



EnGenDER

Enabling Gender-Responsive Disaster Recovery,
Climate and Environmental Resilience in the Caribbean



DOMINICA



Policy Brief

Gender Inequality of Climate Change and Disaster Risk in Dominica

November 2021





Isiuwa Iyehen, UN Women Programme Specialist – Economic Empowerment and Statistics, surveys damage in Dominica alongside a local woman farmer post-Hurricane Maria in 2017.

Source: UN Women Photo/Sheldon Casimir

BACKGROUND

The Enabling Gender-Responsive Disaster Recovery, Climate and Environmental Resilience in the Caribbean (EnGenDER) Project is funded by Global Affairs Canada and the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, which is led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and jointly implemented by UN Women, World Food Programme (WFP) and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA). The aim of the project is to identify and address any gaps to ensure

equal access to disaster risk resilience, climate change and environment solutions for

women, men, boys and girls in nine beneficiary Caribbean

countries including Dominica. The **five priority sectors** selected by

the National Decision-Making Mechanism for Dominica for EnGenDER

are **agriculture and fisheries, health, social protection, employment, and resilient infrastructure and housing**.

In December 2020, the UN Women Multi-Country Office (MCO) Caribbean completed a review of the Gender Inequality and Differential Impact of Climate Change and Disaster Risk and Cost of Inaction for Dominica. This study focused on the gender-responsiveness of climate change policies and strategies and incorporated a mapping of the coping adaptive capacities for key vulnerable groups through stakeholder consultation.

The MCO, in collaboration with the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) also completed a gender-responsive resilience-building Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices and Behaviours (KAPB) Study in July 2021. The study provided a better understanding of any institutional gender biases that are not captured in policy documents, which can influence the ways in which gender is mainstreamed in their work.

Results from both studies confirm that natural hazards and climate change impact men and women differently for a host of factors, which include their different roles and individual and family responsibilities, and policy development and service delivery by mandating bodies.



VULNERABILITY: A GENDER LENS

Studies have revealed that in Dominica, there are poorly designed, vulnerable and aging public infrastructure, particularly in sectors such as health, education, water and roads (Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica, 2017; DIPECHO, 2014). Indeed, the most proximate data that can be found are disaster event-related and cover lack of access to services, displaced persons such as persons in shelters, and losses due to disaster risk by gender and/or vulnerable groups.



The key climate hazards affecting Dominica are:

1. Increasing frequency and intensity of storms including hurricanes



2. Flooding and flash flooding



3. Landslides



4. Coastal erosion (Table 1)



Farmers are usually over 40 years old, and there is a gendered division of labour: **85%** of skilled agricultural and fishery workers are male and **15%** are female (Ramjattan, 2013). Women have traditionally played a role in agriculture, but their role is less visible in fisheries. Over the past ten years, as many as 20 percent of subsistence farmers in Dominica were women, i.e. nearly 2,000 farmers (Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica, 1995).

Despite declining numbers, women continue to play an important role in some areas of the sector. For example, village



Women farmers in Dominica.

Source: UN Women Photo/Sharon Carter-Burke

women are engaged in growing most of the food staples (sweet potato, yam, cassava, dasheen) as well as vegetables, herbs and spices. Although today, the percentage of women's participation has hardly changed (20.1% of the agricultural sector compared to 79.9% for men), the loss of income from the COVID-19 pandemic has been particularly challenging for women, who had just begun to recover their financial stability after the loss and damages from Hurricane Maria in 2017 (ReliefWeb, 2020).



Moreover, **women often dominate the informal economy** in Dominica. As informal distributors, women are usually connected to the agricultural sector as street and market vendors, commonly referred to as 'hucksters' in the inter-island trade in agricultural produce and other commodities, as well as vendors at tourism sites. Despite this contribution, as well as women's increased educational attainment, women experience unequal access to credit for agriculture and enterprise development through the mainstream banks, such as the Dominica Agricultural Industrial & Development Bank (Dominica AID Bank). However, there are instances where women access credit through micro- and small enterprise 'windows' such as at the National Development Foundation of Dominica (NDFD) and related credit unions.



After Tropical Storm Erika in 2015, for example, around 40% of informal economic activities were disrupted, affecting 55% of the women engaged in such activities (Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica, 2015). Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also reported that government resettlement policies were not gender-sensitive, putting single women with children at a greater economic disadvantage (US State Department, 2016). Critically, the documented impacts on critical services in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, two years after Tropical Storm Erika, also impacted on employment and access to employment, including temporary employment.



The Kalinago, an indigenous people of the Lesser Antilles in the Caribbean, continue to face stigma and discrimination in a structural sovereignty-related context such as being subject to intense scrutiny when they aim to invest in areas such as agriculture. This scenario needs to be further understood. Little adjustment has been made to provide options for the common land ownership context of the Kalinago and new or alternative forms of collateral.



The level of participation **in the employment sector** was and continues to favour men over women, even youth. Nevertheless, women are well represented in the business sector although they still face financial challenges, including at the highest level of decision-makers, and the power brokers seem are still male. Young men and women face different challenges, particularly driven by age and education, but innovation and the rise of information and communication technologies (ICT) provide opportunities for both.





Women have a lower rate of formal employment (**42.2%**) than men (**57.8%**), are more likely to work for no or lower wages; the largest gaps are between skilled agricultural and fishery workers, and workers in crafts and related trade (Baksh, 2014). Women are over-represented in service sector jobs (both government and commercial), which, in times of financial and environmental crises, have often been the most at risk. Recent data gathered from the 2017 Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PNDA) exposes a rate of female unemployment slightly higher than that of male unemployment, although there are more men than women in the formal labour force. This may be attributed to the fact that there are less women than men accounted in the formal economy, and therefore less women included in unemployment statistics.

The status of female and male PWDs in Dominica highlights structural challenges in finding employment and also in accessing services. Estimated at **5.2%** of the population, PWDs represent **51%** of the population who are without any educational qualifications (Caribbean Development Bank, 2014). **Female PWDs are less likely to be employed** than male PWDs. And this intensifies in a post-disaster context and in the face of climate risk.



There is a legal mandate preventing discrimination in employment on the basis of gender; however, there is no legal requirement for equal pay for equal work (World Bank, 2021). It should be highlighted that the **National Gender Policy and Action Plan** recommends both a review of the Protection of Employment Act (Chapter 89:02) and the Labour Contracts Act (Chapter 89:04) regarding the rights of women and disabled workers; it has been confirmed that the female-dominated class of employees suffers the most from non-payment of social security contributions by employers and are the most vulnerable to abuses of employment (ILO, 2017).

Regarding the health sector, maternal and child health (MCH) remain a priority area for the health services. In July 2017, a pilot health insurance scheme for mothers and infants made prenatal and postnatal care more accessible and affordable for all Dominican mothers. However, over an extended period post-Hurricane Maria, primary health services were offered in buildings with only completed emergency repairs or in alternate premises. This lack of access to health services particularly affected women, the elderly, PWDs and women and girls in internally displaced people (IDPC) camps reported no access to health services (Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2020).





The elderly are a growing population (today, **14.8%**), which results in a greater demand for health services and quality care. The out-migration of young families often leaves them without their children's care, which also places further demands on the public health services.

Gender-based violence (GBV) also remains a significant threat, particularly intimate partner violence and child abuse. Administrative data indicate that **86.9%** of the victims of GBV are women; one in two of these women report sexual assault, and two in five report physical assault (OHCHR, 2019). Elderly women and female PWDs are also at increased risk as the crimes often go unreported. Police sensitivity remains a challenge, especially for GBV cases and even more so for those in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTQ+) community.



In the social protection sector, the most common vulnerabilities were old age, being from single-male or single-female-headed households and having a chronic illness.



Pregnant women, breastfeeding mothers, and women and girls with physical disabilities are also considered vulnerable. Social protection mechanisms have been deployed for income smoothing and other forms of de-risking and protection of households from additional risks. Given that **28.8%** of the population live below the poverty line, and women are more likely to be unwaged than men (Caribbean Development Bank, 2014), focus on gender-responsive social security, protection and safety nets, and child maintenance, etc. has been identified as critical. In the post-disaster context, other social protection issues emerge. Other vulnerable persons include those with limited options for a permanent return to their communities and livelihoods (IOM, 2018). In some instances, cash transfers have been integrated into

the social protection system in a post-disaster context (with shock-responsive measures) and even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The housing sector is regularly impacted by extreme events, and consequently, many public buildings including schools and churches tend to be used as temporary and long-term shelter for displaced families and individuals. Impacts on homes result in gender vulnerabilities; **56%** of the 1,862 people housed in 63 shelters post-Hurricane Maria were reported to have one or more vulnerabilities, such as being pregnant, breastfeeding, having a physical or cognitive disability or chronic illness, being elderly, or being a single head of household (IOM, 2018). In addition, **90%** of the Kalinago community's housing was destroyed, and people were less likely to access loans for reconstruction due to their lack of personal collateral due to communal land ownership (Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica, 2017).













A significant number of Dominica's important **infrastructure** is located along the coastline, close to the present sea level, which renders their infrastructure vulnerable to flooding and storms (UNDP, n.d.). Turbidity is another threat to Dominica's infrastructure in terms of water quality. Documented studies have also shown that many upland areas are prone to landslides during the wet season from June to October, creating challenges for downstream waterways. The dumping of solid and industrial wastes in rural communities (e.g. in Marigot, Castle Bruce, La Plaine) also contributes to the pollution of streams.

Overall, in Dominica, women are recognized in two ways: (i) as a vulnerable group that deserves to be considered a distinct group; and (ii) as beneficiaries who can and should benefit directly from policy interventions. Other groups are also reflected in the identification of national, sectoral and group-related priorities including youth, the elderly and PWDs.



Table 1:
Hazard impacts on priority sectors

Hazard	Agriculture			Infrastructure (water)		Other infrastructure	Housing	Health
	Crops	Livestock	Fisheries	Forestry	Infrastructure (supply)			
 Storms (increasing frequency and intensity)	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
 Flooding/flash flooding	X	X	X (Limited)	X	X	X	X	X
 Drought/water scarcity	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
 Landslides	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
 Coastal erosion	X							
 Earthquakes	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
 Volcanic eruptions (including ash dispersal)	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
 COVID-19 Biological hazards	X		X			X (especially demand for ICT)		X

Source: Caribbean Handbook on Risk Information (CHARIM) 2016.

GENDER AND AGE DIFFERENTIAL IMPACTS OF CLIMATE AND DISASTER RISKS

Tables 2 and 3 provide the likely hazard impact on vulnerable groups, taking into consideration the social and demographic trends in Dominica. Findings from specific PDNAs as well as social impact assessment data are also summarized in this section. It suggests several areas of acute vulnerability in the agriculture sector for both fishers and farmers, with water emerging also as a key driver of vulnerability and susceptibility. These areas coincidentally reflect similar types of considerations being explored in the Disaster Risk Reduction field of study (Kambon et al., 2016).



Table 2:
Gender assessment of risk arising from severe or repeated disaster impacts (X – acute, x – persistent)





Hazards	VULNERABLE GROUPS LIKELY TO BE IMPACTED									
	Women	Men	Children	Young Men	Young Women	Older Men	Older Women	PWDs	Kalinago	
Physical risks from long-term shelter stays e.g. sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)	x		x	X	x		x	x	x	
Psychosocial risks from long-term shelter stays – depression, lack of privacy	x	x	x	X	x	x		x	x	
Risks from school not being available			x	X	x			x	x	
Risks arising from damaged water infrastructure and having to rely on external sources of water – time use, physical stress, and physical security issues	x	x	x	X			x	x	x	
Risks from the lack of permanent shelter	x	x	x	X		x		x	x	

Hazards	VULNERABLE GROUPS LIKELY TO BE IMPACTED									
	Women	Men	Children	Young Men	Young Women	Older Men	Older Women	PWDs	Kalinago	
Delays of social security payments and income support	x					x	x	x	x	
Delays in programming that provide critical support			x	x		x	x		x	
Risk of permanent job or income loss, risk of need to retool	x	x		x	x				x	
Risk of human trafficking particularly through temporary migration	x		x	x	x				x	
Discrimination in access to opportunities	x			x				x	x	
Risk of increased care work	x			x					x (Women)	
Risk of erosion of adaptive capacity	x	x	x	x		x		x	x (alcohol dependency)	
Risk of physical injury	x	x	x	x		x		x	x	
Risk of the loss of assets	x	x		x		x				
Risk of the inability to repay loans	x	x				x			x	
Risk of loss of insurance	x	x				x				
Risk from lack of insurability	x (micro and small business and farmers)	x (particularly fishers)						x	x	
The exposure to acute and multiple forms of risk	x	x	x	x		x		x	x	

Source: CHARIM, 2016.

Table 3:
Likely hazard impact by vulnerable group

Hazard type	Vulnerable group							Possible impact(s) during preparation, response and recovery (using a Gender Needs Framework)	Findings/evidence related to the role played by intersectionalities of gender and race, ethnicity, livelihood, geography and class
	Women	Men	Children	Youth	Older Men	Older Women	Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)		
 Storms (increasing frequency and intensity)	X	X	Impact could not be determined	X	X	X	X	Affected by location, state of the home and physical vulnerability Reliance on farming and fisheries for income particularly from damaged infrastructure Affected by damage to road and irrigation infrastructure Damage to fishing vessels and the lack of available insurance	Yes – for some communities such as Dubique/Stowe, Layou, Good Hope Some specific impacts on the Kalinago community due to storms
 Flooding/Flash flooding	X	X	(particularly school infra-structure and transport)	X	X	X	X	Reliance on livelihoods such as farming, fisheries for income Effects on forest roads and the loss of land (e.g. TS Erika) Topography creates a knock-on between flooding and landslides Also resulted in new dams or mini lakes in some cases	Analysis for specific events such as TS Erika and Hurricane Maria show an impact on poor households, on specific parishes and on specific income classes particularly via reliance on social protection measures

Hazard type	Vulnerable group								Possible impact(s) during preparation, response and recovery (Using a Gender Needs Framework)	Findings/evidence related to the role played by intersectionalities of gender and race, ethnicity, livelihood, geography and class
	Women	Men	Children	Youth	Older Men	Older Women	Persons with Disabilities (PWDs)			
 <p>Drought/water scarcity</p>	X	X		X					Through dependency on rain-fed agricultural activity, collection and storage of water	Widespread across the farming community but may be more acute in some areas vs others Some effects on Kalinago due to loss of material for basket-weaving
 <p>Landslides</p>	X	X	X (schools and homes)	X	X	X	X		Housing, physical access and mobility, access to transportation, access to work, access to water supply	Often widespread across the country – several events have seen this scale of event
 <p>Extreme heat/heatwaves</p>	X (farmers particularly of herbs and some vegetables)	X (Fishers and fish vendors)							Effects on labour and working conditions for fish and produce vendors Increased demand for ice and cold storage for fish and produce Health impacts for those suffering from non-communicable diseases	Specific to farming and fishing livelihoods, but also likely effects on other areas
 <p>COVID-19 biological hazards</p>	X (particularly rural women)	X							Affected by age, type of employment (impact on time for livelihood activities for both fishers and farmers), pre-existing health conditions, reliance on tourism related income or involvement in tourism sector	Gender, age, geography, income source and class

Female farmers and women's access to water for example, can be directly related to a number of security related issues for those who may have to travel from remote and non-populated areas at early mornings in anticipation of household needs. The physical strain and potential for injury posed by carrying heavy buckets by hand and single-handedly potentially over rough and unstable terrain (given the topography of some communities in Dominica) also highlight key concerns as it relates to gendered impacts on climate and disaster risk.



Moreover, the effects due to the loss of access or declining quality of services can have cascading consequences at the household and community levels, particularly when the woman in the household is also involved in farming and or fisheries. This scenario can also affect income, which by extension impacts the ability to conduct emergency/recovery repairs. In fact, COVID-19 exposed other vulnerabilities (World Food Programme, 2020) including mobility challenges, price volatility, livelihood fragility and income stream vulnerabilities. Although Dominica generally experienced a relatively mild COVID-19 pandemic in terms of number of persons contracting the virus, the restricted movement as a public health measure, impacted the economy, especially the tourism sector.



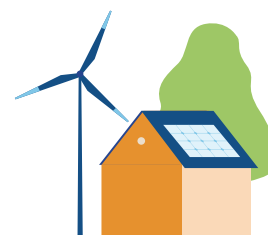
THE COST OF INACTION

Action on climate change in Dominica focuses mostly on adaptation, with limited attention to mitigation. This is due to the context of the main observed effects or patterns where adaptation provides the most likely source of support and positive change to risk and exposure at the national and local level. Current actions reviewed, in this report, are largely those that:

**1. Reduce vulnerability
(at various levels)**

**2. Build resilience
(e.g., water systems,
individual, household
and community)**

**3. Enhance adaptive capacity
(particularly at the individual
and community level – both
socially and ecologically)**



The Quantitative Review of Cost of Inaction

The estimated climate impact as a percent of Dominica's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 2025-2100 is provided in Table 4.

Table 4:
Estimated climate change impact on GDP

Country	ESTIMATED IMPACT AS A PERCENT OF GDP BY SPECIFIC YEARS			
	2025	2050	2075	2100
Direct Materials Intake (DMI)	6.3%	34.3%	54.4%	77.3%

Source: Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica, 2020.

This implies significant economic haemorrhaging and even greater effects on some sectors than others, particularly those reliant on certain levels of recurrent finance for continued operation. These costs are amongst the highest in the Caribbean as a whole, only exceeded by Haiti, Grenada, and St. Kitts and Nevis (Government of the Commonwealth of Dominica, 2020).

There are also costs related to the lack of collection of monies due by the government with potential knock-on effects on recurrent investments in climate action. It has been reported that in 2012 around USD3.4 million was owed to the State for lands allocated and occupied (FAO, 2013).

The Qualitative Review of Cost of Inaction

To date there is no evidence that the overall response and investment in climate and disaster risk, matches or responds to the price tag of climate change for Dominica. Existing national and sectoral adaptation planning instruments do not consistently connect gender, livelihoods, rights and governance in either strategic or practical ways for vulnerable groups to benefit. The reality is that Dominica cannot afford to pay for or replace damaged structures or systems further increasing the country's vulnerability. Therefore, there will be a consistent gap between the assessment of loss and damage and the available resources to respond.



ADAPTIVE COPING MECHANISMS



40 stakeholders were consulted using: i) key informant interviews, (ii) group interviews e.g. Ministerial stakeholders or sectoral stakeholders such as banking and insurance and (iii) focus group discussions (FGDs) with key vulnerable groups.

The most common form of adaptive capacity amongst stakeholders was Flexibility. Flexibility, however, is a double-edged sword. The same flexibility that allows persons to engage in various forms of income-generation and employment, serves as hindrance to access to stimulus, access to finance and insurance which often relies on “job letters” i.e. full time formal employment and other opportunities.



There was also evidence of a disconnect between several programmes to mitigate disaster risk. Women farmers highlighted issues that are not always incorporated in national or sectoral plans and policies, such as **the** lack of available farm labour, drought (e.g. 2020), ongoing recovery from previous impacts, praedial larceny and the inability to invest in adaptation measures even in a limited way.

Issues regarding women’s voice and influence were also raised by various key informants including the diminished role of the Women’s movement. At the same time there are those who express concern about the lack of attention, inclusion and prioritization of men. Of 41 Village Councils, only 12 are chaired by women and across these, 155 members are female compared to 172 male members (estimated).

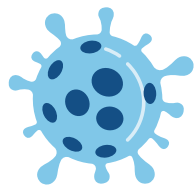


Overall, the findings from the FGDs suggest:



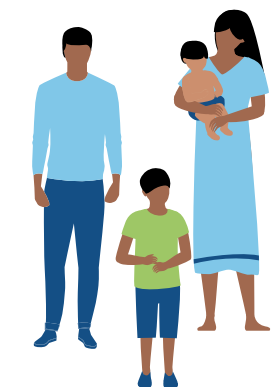
1. Most vulnerable groups including fishers, PWDs, youth and farmers practice a lot of self-reliance; fishers in particular rely on themselves, savings, and loans to navigate impacts and risks from disaster, climate or the environment.


2. COVID-19 forced some adaptation and opportunities for growth by farmers including online marketing and customer engagement.



3. The Kalinago community seemed, theoretically, to benefit in more ways from public support and programmes including programming leveraged by non-governmental actors. Still, they faced enormous barriers to adaptive capacity including the lack of individual access to land.

4. Key informants noted the changing face of farming, particularly in the market, from Dominican to Haitian. A significant number of Haitian women are visible as they vend in the key market areas of Roseau and Portsmouth as well as do road-side vending.





5. Under-insurance was and remains a significant issue for households and was a major issue in the aftermath of Hurricane Maria. This emerged as a form of coping that needs to be given more consideration and analysed further.

6. Remittances is a frequent coping mechanism with some of the main sources coming from Antigua and Barbuda, Sint Maarten and the United Kingdom.



THE KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, PRACTICES AND BEHAVIOUR STUDY

There is an assumption that individual knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours can influence institutional practices (and vice versa), while policies create the environment in which individual and institutions operate.

In addition to a policy institutional mapping which identified the key policies and institutions (in the priority sectors) related to gender, climate change, DRR, a survey including stakeholder consultation was done for Dominica. Findings revealed that while women and men have equal rights in the workplace, there were a few areas for strengthening gender resilience.

Respondents to the survey indicated the following:



At the individual level



Although individuals perceive themselves as 'gender champions', there are knowledge gaps with respect to understanding gender and its concepts.



Women are more vulnerable than men to climate change and disasters, therefore opportunities for strengthening resilience must take the varying risks into consideration.



Aspects of bias in gender attitudes. For example, some respondents believe that women should prioritize their family, regardless of the impact on their career. Survey respondents also believed that women were better at planning and multi-tasking than men. Survey results also revealed that there was a general consensus that it was more important for a man to obtain a university degree and work outside the home than for a woman.

At the institutional level



While there are in place gender strategies and action plans, there is evidence of limited awareness of the importance of gender considerations in the institution's work.



The lack of mandate and disaggregated data are the main barriers to gender being incorporated at the institutional level.

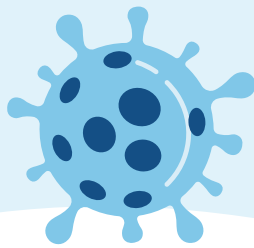


Staff from the Bureau of Gender Affairs (BGA) in Dominica receive 500 cloth masks produced by Ms. Elizabeth Xavier, a local woman tailor under the EnGENDER Project in response to COVID-19.

Source: BGA Dominica, 2021

RECOMMENDATIONS

A 'one-size fits all approach' to adaptive capacity and resilience is not viable in Dominica due to many nuances including highly localized challenges. While Dominica has clearly made some significant strides in its approach to risk and resilience including the mainstreaming of gender, there are still limitations on how gender is considered. To address gaps and new insights revealed by this assessment, the following recommendations are made:



To enhance flexibility, particularly for informal businesses and the informally employed, digital access to finance needs to be improved. Additionally, expanded investments in re-tooling and reskilling that would mitigate the drawn-out effects of COVID-19 and future hazard impacts.



Prioritize new investments in gender data collection as well as research in collecting data across events, groups and sectors.



There should be greater consideration of guarantees or other de-risking mechanisms that could allow the banking and insurance sector to play a more active role in resilience building. Adaptation of policy, strategy and instruments is critical in the public and private sector.



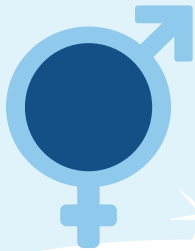
The creation of a national farmers organization with the aim to raise the voices and specific needs of women farmers and some of the inherent risks in farming that require a response.



The need to address psychosocial support after large extensive events or after smaller intense events, specifically including for those farmers who are women, single heads of households and with a high number of dependents.



Social protection instruments for women entrepreneurs operating in the informal economy, particularly microentrepreneurs running small service businesses, e.g. hairdressers, fishery sector workers and market stall vendors.



Efforts by the Dominica Agricultural Industrial and Development Bank (AID Bank) can be more gender-sensitive in its programming, with gender-sensitive instruments encouraged and expanded to other financial institutions via specialized support by UN Women and others.

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