in some SIDS in 2017 with 7 countries having 40% or more of households headed by women. The feminization of poverty is a present phenomenon the SIDS, especially in large households or households headed by women (UNESCO, n.d.). Research shows that female-headed households are more vulnerable to climate related shocks for three reasons that include labour market disparities, higher dependency ratio and double burden (Muttarak, 2016), which will be explored in the following sub-chapter.

**Table 3 – Average household size and % female household headship in SIDS (2017)**

	Average household size (number of members)	Female household headship (%)
Antigua and Barbuda	2,8	-
Bahamas	3,4	39
Bahrain	5,9	-
Barbados	2,9	47
Belize	4,1	-
Cabo Verde	4,2	-
Comoros	5,4	39
Cuba	3,2	41
Dominica	2,7	-
Dominican Republic	3,5	40
Fiji	4,8	15
Guyana	3,8	34
Haiti	4,4	41
Jamaica	3,1	41
Kiribati	6	-
Maldives	5,2	35
Marshall Islands	6,9	-
Mauritius	-	21
Federated States of Micronesia	6	-
Nauru	6	34
Papua New Guinea	5,3	
St. Lucia	2,8	40
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	3	-
Sao Tome and Principe	4	39
Seychelles	3,8	49
Singapore	3,3	22
Solomon Islands	5,5	-

<sup>10</sup> UN DESA data not available for Grenada, Guinea-Bissau Samoa, Palau and St. Kitts and Nevis.



Suriname	3,9	31
Timor-Leste	5,8	23
Tonga	5,7	23
Trinidad and Tobago	3,3	33
Tuvalu	6	-
Vanuatu	4,8	21

*Source: UN DESA.*

*Available at:*

*[www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/ageing/household\\_size\\_and\\_composition\\_a\\_round\\_the\\_world\\_2017\\_data\\_booklet.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/ageing/household_size_and_composition_a_round_the_world_2017_data_booklet.pdf)*

The average household size is also large in many SIDS which, due to gendered social roles may create additional burden on women as caretakers and main responsible for activities related to the wellbeing of their families.

The societal role of women in the household may also pose obstacles in terms of management of resources and household assets. In the Solomon Islands, it was found that women are less involved in household decision-making related to spending, healthcare and visits to family (Secretariat of the Pacific Community et al., 2015) and that “strong customary and religious beliefs which dictate that a woman has a responsibility to her husband, children and community to stay in a marriage” (OECD, 2019).

Some SIDS also experience high levels of migration which can be exacerbated by climate change as it is a major drive of displacement, especially when considering the threats particular to this group of countries. Available data from the Caribbean region shows that the feminization of international migration is one of the emerging trends in the region but that more comprehensive analysis is necessary (Platonova et al., 2017). Understanding how this relates to the status of women is relevant since migration patterns can provide insights on emerging societal roles, as the research of Djoudi et al. (2011) in Mali shows. However, other migration patterns such as the migration of young men can place a greater burden on women, that together with climate change can lead to deterioration of land management (FAO, 2017).

### 2.3.2 Education and labour market

The UNESCO Gender Equality Desk Review on the SIDS (n.d.) reveals the impact of strong rooted traditions and colonial history on the lives of women, because “gender discrimination is one of the major causes of poverty among women who often carry the heavy burden of numerous dependants, children and the elderly”.

Investments in education can play a big role in improving countries’ resilience to climate change with data suggesting “a strong positive association between the average amount of schooling a girl receives in her country and her country’s score on indexes that measure vulnerability to climate-related disasters” (Kwauk et al., 2017).

Looking at sex-disaggregated data on education on SIDS on Table 4<sup>11</sup>, we can see a discrepancy between enrolment rates in primary education and secondary education for both male and female, with lower rates of enrolment on the latter. This is particularly evident in Belize, Cabo Verde, Comoros, Dominican Republic, Papua New Guinea, Timor Leste, Vanuatu, Tuvalu.

**Table 4 – Adjusted net enrolment rate primary education and net enrolment rate secondary education (2009-2018) in SIDS, disaggregated by sex**

Country	Adjusted net enrolment rate, primary education, percent, 2009- 2018		Net enrolment rate, secondary education, percent, 2009-2018	
	male	female	male	female
Antigua and Barbuda	82	81	73	76
Bahamas	85	92	79	86
Bahrain	99	99	92	94
Barbados	90	91	93	99
Belize	100	99	68	73
Cabo Verde	87	86	61	68
Comoros	85	84	41	45
Cuba	97	97	84	89
Dominica	97	99	90	97
Dominican Republic	88	88	62	71
Federated States of Micronesia	83	85	-	-
Fiji	98	98	79	88
Grenada	96	97	80	72
Guinea-Bissau	74	70	-	-
Guyana	95	97	81	86
Jamaica	-	-	71	77
Maldives	100	100	-	-
Mauritius	95	97	82	88
Papua New Guinea	80	75	36	30
St. Lucia	-	-	79	81
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	99	98	91	91
Samoa	96	97	74	81
São Tomé and Príncipe	97	97	61	68

<sup>11</sup> UNFPA data not available for: Haiti, Kiribati, Palau, Nauru, St. Kitts and Nevis.

Seychelles	-	-	87	90
Singapore	-	-	100	100
Solomon Islands	69	70	-	-
Suriname	96	100	53	65
Timor-Leste, Democratic Republic of	79	82	55	64
Tonga	95	97	74	79
Trinidad and Tobago	99	98	-	-
Tuvalu	-	-	63	79
Vanuatu	86	88	48	51

*Source: UNFPA statistics  
Available at: [www.unfpa.org/data/world-population-dashboard](http://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population-dashboard)*

It is important to note that women's higher enrolment in education does not translate in women's higher participation the labour market. As data from 14 SIDS<sup>12</sup> shows in Table 5 below, the participation of women in the labour market can be half as low as the one of male in some countries.

**Table 5 – Labour force participation (%)<sup>13</sup> in SIDS, disaggregated by sex**

Country	Labour force participation (%)	
	Female	Male
Bahamas	77,9	87,9
Bahrain	45,6	88,1
Barbados	75,2	80,5
Belize	55,5	83,7
Cape Verde	52,9	73,4
Cuba	50,4	78,6
Dominican Republic	59,1	83,2
Fiji	43,7	78,6
Jamaica	63,6	82,3
Maldives	44,9	85,1
Mauritius	52,1	80,3
Singapore	68,7	83,5
Suriname	46,4	70,8

<sup>12</sup> Data not available for: Antigua and Barbuda, Comoros, Dominica, Federated States of Micronesia, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, São Tomé and Príncipe, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.

<sup>13</sup> The World Economic Forum (2018) uses ILOSTAT Estimates for 2017 or latest available data. Female, male labour force participation rate, age 15-64 (%): measures the proportion of a country's working-age population that engages actively in the labour market, either by working or looking for work. Labour force data does not take into account workers employed abroad.

Timor-Leste	25,4	53,3
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*Source: WEF, Global Gender Gap Report 2018*  
*Available at: [www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2018.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018.pdf)*

Due to the barriers of participation in the formal market, women participate in informal activities, which are more insecure and not regulated (UN ESCAP, 2014). They face inequalities in terms of access to formal employment, while male enjoy more access to the formal market and to various decision-making positions (UN DESA, 2013). Men own and control the majority of formal business in the Pacific and women often engage in “subsistence agriculture, marketing of agricultural products, and petty trading” (IFC, 2010a). In Antigua and Barbuda women’s activities in the informal sector are undervalued and are predominantly in “micro-businesses such as the vending of souvenirs and clothing, the roadside sale of foods and the sale of agricultural produce in the market” (CEDAWa, 2017).

The existence of a double burden for women, due to their engagement in income-generating activities and their obligations as care givers in their families causes more obstacles for their empowerment. In the Caribbean, women’s social responsibility in unpaid care work limits the possibility to access other types of jobs (UNESCO, n.d.).

In terms of access to productive assets, women face obstacles in terms of land ownership that is still linked to customary practices, with no legal specific provision to ensure equal rights. This is the case in Samoa (Government of Samoa, 2016), whereas in the Solomon Islands, even when land is inherited by women, its management and utilization is predominantly done by male (Japan International Cooperation Agency, 2010). Customary and Islamic laws influence the administration, inheritances systems and ownership of property by women in Comoros and Bahrain (OECD, 2019). This obstacle is linked with increased difficulties to access credit, since property is normally used as a collateral for loans (ILO, 2018).

Insecure land rights, persistent discriminatory laws and practices create difficulties for women to realize their rights. Expanding women’s economic opportunities means implementing policies that allows for the full participation of women in economy.

### 2.3.3 Political empowerment and participation

The political representation of women in most of the SIDS remains at a very low level, with an average of 20,5% of women represented in the national parliament for 14 SIDS for which data is available<sup>14</sup>, as represented in Table 6. The Maldives present the lowest value with only 5,9% of women in the parliament and Cuba the highest value with 53,2%. According to the report, the global average representation of women

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<sup>14</sup> Data not available for Antigua and Barbuda, Comoros, Dominica, Federated States of Micronesia, Grenada, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, São Tomé and Príncipe, Seychelles, Solomon Islands, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tuvalu, Vanuatu

is only 24% of available seats in national parliaments. Only in 18 countries worldwide female representation is under 10%, which includes 3 SIDS countries: Maldives, Bahrain and Belize.

**Table 6 - % of women in National Parliament in SIDS (2018)**

<b>Country</b>	<b>% Women in parliament</b>
Maldives	5,9
Bahrain	7,5
Belize	9,4
Mauritius	11,6
Bahamas	12,8
Fiji	16
Jamaica	17,5
Barbados	20
Singapore	23
Cabo Verde	23,6
Suriname	25,5
Dominican Republic	26,8
Timor-Leste	33,8
Cuba	53,2

*Source: World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2018  
Available at: [www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_GGGR\\_2018.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2018.pdf)*

In 2005, WEDO published a report where it calls for action from the “Dirty Dozen” countries with no women in the Parliament. At the time, more than half of this group were SIDS: Bahrain, Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Palau St. Kitts and Nevis, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Guinea Bissau, so we can see since then that some progress has been made.

However, women they remain underrepresented politically in most SIDS. Women’s participation in decision making processes is one indicator of gender equality that provides information on the position they have to influence policies and outcomes. It has been demonstrated that female presence in decision making positions together with women’s groups and individual actors have a crucial role in ensuring gender equality across different policy areas (UN DAW et al., 2005).

### 2.3.4 Provisions in legal systems

One of the most relevant international frameworks for gender equality is the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)<sup>15</sup>. The ratification of this Convention by the States parties indicates their commitment to respect and protect women's rights.

From 1981 until 2019, 189 countries have ratified/acceded the CEDAW and only 2 out of the 38 SIDS countries have not<sup>16</sup>. The convention is also relevant in the context of climate change, through the “prohibition of all forms of discrimination against women (article 2), the obligation to ensure the full development and advancement of women in all fields, particularly in the political, social, economic, and cultural fields (article 3), public participation (article 7), and the protection of the rights of rural women (article 14)” (CIEL et al., 2019). The CEDAW committee (2009) has also launched a statement on this particular issue, expressing concern on the absence of gender perspective in various global and national policies and initiatives on climate change.

However, some of the countries face issues regarding their compliance with CEDAW provisions. In 2017, Singapore still had to include on its Constitution a definition of discrimination against women and measures to prohibit it that would encompass “direct and indirect discrimination in the private and public spheres as well as intersecting forms of discrimination against women, in line with article 1 of the Convention” (CEDAWb, 2017).

Tonga, a CEDAW non-ratifying state, “has no domestic violence, sexual harassment, human trafficking, sex tourism or family legislation in place” (UN Women Asia and Pacific, n.d.).

In addition, gender-based violence (GBV) is an issue prevalent in many of the SIDS. In the Pacific SIDS, one of the regions with the highest rates of sexual violence, the progress and responses by the governments have been slow (UN DESA, 2013). The UN Women database on Violence Against Women finds a prevalence of 64% in lifetime Physical and/or Sexual Intimate Partner Violence in the Solomon Islands, 60% in Vanuatu and 68% in Kiribati. In Papua New Guinea, rates of violence are high with an estimate two thirds of women affected, and sexual abuse is found to be among the most common factors affecting women's health (Pacific Women, 2017).

Obstacles in access to justice for women is another hindrance to women's' empowerment and existing legal systems or customary rules can continue to pose obstacles in criminal procedures. Nevertheless, several countries have recently introduced domestic violence legislation including Cabo

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<sup>15</sup> “The CEDAW is an international treaty intended to guarantee rights for women, and represents the culmination of the 19th century movement for women's rights. The Convention sets standards for women's rights in the political, cultural, economic, social, and family sectors, and delineates many forms of gender discrimination. Furthermore, the Convention calls for specific actions to remedy discrimination. The United Nations General Assembly adopted CEDAW on December 18, 1979, and the Convention entered into force on September 3, 1981, after it had been ratified by 20 states.” Available at: [eml.berkeley.edu/~webfac/bardhan/e271\\_sp03/mcvane.pdf](http://eml.berkeley.edu/~webfac/bardhan/e271_sp03/mcvane.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Information accessed on the 14/04/2019 at: [indicators.ohchr.org](http://indicators.ohchr.org). SIDS countries that have not ratified/acceded CEDAW: Palau, Tonga.

Verde, Comoros, Fiji, Guinea-Bissau, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, São Tomé e Príncipe, Samoa, Timor-Leste, Tonga and Vanuatu (World Bank, 2019).

### 2.3.5 Influence of outside forces at work

This is a broad topic that should include considerations on geopolitics, trade and various other issues. However, I will focus on some relevant information specifically related to the issue of climate change on SIDS.

In the framework of the Conference of the Parties (COP)<sup>17</sup>, the National Adaptation Plans (NAPS) enables the parties to identify adaptation needs and to develop strategies to tackle them. In this process, support to LDCs is foreseen by the Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG) that provides guidance for not only on technical terms but, also for “the strengthening of gender considerations and considerations regarding vulnerable communities” (Least Developed Countries Expert Group, 2012). The action plan should be country-driven and gender-sensitive. As of 2019, 2 SIDS countries have submitted their NAP (Fiji and St. Lucia)<sup>18</sup> and both include gender considerations, showing that this can be a good entry point for integrating gender in climate policies with the support of international actors. In St. Lucia NAP describes it as: “The UNFCCC calls for the mainstreaming of gender across all activities involved in the NAP process, with the aim of decreasing gender-based vulnerabilities, promoting gender equality in decision making and ensuring that the implementation of adaptation measures does not impose additional burden to women, and does not promote the domination of any gender over others” (Government of Saint Lucia, 2018).

The Gender Action Plan of the UNFCCC has also mandated mainstreaming gender perspectives in all its interventions (UNFCCC, 2018) which can set an example for all international parties and catalyse innovative approaches and gathering of expertise, knowledge and best practices worldwide.

Global partnerships also play a crucial role in providing dialogue and knowledge sharing and learning opportunities between regions. The Samoa Pathway, an intergovernmental agreed outcome document from the Third International Conference on SIDS (2014) reinforced the need of partnerships with SIDS countries in different areas. A review of the partnerships between SIDS and international actors (UN DESA, 2019) underlines climate change as one of the biggest priorities in the agenda, but it finds that gender remains an under-represented dimension in these engagements. In the Pacific region this is less the case, but in the AIMS countries gender equality is not a priority. The review also suggests that gender inequality could be tackled “in partnerships through focusing efforts on women’s participation in the labour force, and in achieving income equality” (UN DESA, 2019).

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<sup>17</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP) is the supreme decision-making body of the Convention. All States that are Parties to the Convention are represented at the COP, at which they review the implementation of the Convention and any other legal instruments that the COP adopts and take decisions necessary to promote the effective implementation of the Convention, including institutional and administrative arrangements. Information available at: <https://unfccc.int/process/bodies/supreme-bodies/conference-of-the-parties-cop>

<sup>18</sup> NAPs submitted available at: [www4.unfccc.int/sites/NAPC/News/Pages/national\\_adaptation\\_plans.aspx](http://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NAPC/News/Pages/national_adaptation_plans.aspx)

There are other forces at work to consider that influence SIDS possibilities to benefit from different types of support, such as ODA eligibility and countries' income status. Watson et al. (2016) find that 26% of total SIDS funding from multilateral climate funds have been allocated to these SIDS LDC countries with over three-quarters of this funding directed towards adaptation projects. ODA eligibility is important in determining donors' funding allocations to SIDS (OECD, 2016). While funds to SIDS LDCs have remained stable for the period 2011-2014, Upper Middle Income SIDS were able to access new funds, mainly as concessional loans. However, nearly 75% of these could be accounted for investments in only 2 countries (Dominican Republic and St. Lucia). A similar situation was found in Lower Middle income Countries, with large parts of concessional funding being directed to a single country (Cabo Verde). Nonetheless, the SIDS might face difficulties in leveraging these resources due to lack of human and technical capacities (GIZ, 2017).

On a global level, during the years 2015-2016, climate-related development finance (concessional and non-concessional) allocated for climate adaptation was only 27% and 13% for overlapping adaptation and mitigation goals (OECD, 2018). Meanwhile, 60% of climate finance for all SIDS was directed for adaptation efforts and 5% for projects with multiple foci, which is consistent with the countries' pressing adaptation needs (Watson et al., 2016).

### 2.3.6 Environmental challenges

SIDS are already facing challenges due to climate change that pose additional difficulties to groups of people due to their specific social and economic characteristics. Social constraints faced by women in these countries and limitations posed by ascribed gender roles, influence women's social, economic and political opportunities and create obstacles for their long-term recovery and ability to contribute to adaptation efforts. Women and girls have different responsibilities and are normally in charge of food production, such as in Papua New Guinea and in the Solomon Islands, where they play a major role in the country's rural economy (IFC, 2010b). In Timor-Leste, women are mainly involved in subsistence agriculture (IFC, 2010c).

Women's engagement in different climate change adaptation strategies are related to their traditional know-how. Women's traditional knowledge about water resources has also been proven critical (Secretariat of the Pacific Community et al., 2015). In the Pacific region, the effects of climate change in fisheries will impact women and men differently since they fish in different areas, women near the coast and men in deep seas (Joseph-Brown et al., 2012).

In the Caribbean, women are responsible for the collection of water for their household and their health is at a greater stake in the face of water scarcity events (Joseph-Brown et al., 2012), while in the Pacific, water scarcity will burden women due to their responsibility for collecting water for their household usage (Secretariat of the Pacific Community et al., 2015). It is also found that women are less represented in formal risk management sectors, but that they have a leading role in grassroots and community-based groups (Joseph-Brown et al., 2012).



The issue of gender-based violence in SIDS is also relevant, since it has been found that in some settings there is an increase in GBV after natural disasters (IFRC, 2015). After climate natural disasters, there are examples of wider and long-lasting impact for women, and issues of GBV present also in shelters where women would seek protection (GIZ, 2017). As an example, after two tropical cyclones in Vanuatu in 2011, a women's counselling centre reported a 300% increase in new domestic violence cases (Secretariat of the Pacific Community et al., 2015).

Despite of the existing barriers, in terms of their political and economic empowerment and entrenched social roles, climate change can also create opportunities for changing gender roles with the adaptation of communities to different conditions.

Currently there are few studies taking a gender perspective in assessing the adaptative capacities of populations in the region of the Pacific (Maclellan, 2011) or of specific gender issues and climate change in SIDS. An integrated approach that mainstreams gender in all areas of policy and further research and sex-disaggregated data on the interlinkages between gender and climate change can inform policy makers on how to move forward, contributing for women's empowerment.

### 3 Case study: the GCCA+

The Global Climate Change Alliance Plus Initiative (GCCA+) is one of the biggest climate support programmes managed by the European Commission (Dejgaard et al., 2018) with a strong focus on LDCs and SIDS. The EC was one of the first climate finance players to prioritize the SIDS through bilateral and regional programmes. These accounted for 30% of GCCA funding through bilateral and regional programmes in 2015 (European Commission, 2015b).

The previous flagship programme, the Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA) was established by the European Union in 2007 and was in place until 2014, under the Thematic Programme for Environment and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources including Energy (ENRTP).

The CGGA+ builds on the lessons learned from the previous instrument after a global evaluation that recognised it as “as a viable instrument for practical cooperation on climate actions” (Euronet Consortium, 2015). The new flagship is also in line with the commitments to work towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Agreement from the COP21 outcomes and the Sendai framework for Disaster Risk Reduction<sup>19</sup>.

The GCCA+ is funded under the EU thematic programme Global Public Goods and Challenges 2014-2020 and it focusses in three areas (European Commission, 2015b):

- “i) Mainstreaming climate change into poverty reduction and development efforts;*
- ii) Increasing resilience to climate related stresses and shocks (promoting disaster risk reduction/DRR); and*
- iii) Supporting the formulation and implementation of concrete and integrated sectoral based climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies.”*

These reveal the centrality of climate change adaptation efforts in this programme, especially in assisting countries in implementing their National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and helping “vulnerable countries to prepare for climate-related natural hazards, reduce risks and minimise impacts by integrating multi-sector risk management approaches” (European Commission, 2015b). As of November 2018, the programme was funding 70 support actions in more than 60 countries, including 37 LDCs and 36 SIDS across Africa, Asia, Caribbean and the Pacific (DEVCO, 2018). For the 2014-2020 period, EUR 465 million plus EUR 70 million from the 11th European Development Fund intra-ACP and further expected contributions from EU member States have been allocated to the GCCA+ (GCCA+ Support Facility, 2017).

Through the support of the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO), EU delegations and the GCCA+ Support Facility, the flagship

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<sup>19</sup> The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (Sendai Framework) is the first major agreement of the post-2015 development agenda, with seven targets and four priorities for action. Available from: [www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/sendai-framework](http://www.unisdr.org/we/coordinate/sendai-framework)

operates in two pillars: “policy dialogue” and “effective cooperation through technical and financial support” (European Commission, 2015b).

The Theory of Change of the GCCA+ flagship is represented in Table 7 below, and it offers an insight on the intended and desired impacts and the chain of logic behind it. It also shows the focus of the flagship in LDCs and SIDS countries and on adaptation, despite of not being limited to it.

**Table 7 – GCCA+ Theory of Change**

	<b>Logic of intervention</b>
<b>Impact</b>	To facilitate the transition to a climate resilient low-carbon future in line with the 2°C goal and to foster a common understanding of the risks, costs and challenges posed by climate change, the benefits of low carbon action and the links to adaptation and sustainable development
<b>Outcomes</b>	To help countries most vulnerable to climate change, in particular LDCs and SIDS, to increase their capabilities to cope with the effects of climate change, in support of the achievement of the SDGs, and to have their voice better heard in the international climate change negotiations.
<b>Outputs</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Policy dialogue and experience sharing</li> <li>2. Financial and technical support</li> <li>3. Knowledge management and communication</li> </ol>
<b>Inputs</b>	Activities of GCCA+ teams

*Adapted by the author from: IIED, “Monitoring and evaluating climate adaptation: a review of GCCA experience” (2014)*

The process of funding selects programmes through an evaluation of the countries’ needs by the EU Delegations together with local development partners, followed by an assessment based on a number of eligibility criteria that includes: the quality of the proposal, the status of dialogue between the country and the EU, political factors, assessment of UNFCCC negotiations and commitments by the country and the GCCA+ index score, an ad hoc climate-resilient development index<sup>20</sup>.

The GCCA is moving from working mainly through grants to governments to new mechanisms of funding such as “blending, trust funds and small grant facilities” (European Commission, 2015b) and it is focused on widening the range of stakeholders involved in activities as to better include civil society, private sector, local authorities and community groups.

<sup>20</sup> The GCCA+ climate resilience index was developed by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission in line with the GCCA initiative objectives and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Information available at GCCA+ Website: [www.gcca.eu/funding/how-does-gcca-funding-work](http://www.gcca.eu/funding/how-does-gcca-funding-work)

The GCCA+ has engaged with SIDS through country and regional programmes. The flagship has financed projects not only in SIDS LDCs such as Comoros and Haiti, but also in High income countries such as Seychelles.

My proposal for this work throughout the next chapter is to discuss what is gender mainstreaming and what can constitute a gender responsive approach to climate change adaptation projects. Foremost, I also contribute to the analysis of the GCCA(+) by providing insights on how gender can be mainstreamed in different areas of this flagship.

### **3.1 Mainstreaming gender in the GCCA+**

Gender mainstreaming is a process and not an end in itself (de Waal, 2006). The term was introduced at the Third World Conference on Women in 1985 in Nairobi, Kenya and it has been recognized as an important strategy across different sectors and policies. In 1995, during the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action highlighted the interlinks between women, environment and sustainable development, referencing the need to integrate women in policy formulation and decision making (UN Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995). Since then, the United Nations have recognized the value of gender mainstreaming as a global strategy, including different measures to include it across its areas of work and in all policies and programmes in the UN System (UN Economic and Social Council, 1997).

This is a strategy that aims to ensure that gender considerations are taken into account in the formulation of policy, in research and in the implementation of local, national and international programmes. It does not simply mean to ensure equal numbers of women and men participation and neither does it require any obligation for different and specific activities and programmes. Instead, it aims at bringing the experience, knowledge and interests of women, men and other genders in the agenda, incorporating equal opportunities for all. In fact, even when gender mainstreaming is present transversally into policies and programmes it still needs to be complemented with targeted interventions to promote gender equality (UN OSAGI, 2002). This elicits an approach to mainstreaming that focus on identifying and addressing gender in existing development paradigms rather than prioritising gender concerns (de Waal, 2006). A multiple track approach for gender equality is necessary, due to the existence of multiple obstacles for gender equality (UN Women, 2014).

The UN OSAGI (2002) publication offers interesting guiding questions on how to include a gender perspective in policy analysis and development such as in:

- *“The formulation of the policy issue/question to be addressed;*
- *The definition of information needs to assess policy options;*
- *The assessments of implications of different options by gender;*
- *The determination of who will be consulted and how;*
- *And in the formulation of recommendation.”*

In this process, gender concerns are present throughout the entire project/programme cycle, from the planning, to the implementation and through the monitoring and evaluation.

However, we should note that gender mainstreaming is not the answer to “eliminate gender-specific discrimination and social marginalisation” (Rodenberg, 2009), but there should be political and social commitment to end discrimination and gender-based violence. This reflects the importance of conducting country specific gender analysis that can provide more information on challenges faced by women and that cannot be overcome through project-based actions, but that rather require political and social willingness and actions.

Mainstreaming gender in the GCCA+ goes beyond looking at each individual project and it should encompass a wider set of actions that include its procedures, different channels of cooperation and actions. Taking these aspects into account, the aim of this chapter is to give key recommendations and action points for the strengthening of the flagship that considers a feminist political ecology point of view and gender mainstreaming good practices.

### **3.2 Gender responsiveness analysis of the GCCA+ flagship**

The analysis of the CGGA+ was based on key available documents including:

- European Commission (2015b) The plus of GCCA+: An EU flagship initiative supporting climate resilience.
- GCCA+ Support Facility (2017) The EU Global Climate Change Alliance Plus: Flagship Initiative GCCA+ Orientation Package.
- GCCA(+) website available at: [www.gcca.eu](http://www.gcca.eu).
- Euronet Consortium (2015) Evaluation of the Global Climate Change Alliance (GCCA) Global programme World-Wide.
- DEVCO (2018) GCCA+ Journal: Innovative and effective approaches to climate change adaptation and other Paris Agreement priorities.
- Secretariat of the Pacific Community (2016) Global Climate Change Alliance: Pacific Small Island States – final report volumes 1 and 2.

The GCCA+ Journal (DEVCO, 2018) states that “since the start of operations in 2008, the GCCA(+) has promoted gender mainstreaming and gender focus in its programmes and projects” and the global evaluation of GCCA (Euronet Consortium, 2015) considers that gender dimensions have been “adequately considered and integrated in project design and execution”, mentioning good practices from projects implemented in Jamaica and Guyana. It also recognizes the benefits of gender-responsive climate action since it has “demonstrated to be cost and impact effective” (DEVCO, 2018).

Nevertheless, the evaluation of GCCA interventions revealed amongst its recommendations, the need of “developing new guidance on specific aspects, such as gender mainstreaming, the use of climate- and gender-sensitive indicators and knowledge management” (DEVCO, 2018).

In addition, DEVCO (2018) recognizes overall weak points in the GCCA+ approach to gender that could be improved, such as:

- *“More methodological and technical guidance;*
- *Gender analysis;*
- *More resources (including gender-specific expertise) and time;*
- *Baseline and targets;*
- *Policy dialogue related to GCCA+ should incorporate gender concerns and issues and highlight potential gaps in national-level gender policy and practice.”*

DEVCO highlighted as a best practice, the “Global Climate Change Alliance: Pacific Small Island States” (PSIS) project, funded by the GCCA with a budget of EUR 11.4 million and realized during the period 2011-2016 (DEVCO, 2018; Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2016a). It was in place during the transition from GCCA to GCCA+ and the final report will serve as the basis for the analysis focused on some of the programming issues in terms of gender mainstreaming.

The PSIS project was implemented by the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) and various international partners. The programme had the purpose of promoting “long-term strategies and approaches to adaptation planning and pave the way for more effective and coordinated aid delivery to address climate change at the national and regional level” (Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2016a) in nine small Pacific Islands, namely: Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Tonga and Tuvalu. The goal was to assist in countries in designing and implementing climate adaptation projects, while mainstreaming climate change into regional and national development plans.

Due to the dimension of this programme and the various activities being implemented, there was a large opportunity to promote a gender-responsive approach that took into account power relations between men and women, seeking methods to address issues of gender inequality and discrimination in the planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation activities. However, the project did not engage in gender transformative activities and it only demonstrated to tackle issues in a gender-sensitive and/or gender-specific way, not corresponding to a gender-responsive best practice.

The PSIS focused on 4 approaches to address gender issues in the planning phase (Pacific Community, 2016a):

- *“Disaggregate all training and consultation data by gender to ensure women were being reached in these activities;*
- *Include specific activities that focus on special groups (women, youth, children, elders);*
- *Identify opportunities to reduce women’s burdens as primary family carers;*

- *Develop education and awareness-raising activities that reach out to different social groups, including women, based on their capacity to access and absorb information.*”

A gender equality advisor was included as part of the project team and joined the preparation of tools aimed at supporting the integration of a gender perspective in project design.

However, the report of the project shows that various activities could have been strengthened from this point of view. The PSIS, despite providing sex-disaggregated data on the participants of the trainings and consultations promoted, did not consider women’s obstacles in the access to these activities in the first place. The PSIS failed to address this issue and the disaggregation of data at the stage of participation does not provide meaningful insights and commitment to ensure women’s presence. A gender responsive approach implies more than disaggregated data and the inclusion of equal number of women of men. It rather requires “an understanding of existing inequalities between women and men, and of the ways in which climate change can exacerbate these inequalities” and how these place different burdens in women and men (Brody et al., 2008). From a reporting side, it is less important to know how many women have participated than how much have they have benefited from it. However, in Tuvalu, women’s contribution in the agricultural sector was recognized and separate consultations took place during the preparation of the Tuvalu Agriculture Strategic Marketing Plan 2015–2020 (Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2016b).

The implementation of specific activities for women in some of the countries did not address larger issues of gender inequality. In the Marshall Islands and in Tuvalu, women were only engaged in complementary activities to wider projects. This included planting gardens, but no specific information on why this was considered relevant is provided. As described previously, gender mainstreaming does not equal designing specific activities for women as a means of inclusion, but rather ensuring that various stakeholders have access to the same opportunities and participation in decision making. Successful projects do not only engage with various actors but also account for their ownership and active contribution in the results, as to ensure sustainability.

In addition, the programme failed to address women’s participation in activities that could contribute to increase their access to funding and resources. When referring to the activities promoted in the Federated States of Micronesia, such as a training on project proposal, the implementing team just recognizes the prominence of men’s role in decision making in the household as a factor as why male participation was higher.

Some positive examples are to be mentioned. In Tonga, the specific requests of women were addressed with the construction of three coastal parks for children. Another focus was on reducing women’s burden, namely in the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Niue and Palau through the improvement of water security, since women spend a large amount of time fetching water. This action places women from a beneficiary point of view, but wider benefits to the community are also acknowledged.

As lessons learned, the report mentions that “project activities specially designed for women, youth and senior citizens ensure their involvement in building climate resilience” (Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2016a). I consider that this portrays the failure of this project in addressing wider issues of

social inequality that relates to the possibilities of these groups to participate in decision-making. In addition, the project did not show any commitment to hear women's voices in national adaptation planning and did not promote transformative activities that addressed wider issues of gender inequality in the access to resources.

A European Commission Action Document from 2017 states that it would only then start to “address evidence from previous needs assessments undertaken during the GCCA: PSIS project, which showed that women have less familiarity and knowledge about climate change concepts than men and have different needs and skills” (European Commission, 2017).

Gender-responsive programmes should integrate a gender dimension throughout the project, “including design, implementation, assessment of proposals, and of monitoring and evaluation systems” (UNDP, 2009). In general, the project does not seem to have put strong methodologies in place to address gender issues and DEVCO could have had a stronger role in providing support to its implementing partners.

### **3.3 Operationalizing a gender-responsive approach on GCCA+**

As highlighted by the DEVCO itself, the GCCA+ flagship has the opportunity to take a leadership role in this area vis-à-vis other climate-funding instruments through gender mainstreaming and gender specific interventions in a complementary way (DEVCO, 2018). The EU has adopted a Gender Action Plan that frames EU External Relations for the period 2016-2020 and that includes as one of its thematic objectives the provision of equal rights for women in participation in decision making in environmental issues (European Commission, 2015a). The Action Plan also sets the ambitious target of mainstreaming gender across 85% of new EU initiatives in all sectors by 2020<sup>21</sup>. The implications of this plan for the GCCA+ flagship are not clear, but it can bring an opportunity for the EU to leverage its position and to commit to support SIDS in adaptation programmes with a strong gender-responsive approach.

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) is a case of a climate financing tool that has strongly focused in addressing this issue. The GCF was launched at COP17 in 2011 with the aim of investing in climate change adaptation and mitigation activities in developing countries and since then, it has set an example as the “first climate finance mechanism to mainstream gender perspectives from the outset of its operations as an essential decision-making element for the deployment of its resources” (Green Climate Fund, 2017). The GCF also has a focus on adaptation funds for vulnerable countries, setting a minimum floor of 50% of these funds for LDCs, SIDS and African States (Climate Focus, 2016).

The GCF adopts a gender mainstreaming approach with the goal of “engaging women and men of all ages as stakeholders in the design, development and implementation of strategies and activities to be financed” (Green Climate Fund, 2017). The adopted Gender Policy (Green Climate Fund, 2015) has been

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<sup>21</sup> To identify if gender is considered in the programmes, the EU uses the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) gender equality policy marker (Gender marker). More information available at: <http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/dac-gender-equality-marker.htm>



now updated for the period 2018-2020 (Green Climate Fund, 2018). By 2018, 92% of projects considered by the GCF Board included gender assessments and 83% had gender action plans and it was found that incorporating a gender mainstreaming approach as part of the project cycle “has helped to identify specific gender elements that should be included in project and programme activities, and to determine how the project or programme can respond to the needs of women and men also from vulnerable communities in view of the specific climate change issue to be addressed” (UNFCCC, 2018).

Contrarily to the GCF, the CGGA+ funding process does not include as part of its requirements a specific gender analysis of the country/region and/or the necessity of developing a gender action plan. This might mean that important considerations related to the status of women in society might not be considered in the planning and implementation of the projects. The GCCA+ Support Facility (2017) on the Orientation package does not provide any information or requirements from the beneficiaries’ side on this matter and it only mentions gender as an issue to be taken into account. In order to express interest in a funding opportunity, there is no obligation to clarify the expected impact and engagement of women, how consultations with women will be made or any other type of gender specific assessment or alignment with gender policy documents.

The pre-planning and designing phases are important since they constitute an opportunity for engagement with local stakeholders and actors and for the establishment of strong baselines. From a feminist political ecology perspective, gender analysis is key to understand and map power relations, the status of women in the country, the ownership of property and control and access to resources who holds the power. Including gender analysis allows to better understand the specific vulnerability of women, their access and use of resources and how actions can impact them. To ensure effective programming it is necessary to understand how gender relations influence the responses to climate change and disasters (OXFAM, 2010). Collection of sex-disaggregated data should not only provide information related to climate vulnerability and coping mechanisms, but also give insights on the status of women in the country, especially since gender related data is scarce in many of SIDS. These findings should feed into climate negotiations as well as national debates to enable decision makers to have a better understanding of these interlinkages and what kind of capacity and support is needed.

A gender sensitive formulation of the problem and objectives of the projects will also be easier to translate in outcomes and outputs and will facilitate monitoring and evaluation activities. In the planning phase, specific objectives on strengthening women’s empowerment in the household and community should be included. Gender-sensitive programming includes working to support women’s right to ownership and control of assets and to protect women and girls from violence in case of disasters (OXFAM, 2010), which we have seen it is a predominant concern in SIDS. It is also important to ensure that accountability mechanisms are present (OXFAM, 2010) and to identify and consult local key stakeholders, including civil society. It is known that in many SIDS there are strong women’s movements working in issues related to climate change, consulting and involving them would be important.

In terms of monitoring and evaluation (M&E), it is necessary to assess how interventions influence gendered power relations and inequalities, through an inclusive and participatory process (UN Women, 2015). The review of GCCA M&E activities (IIED, 2014) highlights the challenges of these exercises, since there are no universally agreed standards to measure how successful an intervention is in reducing people's climate vulnerability. The review also finds that the strongest M&E systems included a M&E framework document with well-defined indicators, activities for baselines and clear roles. This shows that, even with M&E being challenging, it can further strengthen through inclusion of disaggregated data and development of gender-sensitive indicators.

Policy dialogue actions in GCCA+ can signify another strong entry point for advocating for gender responsive policies in SIDS. Policies provide an opportunity for resources to be equally distributed between men and women as to “guarantee that they have a more profound impact on correcting social inequalities that aggravate the consequences of climate change” (UNDP, 2009). An enabling environment on a political level for gender equality can leverage further actions and investments on climate change adaptation projects. However, in order to challenge structural constraints, these dialogues should also be grounded in evidence-based data (UN Women, 2014).

The GCCA+ could also support governments to ensure international development policies are translated on a national level since “although there is a mandate to mainstream gender-responsive climate change adaptation measures, implementation of these international commitments is still slow at national and subnational levels” (Aguilar et al., 2015). DEVCO (2018) also highlights the need to link projects and policy development in the context of the GCCA+. DEVCO can support SIDS to uphold their international commitments on gender equality such as those part of the CEDAW, by translating laws and regulations to the Constitution and/or providing technical and financial support for countries to mainstream gender in national policies from employment strategies to sustainable development.

The UNDP (2009) resource guide provides further points that could be applicable in this context, such as the adoption of principles of gender equality in negotiations and policies between countries, the use of gender strategies already in place as basis for climate change adaptations strategies and the support in the development of national and local strategies to improve the management of natural resources and transfer of technology to women.

DEVCO also provides capacity building through the GCCA+ Support Facility, providing information and training on specific areas<sup>22</sup>. The GCCA+ facility has space to develop its role as a promoter of research and knowledge on gender related issues and climate adaptation and support capacity building for partner Governments, Ministries and other partners through promoting and organizing trainings on gender

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<sup>22</sup> The areas include such as “Understanding climate change science; Understanding climate change-development linkages; Mainstreaming climate change and strengthening institutions and capacities; Mainstreaming climate change in national, sector and subnational policies, strategies and programmes; Costing, assessing and selecting adaptation and mitigation options and measures; Mainstreaming climate change in the budgetary process; and Mainstreaming climate change in monitoring systems”. Available on the website: <http://www.gcca.eu/knowledge/training-and-capacity-building>

analysis, gender mainstreaming, gender responsive budgeting, etc. This would enhance the ability of local actors to develop gender-responsive policies and strengthen their capacities in terms of planning and programming across sectors. In fact, the GCCA+ facility acknowledges its role as a support for the development of stronger institutions and policies, through the implementation of projects that include solutions to reduce the constraints that SIDS face, “such as inadequate data and technical capacity, weak human and institutional capacity and limited financial resources” (GCCA Community, 2017).

In terms of knowledge management, the GCCA+ promotes an online community<sup>23</sup>, accessible to external actors, where various types of resources are shared. However, we do not see many resources related to gender and gender mainstreaming in the SIDS being discussed. This is another area is being overlooked and can be strengthened.

Linkages between EU programmes could also be an opportunity. The EU has launched in September 2017 the programme “Tackling root causes of gender inequality and violence against women and girls in the Pacific” to address violence against women and girls in the region, recognizing the high personal, social and economic costs of gender inequality in the region (European Commission, 2018). The connections with climate change is acknowledged in this programme, but it does not seem that there is any strong linkage between the information provided with other actions in the area, namely in the GCCA+. Producing resources, sharing data and information on gender related aspects of SIDS countries can contribute to the GCCA+ ability to work closely with governments and to monitor how they are able to mainstream gender and climate change adaptation in their policies. Programmes outside the GCCA+, that work with women economic or political empowerment should also be taken into consideration, since greater access to resources and information is important in terms of climate change adaptation.

The GCCA+ flagship should not operate as a separate line of cooperation between countries, but it should reflect the stances of the EU on gender equality, especially taking into consideration the EU Gender Action Plan (2016-2020). Programmes and projects should align with national and international priorities in terms of gender equality and women’s empowerment and should address these issues in the context of climate change adaptation programming.

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<sup>23</sup> GCCA+ online community: <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/gcca-community/>

## 4 Conclusion

A feminist political ecology approach in a climate adaptation framework has been proven useful, giving light to issues of social inequality and gendered power relations that shape the way women and men are affected by climate change worldwide.

Adaptation necessities vary between regions and countries, but mainly between people based on their gender, class and intersecting social processes (IPCC, 2014). Despite of the SIDS heterogeneity in geographical, natural, economic and social terms, the countries share concerns related to the impact of climate change and natural disasters. The various threats that climate change brings to the population and its livelihoods positions them as one of the key stakeholders in climate adaptation funding and programming.

This proposal has focussed not only in recognizing women's important role in adaptation programmes, but, primarily in portraying how societal gendered roles and power relations restrict women's possibilities to address their specific vulnerability and to use their knowledge and abilities in a productive way in the context of climate change adaptation efforts. I have provided an overview of the pressing challenges climate change poses in SIDS and on women's economic, social and political position in these countries.

The gendered dimension of climate change is being more widely acknowledged from an academic point of view, but few studies and researches have tackled climate change and adaptation with a gender perspective in SIDS. This constitutes an obstacle for inclusive and gender equitable climate action and policies, since this knowledge is not being translated in the implementation of programmes and projects. We are also faced with lack of relevant gender data in various countries which hinders the ability of governments and actors to respond to the root causes of gender inequality.

Although SIDS do not overtly discriminate against women, it is found that women have less opportunities to participate in decision-making processes at a national level and face challenges in managing resources and in terms of economic empowerment. Women are also more likely to have insecure land rights and inconsistent access to services. The issue of gender-based violence is prominent in some of the countries and can be exacerbated in the face of natural disasters, with long lasting impacts for women. Despite of improvements in terms of legal frameworks and policies in some SIDS, these have been limited and challenging obstacles for women's empowerment remain.

Through the GCCA, the EU has prioritized actions in LDCs and in SIDS that aimed at increasing countries' resilience and supporting the formulation of climate change adaptation strategies. Despite of evidences of some concerns of the interlinkages of this issue with gender, the gender responsiveness analysis of the flagship has revealed various gaps in terms of gender mainstreaming practices.

A strong implementation of the EU Gender Action Plan, policy dialogue actions, financial and technical support to countries and better gender mainstreaming programming in the GCCA and other lines of cooperation, can contribute for positioning the EU as a global leader in advancing women's rights that

encompasses an integrated approach that addresses gender inequality as a goal and as a means for sound adaptation strategies and programmes. The EU can also leverage its commitments by affirming a strong focus on gender equality in the framework of climate change. It can work in favour of gender-sensitive financing and promote accountability mechanisms for its partners since neglecting women in climate policies raises not only issues of effectiveness, but also of equality and dignity (Alber, 2011).

Even though the focus of this thesis was on the SIDS group, various reflections can be brought to other levels. It is important to recognize the efforts being made by the international community in bringing a “gender lens” into climate change discussions and policy making, as in the case of the work being done by Green Climate Fund and the UNFCCC. However, in order to achieve gender equality there is still a long way to go, that does not only involve increasing the number of women in negotiations or providing separate spaces of dialogue. We need innovative approaches and the development of specific know-how and capacity building in this field, so that gender does not become a simple ticking box in the implementation of programmes and policies.

An interlinked approach that mainstreams both gender and climate change in national and international policies brings the possibility to leverage investments and to contribute for women’s empowerment. It is important that gender equality is prioritized by national and international actors and in cooperation and humanitarian activities, aligned with international commitments that recognize that women’s rights are not only a stand-alone goal, but also a catalyser for other development goals, being relevant by itself and as a means to achieve others.

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