

GENDER INTEGRATION AND SUSTAINABILITY IN ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE: CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES FOR GENDER POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates gender mainstreaming in environmental institutions in Addis Ababa City Administration aiming to enhance gender equality and decision-making processes. Through qualitative analysis of expert interviews and exploration of four key areas, it reveals varying degrees of gender mainstreaming implementation across institutions. Challenges identified include organizational culture, resource allocation, capacity building, execution practices, and gender representation in leadership roles. Despite recognizing the importance of gender equality, inconsistent execution persists due to cultural norms, financial constraints, and a lack of gender-specific data. The study advocates for strategic measures such as gender-sensitive indicators, increased women's participation in decision-making and comprehensive gender data collection to improve integration. It concludes by emphasizing the critical need for a systematic approach to gender mainstreaming in environmental institutions, underlining its significance in fostering sustainable development and social justice.

Keywords: Gender Mainstreaming; Environmental Institutions; Environmental governance; Decision-making; Addis Ababa

INTRODUCTION

The integration of gender perspectives into the governance frameworks of urban environmental entities is essential for advancing gender equality on a global scale. The United Nations (UN) emphasizes the critical importance of conducting thorough analyses on the potential effects that proposed policy measures and initiatives may have on individuals of all genders across various sectors and hierarchical levels. In support of this ethos, the UN's Global Gender Office has played a pivotal role in developing innovative strategies and providing essential tools designed to integrate gender considerations systematically into environmental programming (IUCN, 2023). The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) further reinforces this commitment with its Gender Action Plan, prioritizing gender equality within environmental initiatives (IUCN, 2023). In the context of the developing world, the integration of gender perspectives is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone for mitigating poverty and advancing sustainable development (Moser, 1993; Walter, 2011). Nonetheless, challenges such as ingrained sociocultural norms, underrepresentation, and barriers to resource accessibility and decision-making continue to impede progress (Bermúdez Figueroa et al., 2023). Across the African continent, regional entities, including the African Union, are vocal proponents of gender mainstreaming in environmental management, although the degree of implementation varies notably between nations (AU, 2015).

Ethiopia, in particular, has acknowledged the principle of gender equality in its constitution (FDRE, 1995). However, Ethiopian women encounter hurdles in participating in environmental governance due to resource constraints, educational limitations, and entrenched societal expectations (UN Women, 2018). Despite recognizing the critical role of women in the stewardship of natural resources, the translation of policy into tangible actions remains elusive (Zegeye et al., 2018). Empirical research by (Agarwal, 2009; Khandker et al., 2020) illuminates the beneficial impacts of gender mainstreaming in forest preservation and water resource management, respectively. Yet, Ethiopian environmental institutions grapple with a dearth of gender-disaggregated data, which hampers the evaluation of mainstreaming outcomes and the formulation of efficacious interventions (Rai et al., 2021).

The schism between the acknowledgment of gender mainstreaming and its practical execution is underscored by (Arora-Jonsson & Ågren, 2019), signaling an urgent requirement for focused strategies. A study by (Rai et al., 2021) assert that current gender mainstreaming efforts in climate change mitigation may inadvertently perpetuate stereotypes rather than subverting them. (Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014) criticize the neglect of intersectionality in mainstreaming endeavors, thereby ignoring critical factors such as race, class, and ethnicity. (Lema et al., 2019) highlights the obstacles associated with implementing gender mainstreaming policies within Ethiopia's urban environmental institutions, attributing it to a deficiency in understanding and commitment.

Furthermore, (Dierig, 1999) found that in the solid waste management sector of Addis Ababa, women's participation significantly improves performance, despite facing notable obstacles. However, there remains a lack of systematic monitoring and evaluation of gender mainstreaming efforts, hindering the ability to gauge progress and make necessary adjustments. Additionally, there is a noticeable absence of definitive indicators for women's leadership in the environmental sector, hampering tracking of advancements and formulation of improvement strategies. The existing literature, with its limited

focus on specific themes, leaves significant gaps in understanding the complex interactions among policy, organizational structure, resource allocation, and Expertise and capacity. This study aims to address these gaps by providing a comprehensive examination of the intricacies of gender mainstreaming within Addis Ababa's environmental institutions. It seeks to offer nuanced insights to facilitate more effective gender mainstreaming practices. The objective of the study is to examine and analyze the current status of gender mainstreaming in environmental institutions in Addis Ababa and its implication to environmental governance practices related to gender and environment.

Materials and Methods

Study context

Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, holds the distinction of being the largest city in the nation, serving as a crucial center for administrative, communication, and economic activities (Shen et al., 2023). Positioned precisely at coordinates 9°01'48" N and 38°04'24" E (Moisa et al., 2023), this metropolis sprawls across an extensive area of 540 square kilometers. Noteworthy is its varied topography, encompassing elevations ranging from 2100 meters to well beyond 3000 meters above sea level (Diriba & Meng, 2021). Addis Ababa experienced a gradual increase in both the highest and lowest temperatures from 1951 to 2002. Rainfall patterns remained stable from 1898 to 2002, with an average annual rainfall of 1184 mm, concentrated between June and mid-September (Addis et al., 2022). Major rivers and streams serve the city. Addis Ketema has the highest population density, with 37,215 individuals per square kilometer (Eshetu et al., 2021).

The study focuses on the phenomenon of gender mainstreaming within environmental institutions in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The decision to conduct this study in Addis Ababa is due to its status as the capital city and a hub of numerous environmental institutions. Such institutions are significant in shaping national environmental policies and strategies. By examining gender mainstreaming in these institutions, the study seeks to uncover the state of gender mainstreaming and its implications on policy formulation and execution.

Methodology

Selection of key informants

The methodology employed a qualitative framework, leveraging expert interviews and purposive sampling to probe gender mainstreaming in environmental entities. This approach ensured the selection of individuals possessing in-depth knowledge pertinent to the subject. The snowball sampling technique further enriched the research by revealing professional networks, thereby deepening the qualitative insights (Vogl, 2022). Utilizing this method, the study engaged 20 specialists through referrals, beginning with institutional heads or acknowledged experts, which underscored the efficacy of the snowball technique in accessing domain-specific knowledge. The investigation concentrated on six pivotal environmental organizations in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (Table 1). It examined their synergistic contributions to ecological preservation, sustainability, and aesthetic enhancement.

Table 1. Public environmental institutions in Addis Ababa along with their institutional mandates

Institution Name	Description
Addis Ababa City Government Environmental Protection and Green Development Commission	Develops and enforces environmental protection policies, oversees green development initiatives, and ensures sustainable urban planning.
Addis Ababa River Basin and Green Area Development and Administration Agency	This office focuses on implementing environmental policies and initiatives at the municipal level.
Addis Ababa City Government Farmers and Urban Agriculture Development Commission	Responsible for the collection, transportation, and disposal of solid waste. Implements waste reduction, recycling, and management strategies to minimize environmental impact.
Addis Ababa Solid Waste Management Agency	This agency is responsible for the collection, transportation, and disposal of the city's solid waste, and plays a crucial role in maintaining the city's cleanliness and hygiene.
Addis Ababa Resilience project office	Focuses on building the city's resilience to environmental and socio-economic challenges, including climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.
The Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MEFCC) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia,	Formulates environmental policies, laws, and regulations at the national level, oversees forest conservation, and implements climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies

Source: The respective institutions, 2023.

The key informant interviews

The study relies on interviews with key informants as its primary means of data collection, facilitating a deep dive into perspectives and experiences regarding gender integration within organizations. Semi-structured interviews are utilized to maintain both consistency and adaptability, enabling open-ended inquiries and a comprehensive examination of participants' individual experiences. This qualitative methodology is vital in qualitative research as it facilitates the acquisition of detailed insights from individuals with informed perspectives and direct involvement in the subject under investigation (Marshall, 1996). The semi-structured format of these interviews proves valuable by providing a framework for the discussion while allowing for a natural flow of conversation. This approach facilitates the emergence of new lines of inquiry based on the narratives shared by respondents (Dicicco-Bloom, B. and Crabtree, B.F., 2006). Key informant interviews provide a nuanced perspective on complex issues like gender mainstreaming within institutions, offering insights that quantitative methods may overlook (Kumar, K., 1989).

Methods of Data Analysis

In this study, the method of data analysis employed was thematic analysis, chosen for its applicability to qualitative research and its adaptability to the exploration of gender mainstreaming in environmental institutions. Thematic analysis served as the primary approach to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within the gathered data. This method provided the flexibility necessary to capture the intricate nature of gender mainstreaming in the specific context of environmental institutions in Addis Ababa. The data, derived from key informant interviews, underwent systematic coding and analysis to discern recurring themes and patterns across four key areas of focus: policy level, organizational issues, resource allocation and expertise and capacity in the environmental sector. This comprehensive approach ensured a nuanced understanding of the complexities surrounding gender mainstreaming in environmental institutions, enriching the study's findings and contributing to a more informed discourse on the subject.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gender mainstreaming is a vital approach that promotes gender equality and aims to integrate a gender perspective into the policies, structures, and practices of organizations. In the context of Addis Ababa environmental institutions, this study aims to provide a comprehensive discussion of the findings of a study that focused on five key areas related to gender mainstreaming. Thematic analysis of expert interviews, specifically expert number 20, has been conducted to gain deeper insights into the challenges and potential strategies for enhancing gender equality in these institutions.

Policy Level: Gender Policies and Laws in the Environmental Sector

Gender policies and strategies in the environmental sector

Ethiopia has made notable strides in integrating gender considerations into its environmental policy and legislation, spanning forestry, agriculture, water resources, and energy sectors. This commitment is evident in national and sector-specific strategies aimed at fostering gender equality and women's empowerment in environmental management (Desta & Haug, 2024). The Government of Ethiopia implemented the National Gender Policy in 2014, highlighting the importance of incorporating gender mainstreaming across developmental sectors, especially in environmental conservation and natural resource management (UN Women – Africa, 2014). This policy has yielded tangible results, including heightened awareness of gender equality's significance in achieving sustainable development goals. Initiatives such as the Gender and Climate Change Strategy have been instrumental in integrating gender perspectives into climate change adaptation and mitigation endeavors (UNDP, 2024). Furthermore, the Sustainable Land Management Program has prioritized women's involvement in land rehabilitation projects, resulting in enhanced land productivity and improved livelihoods for women (Kato et al., 2022).

Despite these advancements, challenges persist in implementing gender policies within the environmental sector. Persistent gender disparities in resource access and decision-making authority pose significant problems. Additionally, entrenched cultural norms and stereotypes impede women's participation in decision-making processes at community and institutional levels, limiting their influence on environmental policies and programs (Mohammed et al., 2022).

Several experts, particularly female representatives and department heads highlighted the existence of gender mainstreaming initiatives within their respective institutions. These initiatives encompass various aspects, including workforce diversity, gender-sensitive planning and programming, and capacity building for women in environmental management roles. For instance, Experts from the Addis Ababa City Government Environmental Protection and Green Development Commission emphasized the existence of gender-sensitive policies aimed at promoting equitable participation in environmental decision-making processes. These policies are evident in initiatives targeting various environmental sectors, including waste management, urban agriculture, and resilience projects.

Furthermore, insights from female representatives and department heads within the Addis Ababa River Basin and Green Area Development and Administration Agency highlighted the importance of gender mainstreaming in environmental planning and management. However, despite policy frameworks advocating for gender equality, practical implementation often faces difficulties such as resource constraints, institutional barriers, and limited awareness among stakeholders. Female representatives from the Addis Ababa Solid Waste Management Agency underscored the need for tailored interventions to address gender disparities in waste management practices and employment opportunities within the sector.

Moreover, discussions with experts from the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MEFCC) in Addis Ababa revealed ongoing efforts to strengthen gender-responsive approaches in environmental governance. Yet, challenges persist in translating policy intentions into actionable strategies, particularly in fostering women's participation in climate change adaptation and mitigation programs. Additionally, insights from the Addis Ababa City Government Farmers and Urban Agriculture Development Commission emphasized the significance of recognizing women's roles in urban agriculture and ensuring their access to resources. The Addis Ababa Resilience project office highlighted the importance of integrating gender perspectives in resilience-building initiatives to address vulnerabilities and enhance community resilience to environmental hazards. However, despite recognizing the importance of gender-responsive approaches, practical implementation faces constraints related to capacity gaps and limited coordination among stakeholders. Gender integration in Addis Ababa's environmental institutions faces hurdles despite policy support. Resource constraints, institutional inertia, and limited awareness impede effective implementation. Tailored interventions in sectors like waste management and urban agriculture are needed to address disparities. Promoting women's participation and access to resources is crucial for advancing gender equality. Capacity-building and interagency collaboration are vital for overcoming implementation challenges.

Organizational Structure

Gender focal points, gender units, and specialists

In Addis Ababa's environmental institutions, the appointment of gender focal points, gender units, or specialists has been inconsistent. Some institutions, such as the Addis Ababa City Government Environmental Protection and Green Development Commission, have designated gender units since 2017. These units play a critical role in ensuring that environmental policies are analyzed through a gender lens, reflecting the importance of gender-sensitive approaches (Bolwig et al., 2008), who emphasizes that environmental projects should recognize the different roles and needs of men and women

to be effective. Similarly, the Addis Ababa Solid Waste Management Agency has appointed gender focal points within its structure to address gender disparities in waste management activities.

On the other hand, the absence of such gender-focused roles in institutions like the Addis Ababa River Basin and Green Area Development and Administration Agency leaves a significant gap in addressing the gender dynamics within environmental initiatives. This gap is not unique to Addis Ababa; it is reflective of broader global challenges in institutionalizing gender-responsive environmental governance (Rico, 1998), who argues that gender disparities in environmental management are indicative of wider socio-political inequalities that must be addressed for sustainable development. The responsibility of integrating gender considerations into environmental planning and implementation often falls on department heads or supervisors, who are frequently female representatives, within organizations such as the Addis Ababa City Government Environmental Protection and Green Development Commission and the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MEFCC). However, the absence of clear accountability mechanisms and the lack of organizational prioritization of gender considerations can pose significant challenges.

Expert interviews have revealed numerous challenges that Addis Ababa's environmental institutions face in terms of gender mainstreaming. A primary concern is the sporadic appointment of gender focal points or specialists, which signals a lack of uniform institutional commitment to integrating gender in environmental policies and projects. While certain institutions have taken commendable strides in establishing dedicated gender units or appointing focal points, others remain behind, leading to inconsistent progress toward mitigating gender disparities. Confronting the challenges of gender mainstreaming within Addis Ababa's environmental institutions necessitates an integrative approach that embeds gender considerations throughout all phases of environmental planning and policy formulation. Such an approach is essential for enhancing the effectiveness of environmental initiatives and also serves the larger objective of fostering gender equality and sustainable development. Addressing these systemic issues will require sustained efforts and an unwavering commitment to gender-responsive governance.

Gender balance in environmental institutions

Among the experts interviewed, female representatives consistently pointed out the underrepresentation of women in senior positions across all institutions. They emphasized that despite efforts to promote gender diversity, structural barriers such as cultural norms and stereotypes continue to hinder women's advancement into leadership roles. For instance, some female representatives expressed frustration with entrenched gender biases within recruitment and promotion processes, which often favor male candidates. Despite the qualifications and capabilities that women may possess, they are frequently overlooked due to these persistent biases. For example, a study by (Branscombe & Ryan, 2013) highlights the "labyrinth" metaphor, describing the numerous obstacles women face in their career paths, which differ from the "glass ceiling" in that they involve a complex set of challenges and not just a single barrier to top leadership positions.

Supervisors and department heads acknowledged the importance of addressing gender disparities within their organizations. However, they cited practical challenges such as limited resources and capacity constraints that hinder the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming initiatives. Furthermore, while supervisors and department heads may

acknowledge the importance of addressing gender disparities, practical challenges such as limited resources and capacity constraints can impede the implementation of gender mainstreaming initiatives. This is echoed by a report from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which suggests that without adequate resources and a strategic approach, gender initiatives may not achieve their intended impact (OECD, 2022).

Targeted mentorship and leadership development programs are indeed pivotal in empowering women to ascend to leadership roles. A study by (Abalkhail & Allan, 2015) suggests that such programs can provide women with the necessary skills, confidence, and networks to navigate their careers successfully. These programs can also help in challenging the status quo by cultivating a new generation of female leaders who can serve as role models and change agents within their organizations. Institutions like the Addis Ababa City Government Environmental Protection and Green Development Commission have shown that with organizational commitment, it is possible to promote gender equality through progressive policies and programs. The case of this commission exemplifies how gender-sensitive recruitment practices and inclusive decision-making processes can create a more equitable work environment. A report by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) further supports this by emphasizing that proactive measures and strong leadership commitment are necessary for the successful mainstreaming of gender in environmental governance (IUCN, 2023).

The study highlights the significant challenge of addressing gender disparity in Addis Ababa's environmental institutions. Structural barriers hinder women's advancement into senior roles despite recognition of the importance of gender diversity. Cultural biases in recruitment processes and limited resources underscore the need for systemic interventions. Investing in training and mentorship programs is crucial to enhancing women's leadership skills and confidence. Positive examples of gender equality initiatives demonstrate the potential for progress with organizational commitment. Institutions prioritizing gender diversity not only advocate for equity but also benefit from diverse perspectives, enhancing decision-making and performance.

Collaborations among the environmental institutions gender mainstreaming

Female representatives from the Addis Ababa City Government Environmental Protection and Green Development Commission and Addis Ababa River Basin and Green Area Development and Administration Agency highlighted collaborative efforts between environmental and gender-focused departments. They cited joint projects aiming to address environmental challenges and gender inequalities simultaneously. Examples include initiatives combining environmental education with sustainable resource management to promote sustainable livelihoods for women. Such integration aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 5 (gender equality and empowerment of women and girls) and SDG 12 (sustainable management of natural resources) (SDG 12) (UNDP, 2015).

However, challenges persist in achieving seamless integration. Some experts, such as department heads from the Addis Ababa City Government Farmers and Urban Agriculture Development Commission and the Addis Ababa Solid Waste Management Agency, pointed out that while there is recognition of the importance of gender perspectives in environmental initiatives, operationalizing this recognition remains a challenge. Limited resources, including funding and staffing, often

hinder the implementation of gender-sensitive approaches in environmental projects. Additionally, bureaucratic hurdles and competing priorities within institutions sometimes impede effective collaboration between environmental and gender-focused departments.

The findings highlight commendable efforts to integrate gender perspectives into environmental initiatives in Addis Ababa, yet significant challenges hinder comprehensive cooperation between environmental institutions and gender equality departments. Collaborative projects signify a growing acknowledgment of the link between environmental sustainability and gender equality, crucial for addressing environmental impacts on marginalized communities. Incorporating gender perspectives into planning ensures both environmental soundness and social equity. However, challenges, such as resource constraints and bureaucratic hurdles, necessitate robust institutional support for effective collaboration. Streamlining processes and aligning priorities are vital for overcoming barriers. While progress is evident, concerted efforts are needed to foster meaningful cooperation between environmental and gender-focused departments.

Resource Allocation

Financial resources allocated for gender-specific approaches to environmental policies

Most of the experts highlighted a lack of specific financial resources allocated for gender-specific approaches within environmental policies. They noted that while gender mainstreaming is acknowledged in policy documents, it often lacks substantive budgetary allocation. For instance, one female representative from the Addis Ababa Resilience Project office expressed,

"Although gender mainstreaming is emphasized in our policies, the actual allocation of resources specifically for gender-sensitive programs remains inadequate" (Interviewee 12)

Experts across institutions acknowledged the importance of stakeholder participation in environmental policy formulation and implementation. However, they also highlighted challenges in effectively engaging stakeholders, particularly marginalized groups such as women and local communities due to budget constraints. A supervisor from the Addis Ababa Solid Waste Management Agency noted:

"While we aim for inclusive decision-making processes, reaching out to diverse stakeholders, especially women and vulnerable communities, remains a challenge due to resource constraints and limited capacity"(Interviewee 5).

Several challenges were identified regarding the implementation of gender-specific approaches and stakeholder participation in environmental policies. These included bureaucratic hurdles, limited awareness and understanding of gender issues among policymakers and practitioners, and insufficient capacity-building initiatives. A department head from the Addis Ababa River Basin and Green Area Development and Administration Agency emphasized:

"There is a need for targeted capacity-building programs to enhance understanding and skills in gender mainstreaming among our staff" (Interviewee 8).

The findings highlight a significant gap between policy intentions and their implementation regarding gender mainstreaming and stakeholder involvement in environmental governance in Addis Ababa. Despite policy acknowledgment, tangible resource allocation for gender-sensitive approaches remains limited, hindering effective implementation. This discrepancy perpetuates gender disparities in accessing environmental initiatives. Additionally, challenges in stakeholder participation underline the need for more inclusive decision-making processes involving diverse stakeholders, particularly women and marginalized groups. Coordinated efforts, including capacity-building, gender-responsive budgeting, and collaborative partnerships, are crucial for addressing these challenges. Bridging this gap requires political commitment and concrete actions to allocate resources, enhance capacity, and promote inclusive decision-making processes.

Application of gender budgeting in environmental programs and processes

Experts from various institutions highlighted a lack of awareness and comprehension of gender budgeting principles among decision-makers and budget planners. This deficiency was attributed to a broader issue of incomplete integration of gender mainstreaming into institutional policies and practices. Without a thorough grasp of gender-responsive budgeting, its practical implementation becomes challenging, leading to oversight and neglect of gender-specific needs within environmental initiatives. Furthermore, department heads from the Addis Ababa City Government Environmental Protection and Green Development Commission and the Addis Ababa River Basin and Green Area Development and Administration Agency underscored the absence of dedicated resources and mechanisms for gender analysis within budgeting processes. While efforts were made to incorporate gender considerations, the absence of specific allocations and guidelines hindered effective implementation. Consequently, gender disparities persisted, and the potential for inclusive and equitable environmental outcomes remained unrealized.

Supervisors and key experts from the Addis Ababa City Government Farmers and Urban Agriculture Development Commission and the Addis Ababa Solid Waste Management Agency highlighted bureaucratic obstacles and resistance to change as significant challenges. They pointed out that entrenched budgeting structures and practices made it difficult to introduce gender-sensitive approaches. Moreover, female representatives from the Addis Ababa Resilience project office and the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change stressed the necessity for capacity-building and technical assistance. They emphasized the importance of training and awareness programs to empower staff in gender analysis and budgeting. Without sufficient skills and knowledge, the integration of gender perspectives into budgeting processes remains superficial and ineffective.

The findings underscore systemic hurdles in implementing gender budgeting within Addis Ababa's environmental institutions. Despite its recognized significance, several barriers impede its effective adoption. Insufficient awareness, resources, and technical expertise hamper the integration of gender considerations into budgeting processes, perpetuating gender disparities in environmental outcomes (Khandker et al., 2020). The limited inclusion of gender perspectives in

budgeting mirrors broader shortcomings in mainstreaming gender within institutional frameworks. Without a comprehensive grasp of gender dynamics and specific needs, environmental policies and programs are unlikely to address the diverse realities faced by men and women. Therefore, urgent institutional reforms are needed to prioritize gender equality and social inclusion in environmental decision-making.

Moreover, resistance to change entrenched within bureaucratic structures obstructs progress toward gender-responsive budgeting. Overcoming inertia necessitates concerted efforts to foster an inclusive and accountable culture within environmental institutions. Leadership commitment, along with targeted interventions to address resistance and foster consensus, is crucial for instigating transformative change. Capacity-building emerges as a vital strategy to bridge knowledge gaps and empower staff in gender analysis and budgeting. Investments in training and technical assistance can bolster institutional capacity to effectively mainstream gender considerations. Additionally, partnerships with civil society organizations and academia offer valuable expertise and resources to support gender-responsive budgeting initiatives.

Expertise and Capacity

Knowledge and expertise in the field of gender and environment

The environmental institutions in Addis Ababa demonstrated a strong awareness of gender issues within their operational framework. Experts highlighted the incorporation of gender-sensitive policies that aim to enhance women's participation in environmental governance. However, the practical application of these policies was often inconsistent, with some institutions lacking clear mechanisms for ensuring gender equity. Interviews revealed that there is a varying degree of expertise regarding the intersection of gender and environment. Some experts were well-versed in the nuances of how environmental changes disproportionately affect women, particularly in areas such as water management and land use. This awareness is crucial, as it aligns with global observations that women often face the brunt of environmental challenges (Brown, 2011).

The practices within these institutions reflected a commitment to green development and resilience within Addis Ababa. Initiatives such as river basin conservation and urban agriculture have been implemented with consideration of their gendered impacts. However, experts noted that women's representation in decision-making roles remains limited, which could hinder the effectiveness of these initiatives from a gender perspective. Experts acknowledged several challenges in integrating gender considerations into environmental programs. These include cultural barriers, lack of gender-disaggregated data, and limited resources dedicated to gender mainstreaming. It was often cited that without addressing these systemic issues, achieving gender equality in environmental outcomes would remain a challenge. These challenges align with broader global trends that recognize the need for concerted efforts in integrating gender considerations into environmental programs (Miller & Razavi, 1995).

Despite the challenges, there were examples of progress and innovative approaches to gender and environmental issues. For instance, the Addis Ababa Resilience Project Office has been working on incorporating gender-sensitive approaches in its urban resilience strategies, and the MEFCC has initiated projects that empower women through environmental conservation and climate change mitigation activities. The finding emphasizes the importance of institutional knowledge and expertise in

bridging gender gaps in environmental governance. While policies exist on paper, their implementation varies, suggesting a gap between policy and practice. The need for capacity building and targeted training on gender-environment linkages was evident across institutions. Moreover, the findings pointed to the systemic barriers that impede the integration of gender considerations. To overcome these, institutions must prioritize the collection of gender-disaggregated data that can inform more nuanced policy-making. Additionally, fostering a culture that values and promotes women's leadership in environmental sectors is crucial. Innovative approaches that have yielded positive results offer a blueprint for scaling up gender-sensitive environmental practices. These examples serve as a testament to what can be achieved with concerted effort and dedication to gender equality.

Gender-environment training

The study on the need for gender-sensitive training within environmental institutions in Addis Ababa brings to light a significant oversight in organizational training frameworks. As noted, while general training programs on environmental issues are commonplace, the integration of gender perspectives is frequently neglected. This absence underlines a systemic issue in recognizing the intersectionality between gender and environmental concerns. Research emphasizes the importance of adopting an intersectional approach to environmental training, give emphasis to the potential shortcomings of ignoring the nuanced impacts of environmental issues on different genders (Steinfeld & Holt, 2020). Moreover, experts have pointed out the necessity for bespoke training sessions that delve into the dynamics between gender and the environment. Without such specialized training, there is a risk that staff may not possess the required competencies to employ gender-sensitive approaches effectively. The lack of these critical skills can ultimately compromise the success of environmental programs and narrow the scope of inclusive decision-making. A study by (Sharr, 2023) highlights similar findings, where the absence of gender-focused training correlates with reduced effectiveness in environmental initiatives and decision-making processes.

The challenges identified by participants, such as limited resources and competing organizational priorities, further complicate the establishment of gender training sessions. Budgetary constraints and high-pressure workloads can lead to the devaluation of gender-related capacity building, thus perpetuating gender disparities and underrepresentation of women in the environmental sector (Smith & Sinkford, 2022). These institutional barriers resonate with the broader discourse on the interrelation between resource availability and the advancement of gender equity initiatives. In light of these findings, it is imperative for Addis Ababa's environmental institutions to prioritize the implementation of gender-sensitive training programs. Such programs should be specifically tailored to the institutions' needs and context, employing interactive methodologies and practical instruments for integrating gender considerations into routine operations. Collaborating with external entities like civil society organizations and academia can contribute valuable expertise and additional resources, bolstering the efforts to mainstream gender perspectives. By embracing shared knowledge and experiences, the environmental institutions in Addis Ababa can strengthen their capacity to bridge gender gaps and foster a more inclusive and equitable approach to environmental governance.

CONCLUSIONS

Ethiopia has recognized the importance of gender integration within its environmental policies; however, the actualization of gender mainstreaming in Addis Ababa's environmental sector faces significant hurdles. Persistent systemic obstacles, entrenched cultural norms, and unequal access to resources hinder the operationalization of gender-sensitive approaches. Although gender focal points and specialists have been appointed in environmental entities, there remains an urgent need for enhanced resources, improved data acquisition, and augmented inter-institutional cooperation to address the enduring gender imbalances, notably at higher echelons of leadership. To advance, Addis Ababa's environmental institutions must implement a cohesive and comprehensive strategy that seamlessly incorporates gender perspectives into every aspect of environmental policy development, program execution, and decision-making processes. Such a strategy should prioritize the strengthening of policy enforcement mechanisms, the challenging and reshaping of cultural norms, and the cultivation of supportive work environments that encourage female empowerment and celebrate diversity. The initiation of mentorship schemes, leadership training, and programs aimed at dispelling gender stereotypes is essential to nurturing female leadership within the environmental domain. Furthermore, inter-agency collaboration, along with partnerships with civil society and other pertinent entities, is crucial to build alliances and promote the gender equality agenda within environmental management. The adoption of gender-responsive fiscal practices, including the allocation of funds for gender-focused activities and equitable resource distribution, should be expanded. Capacity-building endeavors are essential to equip personnel, especially women, with the gender-specific competencies that are currently deficient. Addressing institutional impediments such as resistance to change and the absence of gender-aware procedures necessitates thorough organizational reforms and robust accountability frameworks. Engaging all stakeholders, particularly women, in participatory decision-making and backing educational platforms will enhance female involvement and ascendancy in environmental education and capacity-building initiatives. Prioritizing gender equality in environmental governance is not merely a quest for social equity; it is a strategic imperative to unleash the full capabilities of women as vital agents of sustainable development in Addis Ababa. It is through these collective actions and cooperative initiatives that we can aspire to realize a more balanced and sustainable future for all.

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