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Synergies between gender equality and climate action

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Comments paper – Malta



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Gendered Policies for Climate Action

Rose Marie Azzopardi

University of Malta

Abstract

A gendered perspective of climate action has not dominated Maltese discourse, possibly because there are other priorities in the gender equality agenda which are considered as more urgent and topical. From a gender analysis, attention is more likely to fall on domestic violence, femicide, women in decision-making positions, family-work balance, and women's rights. Whilst the situation of climate change has had an impact on differences in temperatures, thus creating changes to agricultural produce, their pricing policies, and the cost of energy to cool and heat homes, the discourse has not yet turned to how these may be affecting women and men differently. The number of single mothers has increased, the number of female pensioners is higher than men, women are more likely to be at risk of poverty, and the gender pay gap and the gender pension gap remain; these are all known facts, but to equate these with the impact of climate change has not made any impression on the discussion surrounding gender equality. Gender-disaggregated data, to support such claims as to the impact of climate change on gender equality, are not officially available.

1. Country Context: Data and Information

1.1 Data Issues

Data offers the researcher or policy maker the evidence of how a situation is on the ground. However, one of the biggest issues surrounding gender equality is often the lack of gender-disaggregated data. One can find the basics such as data for the population, the labour force, health, and education. However, detailed data on specific topics are more difficult to find.

The National Statistics Office of Malta collects data on women in the labour market but does not have gender-disaggregated data on the labour force in the just green transition sectors. What constitutes a green job is the first problem. According to the ILO, green jobs are “decent jobs in any economic sector (e.g., agriculture, industry, services, administration) which contribute to preserving, restoring, and enhancing environmental quality”. Many of these relatively new types of jobs do not fit nicely into a [NACE code](#) and thus are more problematic to calculate. However, data for women in green jobs was provided by the Ministry of the Environment, Energy and Regeneration (MEER), with the data being based on a survey conducted with companies with at least one environmental activity. The companies were asked to provide the number of workers engaged in eco-activities, categorised by sex, age

group, educational attainment, occupation, and income bracket. For this commissioned study green jobs were defined as jobs in businesses that produce goods and provide services which benefit the environment or conserve natural resources. Categories of green jobs as derived from the company questionnaires are provided in Appendix 1. The data on the number of persons in green jobs (taken as an average between 2017-19) are provided in Table 1.

Table 1- Green Jobs by Sex and Economic Activity

Economic Activity	Males	Females	Total
	No	No	No
Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing	136	-	136
Mining and Quarrying	29	-	29
Manufacturing	1,512	746	2,258
Electricity, Gas, Steam and Air Conditioning Supply	15	3	18
Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management and Remediation Activities	639	57	696
Construction	713	103	816
Wholesale and Retail Trade; Repair of Motor Vehicles and Motorcycles	706	145	851
Transportation and Storage	343	94	436
Accommodation and Food Service Activities	434	184	619
Information and Communication	42	8	49
Professional, Scientific and Technical Activities	285	172	457
Administrative and Support Service Activities	425	141	566
Other Service Activities	243	62	305
Total	5,521	1,714	7,235

Source: Data based on company questionnaires commissioned by MEER for 2017-2019.

The data show that there are no women engaged in green jobs in Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, or Mining and Quarrying. However, the number of women in Manufacturing is noteworthy, amounting to one third of the sector's green jobs. The figures show that women in green jobs are 23.7% of total green jobs identified through this study. Appendix 2 provides five additional tables (Tables A to E) showing the number of green jobs by, sex, company size, age-groups, educational attainment, occupation, and income bracket. The green jobs study is expected to be updated with data for 2020-2022 (MEER 2024, personal communication).

In terms of women in green decision-making positions, the Minister for the Environment, Energy and Regeneration, is a female. She is also an advocate for gender equality, trying to encourage more females into politics through the programme LEAD. In 2024, the Head Office of the Ministry has a gender-balanced staff complement, (64 females and 64 males). In the higher management tier, (from Assistant Director and above) there are 33 high-ranking officials, 14 of which are female. An analysis of the eight departments and three agencies under this Ministry indicate that all Chairs and/or CEOs are however male. In some cases, the entity's website does not offer any information on the structure or composition of the boards. Additionally, there are twelve officially appointed bodies but there is limited information about the decision-making structure. Of the latter, there are two entities whose Chairs are women. Most entities have at least one female on the board of

directors/governors. Considering how important these government entities are in terms of green decision-making capacity, the presence of women remains limited. EIGE presents data on green decision-making for 2022: on the one hand, the share of women as senior administrators in national ministries dealing with environment and climate change was 38%, compared to an average of 44% for the EU; and on the other hand, the share of women as members of parliamentary committees dealing with the environment and climate change was 40%, compared to a lower 30% average for the EU (EIGE, 2024).

Table 2 - STEM Graduates from the University of Malta, 2022/23.

Faculty, Institute, Centre	Females	Males	Total
<i>Undergraduates</i>	(365)	(347)	(712)
Built Environment	69	81	150
Dental	12	1	13
Engineering	20	40	60
Health Sciences	159	50	209
ICT	21	90	111
Medicine	28	17	45
Science	41	38	79
Aerospace Technology	0	1	1
Earth Sciences	15	19	34
<i>Postgraduates</i>	(266)	(245)	(511)
Built Environment	26	35	61
Dental	1	1	2
Engineering	6	21	27
Health	62	22	84
ICT	14	50	64
Medicine	129	70	199
Science	12	13	25
Climate Change and Sust. Dev.	2	1	3
Digital Games	4	6	10
Earth Sciences	4	8	12
Sustainable Energy	2	4	6
Space Science and Astronomy	0	3	3
Biomedical Cybernetics	0	1	1
DLT	3	7	10
Molecular Medicine & Biobanking	1	3	4
TOTAL STEM GRADUATES	631	592	1223

Source: University of Malta 2024.

The number of women who graduated from STEM disciplines (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) in 2023 from the University of Malta (the main University in Malta) amounted to 631, out of a total of 1223 STEM graduates, which is slightly higher than half. Table 2 presents data for the academic year 2022/23. Malta has made strides in increasing the participation of women in STEM jobs. Females accounted for 35.9% of the science and technology jobs. According to Eurostat data,

there were almost 96,000 persons working in science and technology, of which almost 44,000 were females.

Women who may be considered as being impacted by climate change due to additional financial needs include those women who are already either at risk of poverty or suffering due to their status, such as single mothers and ageing women. For example, the number of lone mothers increased from 6,027 in 2011 to 14,491 in 2021 (NSO, 2023).

Women tend to have longer lifespans than men and thus their savings are needed for a longer period. This needs to be understood within the context of a gender pay gap (which stood at 10.5 in 2021), which means that over a working lifetime, women will earn less and thus have less savings. This problem is further accentuated by the fact that the gender pension gap (based on less working hours, less national insurance contributions, lower pay scales, less top positions and thus less income over the working lifespan) is much higher than the gender pay gap. In 2002, the gender pension gap stood at a high 41.8. This implies that as women have a longer lifespan, the need to spread out savings gets thinner with the possibility of being unable to handle costs of heating and cooling brought about by climate change and extreme weather.

1.2 Minimal Information

The only government entity which has published information regarding gender equality and climate change is the Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE). Issue 15 of its Equality Matters newsletter, published in 2022, provides information regarding how climate change can impact women more than men. The editor's opening paragraph admits that 'although not initially evident, gender inequality and the climate crisis are one of today's greatest challenges' (NCPE, 2022, p.1). The newsletter acts as a leaflet defining climate change, and explaining how it effects women and men differently. It states that economic disparities create problems in mitigating climate change and thus exacerbate those very disparities. The gender pay gap, the onus of caring for the family (which often leads to reduced working hours, career gaps, parental leave, the request for flexible working schedules, thus leading to missed promotion opportunities) the fewer women in decision-making positions, the gender pension gap, and other limiting factors, result in women having less income and assets during their working life. The increase in single mother households and older women who have a longer lifespan, signify that women tend to have less resources to mitigate climate change, whether this means installing equipment to lower the cost of heating/cooling (such as double glazed windows or insulation) and the capacity to buy more healthy food (climate change is affecting the price of agricultural goods due to extreme temperatures, drought, erratic weather conditions, etc, making fresh produce more expensive). The newsletter states that climate change impacts men's and women's health differently not only due to biology but also for social reasons, with studies showing that women are more effected by heatwaves. Women and men have diverse consumption patterns and the information on the leaflet seems to suggest that women are more careful about their carbon footprint and

thus make different consumption decisions than do men, therefore, being more effected by climate change and its consequences. EIGE data confirms this assertion.

The leaflet includes five specific impacts on women, including: more gender-based violence (because 80% of persons who are displaced by climate change are women putting them at greater risk); increase in child marriages (when poor families face increased poverty due to weather extremes); increase in stillbirths (due to extreme heat); worsening of maternal and neonatal outcomes (high temperatures are lengthening seasons and encouraging more vector-borne illnesses such as malaria); and disrupt sexual and reproductive life and limit access to contraceptives (natural disasters increase attention on other emergencies, such as for example with Covid and after cyclones or earthquakes). Whilst studies sustain these arguments, many are not relevant in Malta's case. Such impacts of climate change are seen to be affecting countries far away from Malta's reality. This was also the general feel of the interviews conducted with representatives of women organisations and governmental entities. The main message was that there are more urgent and relevant areas to focus on to ensure greater gender equality.

2. Policy Debate

According to Special Eurobarometer survey 538 on climate change, conducted in 2023, 93% of those interviewed see climate change as a 'very serious problem', but its connection to gender equality is not evident in official policy papers or in policy debate (Eurobarometer 2023).

Malta's Draft National Energy and Climate Plan 2021-2030 (NECP) does not specifically refer to gender differences in terms of the impact of climate change. Women are only mentioned three times. The most relevant mention is that companies who reported on their ESG (environmental, social and governance) criteria on the Government portal on average 'registered an 8% decrease in carbon emissions, 9% decrease in waste generation and a 7% increase in women in management roles' (p. 191). The plan also mentions energy poverty and the Energy Efficiency Directive, Article 8(3), which refers to Member States achieving "an amount of energy savings equivalent to the share assessed in their NECP amongst any of the following cohorts: energy poor/vulnerable customers, low-income households and people living in social housing" (p. 42), but it does not focus on women as being among the energy poor or vulnerable. Malta is currently undertaking an exercise to devise a new indicator which mirrors Malta's specificities in relation to energy poverty and more details are to be provided in the final NECP, expected in mid-2024. In 2011, a female Ambassador for Climate Change was appointed.

The link between the impact of climate change and gender has not been discussed in relation to any specific policy, and no women organisations have taken this discussion on board or in a public manner. The Consultative Council for Women's Rights (CCWR), which was set up by government and has representatives from different women organisations, has not included the topic in its discussions. In

general, topics discussed by the CCWR relate to policies being debated by government or the public.

3. Good Practice Examples

As stated in the previous section, there is no specific policy which recognizes the effect of climate change from a gendered viewpoint and thus there are no policies which mitigate such impacts. However, women as part of a vulnerable group do have access to incentives linked to their electricity consumption. Vulnerable electricity consumers have access to certain energy benefits under the social policy framework, with such benefits being directly deducted from the consumer's electricity bill. Eligible consumers include 'low-income families, households on social assistance, persons receiving unemployment benefits, pensioners, or the disabled'. During 2021, 16,273 individuals were eligible and received these energy benefits (MEER 2023, p.136). Furthermore, those households that do not consume beyond a certain threshold, get an eco-reduction on their bill, with the poorer households more likely not to overstep the annual threshold. Such households can also make use of professional advice on energy efficiency behaviour. Finally, low-income households can make use of financial schemes which help them replace old or inefficient appliances. These schemes are in place because of collaboration between the Foundation for Social Welfare Services and the Energy and Water Agency (ibid., p.137). Those women forming part of these low-income households have access to assistance in various ways. These are measures which mitigate the effects of climate change in terms of energy poverty.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

This comments paper has shown that gender-disaggregated data on climate action is not readily available. Such data is needed to confirm the impact of climate change on women. Considering the wide range of data collected by national statistics offices, any new climate change related data would need to be accompanied by additional human and financial resources.

Educational and labour market experts have the duty to showcase the importance of the EU's twin transitions and the type of essential jobs these encompass. STEM subjects need to be encouraged as being the way forward, with an emphasis being on girls, who are normally deemed as less geared towards these fields. In recent years Malta has seen more women in STEM subjects and this augurs well. More focus on girls would lead to a more gender equal and diverse human resource.

The issue of climate change impacts all citizens and thus campaigns in how every individual can do her/his part in ensuring the ethical use of global resources would go a long way to changing attitudes and behaviour. Examples include, buying products which do less harm to the environment, the recycling of products, the elimination of the 'throw away' society which the Western world has developed into in recent decades, and the possible revival of trades which ensured that goods had a longer

timespan than modern goods seem to have, through mending rather than replacement encouragements.

More research is needed on the effects of climate change on females in the local context, which may be different from the impact climate change has on other geographical areas (as seen clearly in the NCPE's newsletter). Energy poverty is only one such issue which local policies have catered for, for the most vulnerable in society.

Malta has a female minister for the environment, with the portfolio including climate action. This sends a message that women are important in this domain. Nonetheless, women also need to be seen as CEO's or Chairs of governmental entities dealing with green issues. The gender equality junior minister is also a female and thus coordination between the two ministries would help to put more focus on the link between climate change and gender equality. This could be a good cooperative exercise in the development of gendered policies for climate action.

5. References

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6. Appendices

6.1 Appendix 1

Categories of green job activities identified via the company questionnaires as part of the commissioned study by the Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Regeneration (MEER) for the years 2017-2019. Provided for this project via personal communication by MEER.

Air pollution control - A range of measures for maintaining a level of air purity that is adequate for good public health; protection of plant and animal life; and for the preservation of good atmospheric visibility.

Wastewater management - The operation of wastewater collection systems and/or the treatment of collected wastewater in plants or filtration systems that render it fit to meet applicable environmental standards.

Solid waste management - Activities including operation of solid and liquid waste collection systems (e.g. fuels, oils and solvents); waste treatment by landfilling, composting and incineration; and waste brokerage activities (for exports).

Remediation and clean-up of soil and ground water - Measures taken to significantly reduce the level of harmful substances present in soil and groundwater to meet applicable environmental standards.

Noise and vibration control - Improvements applied to machinery, equipment, and engines for reducing the level of noise and/or vibrations which they generate; and steps taken to minimize noise and vibrations experienced in buildings and outdoor space.

Studies, consultancy, training, monitoring, and instrumentation - Activities which include data collection and analysis; and the drawing up of reports and studies having an environmental aspect.

Regulatory - Those activities carried out by or on behalf of public authorities for the safeguarding of environmental assets and for the implementation and enforcement of environmental legislation.

Water supply - Water production from groundwater and desalination plants, harvesting of rainwater, and the distribution of water from the point/s of production to the area/s of consumption.

Recycled materials - Pre-treatment (e.g. sorting, crushing, compacting, shredding, bailing) and recycling of waste materials comprising paper and cardboard, metals, glass, plastics, rubber, wood, and electronic equipment.

Nature protection - Activities or measures for safeguarding biodiversity and natural habitats, and for the ecological restoration or dilapidated land.

Renewable energy - The installation, operation, and maintenance of renewable energy systems operation by solar energy (PV systems and solar water heaters), wind energy (micro-turbines) and heat pump technology.

Other measures - E.g. the installation of electric vehicle charging points and logistic companies' operating a service with Electric Vehicles, energy efficiency related activities; or activities resulting in the decarbonization of the economy.

6.2 Appendix 2

Table A – Green Jobs by Sex and Company Size

Company size	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
	No.	No.	No.	%	%	%
0-9 (micro)	501	139	640	9.1	8.1	8.8
10-49 (small)	1,963	401	2,364	35.6	23.4	32.7
50-249 (medium)	1,429	631	2,060	25.9	36.8	28.5
250+ (large)	1,628	543	2,171	29.5	31.7	30.0
Total	5,521	1,714	7,235	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table B – Green Jobs by Sex and Age-Groups

Age Group	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
	No.	No.	No.	%	%	%
Under 25 years	364	275	639	6.6	16.0	8.8
25 to 49 years	4,268	1,296	5,564	77.3	75.6	76.9
50 years +	889	143	1,032	16.1	8.3	14.3
Total	5,521	1,714	7,235	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table C – Green Jobs by Sex and Educational Level

Educational Level	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
	No.	No.	No.	%	%	%
Primary	469	103	572	8.5	6.0	7.9
Secondary	2,960	1,036	3,996	53.6	60.4	55.2
Post-Sec/Non-Tertiary	1,074	321	1,395	19.5	18.7	19.3
Tertiary	1,018	254	1,272	18.4	14.8	17.6
Total	5,521	1,714	7,235	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table D – Green Jobs by Sex and Occupation

Occupation	Males No.	Females No.	Total No.	Males %	Females %	Total %
Managerial/ professional/ technical	1,454	286	1,740	26.3	16.7	24.0
Supervisory/ highly skilled/skilled	834	255	1,089	15.1	14.9	15.1
Clerical/ sales	265	213	478	4.8	12.4	6.6
Semi-skilled/ manual	2,968	960	3,928	53.8	56.0	54.3
Total	5,521	1,714	7,235	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table E - Green Jobs by Sex and Income Bracket

Income Bracket	Males No.	Females No.	Total No.	Males %	Females %	Total %
Less than €10,000	242	130	372	4.4	7.6	5.1
Between €10,000 and €24,999	3,727	1,381	5,108	67.5	80.6	70.6
€25,000 or more	1,552	203	1,755	28.1	11.8	24.3
Total	5,521	1,714	7,235	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: All data in Tables A to E are based on a questionnaire administered to companies and commissioned by the Ministry for the Environment, Energy and Regeneration (MEER), 2020.