

## Water, Climate and Natural Resource Policies

Of the 8 water, climate, and natural resource policies assessed for this brief, 2 policies were found to have successfully mainstreamed gender: the National Policy of Water (shown in Table I as Politique nationale de l'eau) and the National Action Plan for Integrated Water Resources Management Phase I & 2. Both of these policies integrate gender throughout and recognize the need to consider women's specific needs when it comes to water security. They identify the causes of gender-based inequalities as they relate to climate change impacts and use these inequalities as an opportunity for designing adaptive measures. Unfortunately, these policies are not gender transformative as they do not address the underlying norms that perpetuate gender inequality.

The remaining water, climate, and natural resource policies are gender blind or gender neutral at best. This means that, by not considering gender as a factor, these policies can be detrimental to the push for women's equality. Even though these policies emphasise the importance of water security and climate resilience, they contain no strategies for integrating gender into their activities. There are no gender implementation plans, no indicators and gender-disaggregated data, and the policies do not consider gender-harmful practices that promote inequalities.

## Obstacles to Gender Equality

- Insufficient capacity, knowledge and skills on gender transformational approaches
- Weak intersectoral synergy and absence of partnerships between the Ministry of Social Affairs and Microfinance and other sectoral ministries within the country (specifically the Ministry of Water and Mines, and the Ministry of Living Environment and Sustainable Development) for the promotion of gender transformational practices at various levels
- Lack of enforcement of gender mandate given to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Microfinance
- Low gender integration into sectoral policies
- Lack of evidence based upon gender analysis and gender-disaggregated data

## Recommendations: The Case for a Transformative Approach

Gender inequality is a cause for concern, not only in the water and climate sectors, but in society as a whole. Unfortunately, many relevant policies in Benin have not attempted to integrate gender. Conversely, policies that do integrate gender oftentimes do it in a tokenistic way that results in a surface-level treatment of gender without detailing the pathway to change.

Specifically, in order to strengthen gender-relevant policies in Benin, policy makers should

- Establish a national gender institution (e.g. a national agency) with a mandate to hold other ministries accountable for gender mainstreaming and transformation.
- Facilitate linkages and synergy between the Ministry of Social Affairs and Microfinance, and other sectoral ministries working on issues related to water security and/or climate change.
- Revise existing water and climate change policies to include gender-transformative approaches that not only acknowledge systematic inequalities between men and women but also address the root causes of the inequalities.
- Formulate new policies across government that are gender transformative.
- Strengthen the technical capacities (tools) of gender, water and climate change institutions to mainstream transformational gender in planning, programming and budgeting.
- Strengthen the technical capacities on gender analysis of planners, Cells on Environment and Gender of the Ministries and practitioners at all levels by providing regular trainings on gender-transformative approaches to policy makers and other stakeholders in gender, water, and climate change sectors.
- Provide all ministries with adequate resources to implement gender transformative approaches.
- Create processes and strategies to reconcile national policies with local customs and traditions; and promote traditions that promote gender equality.
- Value and use the unique knowledge and skills of women and marginalised populations to ensure that responses to climate change are effective and sustainable for them.
- Recognize intersectionality and develop policies with strategies to strengthen the resilience of marginalised communities.
- Facilitate synergy between local customs and traditional leaders and development professionals at the intersection of gender, water, and climate resilience through multi-stakeholder platforms.

Partenariat Régional de l'Eau de l'Afrique de l'Ouest  
(GWP-AO)

Secrétariat Exécutif :

Ouaga 2000, Av. Charles B. KABORE, Porte 1673  
05 BP 6552 Ouagadougou 05 • Tél. : +226 25 36 18 28 • 25 37 41 04  
E-mail : gwp.westafrica@gwpao.org



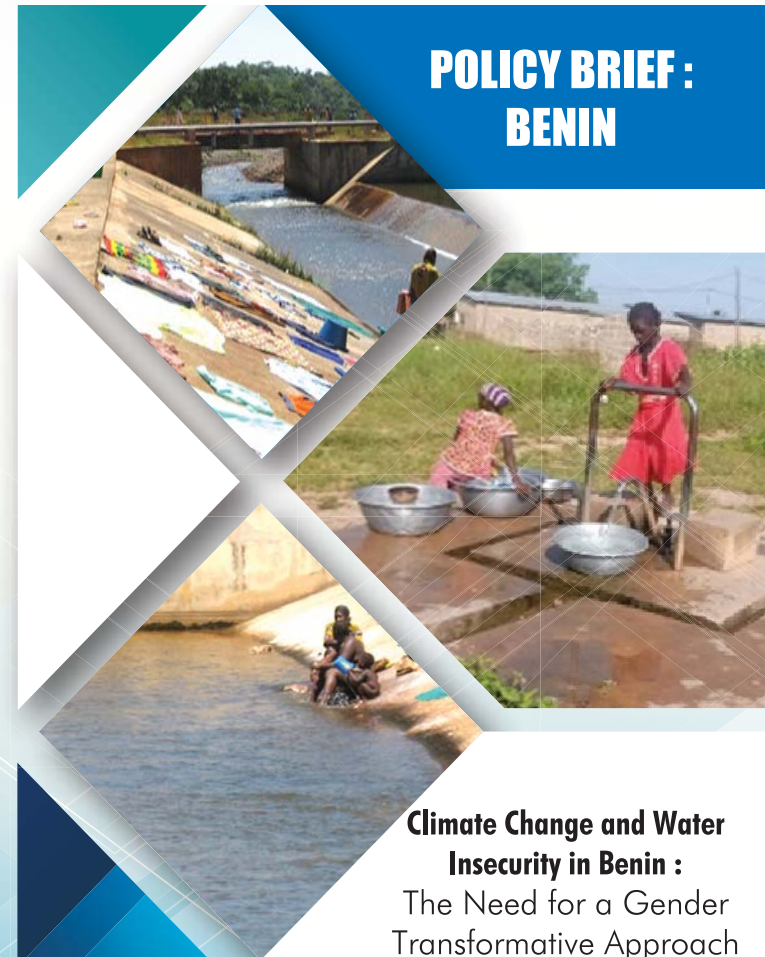
## Africa Water Investment Program (AIP)

### AFRICA WATER INVESTMENT SUPPORT PROGRAMME TO WATER, CLIMATE, DEVELOPMENT AND GENDER (WACDEP-G)

*Gender Equality and Climate Resilient Water  
Investment in Africa*

## AIP WACDEP-G

### POLICY BRIEF : BENIN



**Climate Change and Water  
Insecurity in Benin :  
The Need for a Gender  
Transformative Approach**



## Key Messages

- Current policies do not adequately address issues related to water security and climate resilience from a gender perspective.
- Failing to recognize or address the disproportionate impacts water and climate have on women limit efforts towards gender equality in Benin.
- Deeply embedded gender inequalities must be addressed by reviewing and amending policies through a gender transformative lens.
- Policy review processes should engage a wide range of stakeholders to be inclusive to ensure they are gender transformative.

**A gender transformative approach seeks to address the social norms, attitudes, behaviours, and social systems that underlie inequalities faced by marginalised groups, including women.**

While climate change and water insecurity are a concern for communities as a whole, particular aspects of the issue affect men and women differently. Understanding how these gender inequalities manifest in policy is crucial for decision makers and stakeholders. Policies are a key tool in a government's arsenal to signal national priorities and guide development projects. Thus, the exclusion of women and girls from policies or the failure to address their specific concerns has a significant impact on their daily lives.

Benin has moved towards becoming a more gender-equal society, but the majority of existing policies and strategies in the country, including water and climate policies, remain gender blind or gender neutral at best. The failure to incorporate gender into these policies, coupled with the general provisions of equality that have no concrete method of application, can halt efforts towards gender equality in the country. Consequently, examining and amending policies through a gender transformative approach is critical for ensuring equitable alleviation of the negative effects of climate change and water insecurity in Benin.

Twelve gender, development, water, and climate-related policies in Benin were assessed based on criteria for gender transformative approaches in policy.

## Approach: Are Policies Gender Transformative ?

Policy analysis was conducted to identify gender inequalities and power relations embedded in national and regional policies, with the goal of rectifying gender biases in existing and future policies. Results were derived through a three-stage feminist policy analysis of select water, climate, development and gender-related policies. In terms of content, gender transformative policies will

- explore issues facing women,
- include sex-disaggregated data consistently,
- consult women during policy development,
- aim to address specific needs and interests of women, and
- comply with relevant international conventions.

Gender transformative policies will contain rigorous conclusions that include

- specific targets or commitments to strengthen gender equality
- gender-specific indicators
- responsibility and accountability for implementation and monitoring
- specific steps towards implementation

Figure 1 presents the categorisation and gender-related characteristics from the policy analysis. The criteria used to assess these policies, as well as the full review, can be found in the Gender analysis report: Benin, submitted by Includovate in November 2020.

**Table 1. Categorisation of policies along the gender continuum**

Category	Characteristics	Categorisation of policies analysed from Benin
Gender transformative	Addresses underlying causes of gender-based inequalities; transforms harmful gender norms, roles, relationships	No policies qualified for this category
Gender mainstreaming	Includes gendered statements throughout the programme; but no focus on gender norms or harmful practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Politique nationale de promotion du genre au Bénin. République du Bénin. Programme et plan d'action pour la mise en œuvre de la politique nationale de promotion du genre au Bénin 2010-2015. République du Bénin.</li> </ul>
Partial gender mainstreaming	Efforts are made to include women as beneficiaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Document portant textes et conventions nationaux et internationaux relatifs à la femme, Ministère des affaires sociales et de la microfinance.</li> </ul>
Gender aware	Acknowledges gender differences but does not address gender inequalities	No policies qualified for this category
Gender neutral	Vague, erratic, or minimal effort made to address gender inequalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme d'Action du Gouvernement 2016-2021</li> <li>• Plan National de Développement 2018-2025.</li> <li>• Politique nationale de l'eau</li> <li>• Plan d'Action national de gestion intégrée des ressources en Eau, phase I &amp; 2.</li> <li>• Stratégie de développement à faible intensité de carbone et résilient aux changements climatiques du Bénin 2016 – 2025</li> <li>• Plan d'action 2019-2023 pour la mise en place du cadre national pour les services climatologiques (CNSC) du Bénin</li> <li>• Loi sur les changements climatiques en République du Bénin</li> <li>• Contributions déterminées au niveau national (CDN)</li> </ul>
Gender blind	No attempt to address gender inequalities; may perpetuate gender inequalities or make them worse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loi portant gestion de l'eau en République du Bénin</li> <li>• Politique nationale de gestion des changements climatiques (PNGCC 2021-2030)</li> </ul>

## First Things First: Legislating Gender Equality

National gender policies represent a government's understanding of the social, political, and economic inequalities facing women and signal national priorities in efforts to alleviate these inequalities. The National Gender Promotion Policy (NGPP, translated from Politique nationale de promotion du genre au Bénin) is the leading document promoting gender equality in Benin. The NGPP aims to (i) promote the education and training of women, (ii) value women's work, (iii) promote cultures and traditions that allow women to flourish, and (iv) economically empower women. While the NGPP acknowledges gender norms and considers women's and men's specific needs, it fails to address the underlying causes of gender inequality or transform the harmful gender norms, roles, and relationships that make it hard to achieve full gender equality.

Additional efforts have been made to ratify various international and regional conventions relating to women's rights. However, the promotion of gender equality through legal and institutional frameworks has been limited because no direct action has been taken to identify and address harmful gender norms and practices that perpetuate gender inequality.

## National Development Policies

National development policies in Benin are similar to the gender policies presented in Table 1 in terms of gender equality. The Government Action Programme 2016-2021 successfully mainstreams gender by focusing on three pillars: promoting good governance; initiating the structural transformation of the economy; and improving the living conditions of the population. It also acknowledges that development issues are experienced differently by people of different regions, generations, age groups, and genders but without giving any gender-disaggregated data. The gender gaps and inequalities mentioned in the Government Action Programme are not specific and do not detail how the gender inequalities will be addressed. The strategy framework recognises that in order to address gender gaps there is a need to focus on social inclusion and the empowerment of women as a solution. There is little effort to develop a specific strategy framework to address inequalities and harmful practices. The National Development Plan 2018-2025 (seen above as Plan National de Développement 2018-2025) focuses on four important themes: (i) economic growth and structural transformation; (ii) reducing inequalities and improving social inclusion; (iii) environmental sustainability; and (iv) effective and inclusive governance in order to reduce the inequalities in the country. Despite the breadth of the National Development Plan, gender is mentioned in passing and never integrated into these focus areas.