



Gender Mainstreaming and Gender-Responsive Implementation of the UNCCD

Prepared by the organisers of the UNCCD COP15 Food Day - Seeds for Change for a Nature-Positive Future

Key Recommendations:

1. Take steps to **advance innovative policies and measures that recognise women's equal access** to land, resources and tenure security as enabling conditions for combating desertification and land degradation — especially in rural areas.
2. **Promote gender-responsive and gender-transformative measures** and awareness-raising. This includes implementing the Gender Action Plan (GAP) roadmap, convening the Gender Caucus, and developing tools and guidelines that enhance capacity at the national level to implement the GAP and support women's and girls' empowerment so that they contribute the effective implementation of the Convention. Such measures should be supported by reporting with gender-specific indicators and sex-disaggregated data.
3. **Take steps to remove systemic inequalities** as well as socio-economic and cultural barriers that:
 - a. Disempower and victimise women, making them — especially for rural and indigenous women — more likely to disproportionately suffer from droughts and other natural disasters.
 - b. Prevent women from accessing land and resource security, education, or extension services.
 - c. Limit women's full, informed, and equitable participation in policy and decision making related to land use, food systems, budgeting and other relevant policies.
4. **Ensure gender-responsive mobilisation of resources** for the implementation, monitoring, and reporting of the GAP, as well as capacity building for all actors.

5. **Strengthen collaboration and synergies across the Rio Conventions** for mainstreaming gender and developing gender-responsive and gender-transformative measures while building associated capacities as relevant.
6. **Continue to support systematic documentation of gender-related knowledge** such as women's innovations and effective practices that women have historically employed to maintain soil fertility and biodiversity and to mitigate the impact of drought and desertification. Such knowledge is a foundation for more effective and gender-transformative, evidence-based policies for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and the environment.

Why gender mainstreaming and gender-responsive implementation?

- Effective and inclusive action on land governance and land restoration to combat desertification and degradation requires all members of society to be fully engaged. This includes women and girls whose contributions, rights, knowledge, and practices are often undervalued and not appropriately reflected through equal participation in policy and decision making related to sustainable land-use governance, agriculture, and other productive sectors. **Gender equality and women's empowerment are central to effective environmental decision-making processes and lead to better resource governance, land use and restoration outcomes.**
- Along with enduring gender inequality, **women often suffer disproportionate impacts from biodiversity loss, climate change, land degradation, desertification and drought** compared to men. Women — especially rural and indigenous women who are farmers, fishers, small traders, and food providers for their families — often bear the greater and direct brunt of the consequences when natural resources are destroyed or depleted. **The recent COVID-19 pandemic has also affected women more, thus furthering inequality.**¹²
- While women's economic and other contributions are crucial — over two-thirds of smallholder farmers are women — they are often limited to **roles at the margins or in the informal sector; they have minimal voice when it comes to decision-making for resource management.** For example, women accounted for just 14 percent of the 59.5 million people engaged in the primary sector of fisheries and aquaculture in 2018 but make up about 47 percent of the global fisheries labour force and just under 50 percent of the global agricultural workforce.³ Furthermore, the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021⁴ identified economic participation and opportunity as the second largest gaps facing women.
- More recently, **there has been growing awareness and evidence to support the contributions that women make to land and resource governance, as well as to sustainable and equitable development.** However, much more needs to be done to systematically map, analyse and integrate women and girls' agency and diverse contributions.⁵

How can we narrow the gender equality gap?

- **Women's rights are human rights.** These rights include the right to live free from violence and discrimination, to be educated, to own property, to vote and to earn a fair and equal wage. Efforts to improve land use governance and combat desertification and drought need to ensure the protection, empowerment, leadership, decision making and meaningful and informed participation of women and girls. **Gender-responsive approaches identify and lead to actions that address gaps and**

systemic barriers that stand in the way of women's enjoyment of human rights, including in relation to restoration and natural resource and land use.

- Women are still underrepresented in decision-making processes related to environmental policies, land use planning and budgeting at all levels. While participation is a fundamental right in itself, there is also evidence that **diversity in decision-making leads to stronger outcomes overall**.
- **Gender statistics and sex-disaggregated data are essential to support gender-responsive policy and action, implementation, and reporting.** Data is critical to influence policy making in support of gender-responsive measures in agriculture, fisheries, forestry, land use planning, education, and extension services, among others. There is already encouraging commitment to integrating gender questions and indicators in national reports. However, there is still a **gap in data and information related to gender, land governance and benefit-sharing, which must be urgently addressed**.⁶
- **All the three Rio Conventions** — the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) —, **include gender provisions reinforced by subsequent COP decisions.** Moreover, all three Rio Conventions have adopted a **Gender Action Plan (GAP) or a Gender Plan of Action (GPA)**. The integration of gender considerations into actions against biodiversity loss, climate change impacts and desertification will maximise the results of interventions and lead to gender-sensitive policy- and decision-making.

This recommendation paper refers to:

- **ICCD/COP (15)/17:** Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Gender Note by the secretariat.⁷
 - This note summarises actions taken by the secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) in response to decision 24/COP.14. It also contains a road map to be included in the GAP to provide impetus and a focus on actions relating to women and men, and girls and boys, as per decision 12/COP.14 (*Decision 24/COP.14 Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Gender*)
- **The Gender Action Plan (GAP)**⁸
 - The UNCCD adopted a GAP in September 2017 to accompany the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework. The plan recognises the vital need to include women as equal partners in land-use management and restoration initiatives and unlock women's transformative potential for LDN and the SDG agenda
- **Gender. Note by the secretariat ICCD/COP (15)/21**⁹
 - This note put forward draft decisions for consideration at the fifteenth session of the Conference of the Parties

References

¹Women4Biodiversity. Transformational Change: Best Practices for Gender-responsive Biodiversity Policy and Action Women – Agents of Change Voices from Asia, Africa and Latin America, July 2020

²From Insight to Action. Gender Equality in the wake of COVID-19. UN Women 2020

³<https://www.fao.org/state-of-fisheries-aquaculture>

⁴<https://www.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2021>

⁵Scalise and Giovarelli. 2020. Research Consortium. What Works for Women's Land and Property Rights?

⁶UNEP 2019. Gender and environment statistics: Unlocking information for action and measuring the SDGs.

⁷<https://www.unccd.int/official-documentscop-15-abidjan-cote-divoire-2022/iccdcop1517>

⁸<https://www.unccd.int/resources/publications/gender-action-plan>

⁹<https://www.unccd.int/official-documentscop-15-abidjan-cote-divoire-2022/iccdcop1521>

The **UNCCD Food Day - Seeds of Change for a Nature-Positive Future** is co-organised by [WWF](#), [CGIAR](#), the [Committee on World Food Security \(CFS\)](#), [FAO](#), [CIFOR-ICRAF](#), [TMG Think Tank](#), [UN Environment Programme](#), [IICA](#) and the [One Planet Network](#). The full day event, the first ever Food Day at a UN Conference of the Parties, encourages stakeholders to include food systems approaches in the implementation of the Rio Conventions on Desertification, Biodiversity and Climate. Organisers may hold individual opinions and positions on the topic of this briefing paper. The paper is not an official joint position from the organisers.

For more information

Cristina Eghenter, Coordinator, Global Governance Policy, WWF
ceghenter@wwfint.org

Martina Fleckenstein, Global Policy Manager Food, WWF
mfleckenstein@wwfint.org