

Towards a gender-responsive post-2020 global biodiversity framework: IMPERATIVES AND KEY COMPONENTS

**A submission by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
(UN-Women) as an input to the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework
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UN-Women, in partnership with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, organized an expert workshop to develop recommendations on possible ways to integrate a gender perspective in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework, on 11 to 12 April 2019 in New York, USA. Thirty-eight participants representing Parties and experts from international organizations, think tanks and grassroots and indigenous people's organizations with expertise on gender and biodiversity-related issues took part in the discussions.

This submission is informed by discussions from the workshop, where participants elaborated on the imperatives, key principles, elements or components and related actions for consideration in the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. A technical report of the expert workshop with gender-specific recommendations on the thematic areas of the Convention will be prepared for consideration in advance of the first meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

I. Gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of the Convention, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets as the basis for the post-2020 framework global biodiversity framework

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), in its preamble, recognizes “the vital role that women play in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and affirms the need for the full participation of women at all levels of policy-making and implementation for biological diversity conservation.”¹ Most recently, the resolution on the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030)² adopted by the United Nations General Assembly reiterated the recognition of women's contribution and stressed the need to ensure their effective participation in ecosystem conservation and restoration in the context of the Decade at all levels.

Other global commitments and policy instruments similarly provide guidance and mandate the integration of a gender perspective in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the importance of achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls through a dedicated Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 and the inclusion of gender-specific targets and indicators in twelve other SDGs as well as a commitment to systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of the Agenda. The different targets with relevance to gender and biodiversity issues refer to women's equal access to ownership and control over land, other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources. Commitments related to gender and biodiversity have also been outlined in other long-standing international agreements including the

¹ Convention on Biological Diversity. Accessed at [\[Link\]](#)

² UN General Assembly. 2019. *United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030)*. A/RES/73/284. [\[Link\]](#)

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Agenda 21, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

In terms of implementation of the CBD, the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020³ captures a number of entry points for gender mainstreaming, including *Strategic Goal D: Enhance the benefits to all from biodiversity and ecosystem services, Target 14*: “By 2020, ecosystems that provide essential services, including services related to water, and contribute to health, livelihoods and well-being, are restored and

Box 1. Gender perspectives and natural resource management in SDGs - Specific targets

Target 1.4: By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance.

Target 2.3: By 2030, double the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers, in particular women, indigenous peoples, family farmers, pastoralists and fishers, including through secure and equal access to land, other productive resources and inputs, knowledge, financial services, markets and opportunities for value addition and non-farm employment.

Target 5.a: Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.

safeguarded, taking into account the needs of women, indigenous and local communities, and the poor and vulnerable” and *Strategic Goal E: Enhance implementation through participatory planning, knowledge management and capacity building, Target 18*: “By 2020, the traditional knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and their customary use of biological resources, are respected, subject to national legislation and relevant international obligations, and fully integrated and reflected in the implementation of the Convention with the full and effective participation of indigenous and local communities, at all relevant levels.”

As the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its Aichi Biodiversity Targets reach their completion date, it is a critical moment to reflect on and consider the objectives and key components of gender equality and women’s empowerment to be included in a new global framework for biodiversity for the post-2020 period. Gender equality and women’s empowerment has not been adequately addressed in the current Strategic Plan as there is little focus in the Plan or the Aichi Biodiversity Targets on these issues, despite women’s valuable contributions to both driving and addressing biodiversity loss. The review and updating of the Gender Action Plan 2015-2020 also provide an opportunity to take stock of the gaps in the effective implementation of gender-responsive biodiversity conservation policies and actions. This exercise will provide useful information and lessons learnt that could inform the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

The guiding vision for biodiversity -- ***Vision 2050: living in harmony with nature***, which was adopted as part of the Strategic Plan, could also serve as solid basis for a strengthened consideration of a gender perspective in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. The Vision proposes biodiversity as being “valued, conserved, restored and wisely used” for the purposes of “maintaining ecosystem services, sustaining a healthy planet and delivering benefits essential for all people”. It is clear that valuing, conserving, restoring and wisely using biodiversity requires the involvement of all people, as does the

³ CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020 and the Aichi Targets. [Link](#)

receipt of essential benefits. Ensuring that women play a full and equal role in these activities requires that they have equal access, ownership and control over biological resources and benefits. Without the full consideration of gender equality and women's empowerment in the access to and distribution of benefits, existing disparities in costs and benefits related to biodiversity will be perpetuated, and Vision 2050 will not be realized.

II. The imperative for a gender-responsive post-2020 global biodiversity framework

At the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in 2018, Parties agreed⁴ that the process to develop the post-2020 global biodiversity framework would be gender-responsive; and systematically integrate a gender perspective and ensure appropriate representation, particularly of women and girls, in the process.

Despite the growing recognition of women's significant roles in biodiversity conservation, policies, frameworks and processes do not adequately reflect women's contributions or capture women's agency for change. Lack of sex-disaggregated data and in-depth analysis of women's role in biodiversity conservation and use have resulted in an incomplete picture of women's contribution to, their rights, specific needs and roles with respect to biodiversity conservation and the benefits they obtain therefrom. This leads to vital information gaps in the management of resources and ecosystem services. Furthermore, women's activities in the value chains for natural resource-based products are often overlooked, not compensated, or considered, including their roles as informal entrepreneurs, keepers of traditional seeds, or labourers harvesting and processing resources.

Negative stereotypes and hierarchies continue to impede women's ability to use and manage biodiversity resources. Uneven power relations, patriarchal structures, and discriminatory laws not only diminish women's rights and their access to and control over land, but also influence their roles, responsibilities, capacities and incentives to conserve. Women can also be disproportionately and negatively affected by conservation initiatives, which can in turn influence their attitudes and incentives to prioritize conservation efforts. Systemic cultural and policy changes, and robust mechanisms which ensure equitable benefit-sharing and decision-making of women and men, are therefore necessary to alter discriminatory customs and norms and increase women's participation and leadership in decision-making in biodiversity conservation. The issue of gender-based violence in the context of management and conservation of biodiversity cannot be overlooked as the risk of violence can be heightened during periods of resource scarcity, as well as due to changes in power relations between men and women, when women gain greater access to resources and control over land. Increased protection of rights is needed to mitigate these risks and ensure women's safety. Mechanisms to address gender-based violence, including from organized crime, are also required to protect women environmental human rights defenders.

Women are further disadvantaged by a lack of access to information and technology, or in some cases by the limited information services that are tailored to the needs (including language and time constraints) of women in communities, including rural and indigenous communities. Their access to improved information and technology is therefore an essential pathway for gender equality and women's empowerment and environmental conservation. In addition to sharing information more broadly, it is also

⁴ CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity). 2018. *Comprehensive and participatory process for the preparation of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework*. UNEP/CBD/COP/DEC/14/34. [\[Link\]](#)

important that traditional and other forms of knowledge are captured, recognized, equally valued and shared. Men and women have specific local ecological knowledge of native species, and as such, should both be considered as important contributors to the knowledge gathering and documentation of these species. Non-documentation of women’s knowledge and leadership in conservation management actions will not only exclude this valuable information, but will limit women’s access to the benefits from improved management of biological resources resulting from enhanced knowledge.⁵

Under the CBD, one of the general principles of the programme of work of Article 8(j)⁶ emphasizes “... full and effective participation of women in indigenous and local communities in all activities of the programme of work.” Task four of the first phase of the programme of work further calls on Parties to “develop, as appropriate, mechanisms for promoting the full and effective participation of indigenous and local communities with specific provisions for the full, active and effective participation of women in all elements of the programme of work taking into account the need to: (a) Build on the basis of their knowledge; (b) Strengthen their access to biological diversity; (c) Strengthen their capacity on matters pertaining to the conservation, maintenance and protection of biological diversity; (d) Promote the exchange of experiences and knowledge; and (e) Promote culturally appropriate and gender specific ways in which to document and preserve women’s knowledge of biological diversity.”⁷ These are important gender-responsive approaches that provide a starting point for consideration of the post-2020 framework, to ensure that these and related measures benefit all women and girls.

III. Towards a gender-responsive post-2020 global biodiversity framework: overarching principles and key components

A transformational post-2020 global biodiversity framework should be rights-based, gender-responsive, inclusive and participatory in nature. This means that the framework should recognize and enhance the agency and leadership of women, including indigenous women and women in local communities, in biodiversity conservation and the sustainable management of resources. It should also expand women’s access and rights to, use of as well as control over, resources including land, knowledge, and biodiversity and ecosystem services, and ensure their equal enjoyment of benefits from biodiversity conservation and sustainable ecosystem services.

Key components of a transformational gender-responsive post-2020 global biodiversity framework

1. Recognizing and enhancing women’s agency, participation and leadership

Recognizing and enhancing women’s agency, voice, participation and leadership in the post-2020 global biological diversity framework is essential to ensuring the equitable sharing of benefits from biodiversity

⁵ UN-Women. (2019). *Towards a gender-responsive implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity*. New York. [\[Link\]](#)

⁶ Article 8(j) recommends that the States, “subject to its national legislation, respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional lifestyles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and promote their wider application with the approval and involvement of the holders of such knowledge, innovations and practices and encourage the equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge, innovations and practices.”

⁷ CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity). 2000. *Article 8(j) and related provisions*. UNEP/CBD/COP/DEC/V/16. [\[Link\]](#)

conservation. Women have the fundamental right to lead and participate in the conservation, sustainable use and receipt of benefits from biodiversity.

Women, including indigenous and local women, are holders and keepers of biodiversity conservation knowledge and practices. In their everyday life, they take an active part in the sustainable use of resources and the management of their natural environment: as food providers and food producers, rural women are directly linked to the management of genetic resources for food and agriculture; women are leading collectives and informal gatherings such as savings groups which are powerful tools for biodiversity conservation; they are also a critical part of the solutions to halt biodiversity loss, with their specialized and unique knowledge, different perspectives and priorities, as well as their capacity in managing natural resources, and adapting and innovating in the face of change; and many indigenous and grassroots women are also active as environmental defenders.

Yet, gender norms and stereotypes, many of which are rooted in cultural and sometimes religious practices, define and limit women's and girls' roles in the private and public spheres. They dictate whether women can own or have access to property, land and other resources, or whether they go to school or carry the disproportionate share of unpaid care and domestic work.⁸ These structural gender inequalities thus render invisible women's active contributions and leadership which are not recorded or not considered as relevant to biodiversity. For example, women play a considerable role in small-scale shallow-water fishing and fish processing, but they are not considered as prominent actors in fisheries. As a result, women's contributions to the fish-supply chain, although indispensable, are not recognized and as valued as that of men. Women also face higher risks of being subjected to gender-based violence. Additionally, the unpaid care work, which disproportionately falls on women in many societies, constrains their engagement in biodiversity conservation initiatives.

The result is a lack of recognition of women's active contributions and their roles related to biodiversity which has implications for the policies and programmes for biodiversity and natural resources management. Reviews of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) carried out by the CBD Secretariat⁹ and International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN)¹⁰ reveal that such plans predominantly characterize women as a vulnerable group. At the same time, some countries identify women's lack of participation as stakeholders as a challenge for biodiversity conservation. This implies a recognition that women's lack of voice and agency is likely to impact their access to, decision-making about, and their benefits from conservation programmes and initiatives.

It is thus imperative that the post-2020 global biodiversity framework to ***enhance women's agency and promote their effective participation and leadership in biodiversity conservation***. Concrete and measurable actions in this area include:

- Establish and enforce quotas of at least 50% for women, including indigenous, local and rural women, in decision-making bodies for biodiversity¹¹ and natural resources at local, national and regional levels;

⁸ Coleman, E. A., & Mwangi, E. (2015). Gender and local environmental governance. Presented at the XIV World Forestry Congress, Durban, South Africa, 7-11 September 2015. [\[Link\]](#)

⁹ CBD (Convention on Biological Diversity). 2018. *Progress in the implementation of the 2015-2020 Gender Plan of Action-Note by the Executive Secretary*. UNEP/CBD/SBI/2/2/Add.3. [\[Link\]](#)

¹⁰ IUCN. (2017). Gender and biodiversity: Analysis of women and gender equality considerations in NBSAPs. [\[Link\]](#)

¹¹ Examples include community-based natural resource management groups; project steering committees, governing councils, working groups, committees and boards addressing management and conservation of biodiversity and natural resources, etc.

- Recognize and map women’s roles and activities as custodians of biodiversity, and their leadership and knowledge of seed conservation, traditional livestock breeds, and preservation of traditional knowledge, to identify needs and develop plans to enable equal access to decision-making bodies, information, training, technology, financing, resources and services;
- Engage community leaders and members in changing perceptions, traditions and customary laws to recognize women’s roles and contributions in biodiversity conservation and use;
- Make Free, Prior and Informed Consent mandatory for conservation policies or interventions, ensuring it is undertaken in a way that equally includes women and men;
- Recognize and support informal or formal women’s collectives engaged in biodiversity-related activities (for example, women’s savings and farmer groups) through sustained capacity-building and training and financial assistance, as appropriate;
- Ensure women and women’s organizations are equitably represented in any stakeholder consultations to implement the post-2020 global biodiversity framework;
- Adopt and implement laws and policies that prohibit violence against women, including indigenous and local women leaders, as a result of their activism to conserve biodiversity and ecosystem services, and investigate and punish such violence;
- Establish special agricultural zones jointly managed by women and men, that would enhance and conserve valuable agrobiodiversity, particularly genetic diversity of plants and animals.

2. Promoting and protecting women’s rights and access to resources

A **rights-based approach** is integral to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework that recognizes, protects, and fulfills women’s equal rights and access to biodiversity, ecosystem services, and relevant support mechanisms for biodiversity conservation.

Women’s right to and ownership of productive resources such as land, and their access to essential ecosystems such as water bodies, are often shaped by legislation and customary norms and are yet to be universally respected or fulfilled. Women’s ownership of and control over such fundamental resources is critical to enhancing their autonomy and their capabilities to contribute to biodiversity conservation. Additionally, legal rights to essential assets such as land are often instrumental in enhancing women’s resilience to biodiversity degradation and climate change by increasing their access to other services such as capital, credit, information, technology, and risk-mitigation services, as well as benefits arising from conservation programmes.

Therefore, failing to protect women’s rights and access to resources creates a vicious cycle in which the limited access to key resources, which stems from existing gender inequalities, further perpetuates those inequalities by contributing to women’s poverty, marginalization and suppression of their voice and agency. Some of the concrete actions which could be taken ***promote and protect women’s rights and access to resources*** include:

- Enact or reform and implement legislation to ensure women’s land tenure security and equal access to and control of agricultural land, forests, and marine areas;
- Ensure equal access to natural resources across all governance/management types of protected areas (government owned, indigenous and community conserved areas, co-managed and other effective area-based conservation measures)

- Ensure that financial incentives, social protection programmes and technological and extension services aimed at sustainable management of biodiversity and natural resources equitably target women and women's organizations;
- Undertake inclusive and participatory processes to identify suitable incentives and benefits from conservation programmes, including payment for ecosystem services schemes, to ensure equitable distribution among men and women community members;
- Establish community protocols for access and management of scarce and common-pool resources, particularly water and other forest resources to reduce the burden of unpaid-care work on women and girls;
- Build resilience of communities, including women farmers, to ecosystem degradation, natural disasters and climate change through innovative financing and incentives that would preserve biodiversity;
- Create enabling environments and infrastructures, including information, technology and financing, for women to access and compete in markets;
- Develop strategies and provide incentives to increase women's access to paid employment at mid and upper levels of biodiversity-based value chains which are better compensated and recognized.

3. Enhancing and ensuring equitable benefits and human well-being

Ensuring that benefits from the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity reach all people and contribute to enhancing well-being for women and men requires key enabling conditions that will address systemic gender inequalities and promote and protect women's rights and enhance their voice, leadership and participation. A gender-responsive post-2020 global biodiversity framework must take into account targeted, adequate and reliable means of implementation.

Advancing gender equality in the implementation of the CBD cannot be achieved without a clear strategy to allocate adequate and predictable resources and to strengthen institutional capacities. Establishing clear accountability frameworks at the global, national and local levels is also required. Resource allocation should include gender-responsive planning, budgeting, and monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Judicial reviews equipped to handle public interest cases are also essential to ensuring effective accountability to women and girls. This may require moving beyond the existing constraints in collecting gender-sensitive data and encouraging innovative data collection methodologies on key gender-biodiversity interlinkages.

Some of the specific actions which need to be undertaken to create an enabling environment for biodiversity benefits and improved well-being to be enjoyed by all people, women and men, boys and girls, include:

- Mainstream gender consideration into all national and local biodiversity policies, programmes, budgeting and monitoring mechanisms;
- Make awareness-raising and capacity building components mandatory for conservation interventions to inform men and women, including indigenous, local and rural women of their roles, rights and benefits in relation to the intervention;

- Develop and provide training and capacity building on gender issues and mainstreaming in the context of biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, to policy-makers and those involved in planning and undertaking biodiversity-related projects and programmes;
- Facilitate evidence-based policies by developing gender-sensitive monitoring and reporting frameworks and promoting gender analysis, including in the National Reports of Parties to the CBD; and
- Dedicate or increase the allocation of financial resources and strengthen expertise to advance the collection and use of data disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity, disability and other relevant factors, to inform the development and implementation of gender-responsive biodiversity policies and programmes;
- Identify opportunities to access climate finance to address relevant gender objectives, and ensure new and innovative biodiversity-related financing mechanisms include avenues for access by marginalized and small-scale actors, particularly women and women’s organizations;
- Identify synergies and reinforce efforts to implement the gender-specific targets and/or mandates of the sustainable development goals and the Rio Conventions, including through collaboration with organizations leading the work on these initiatives, and the identification of approaches to mainstream biodiversity and apply common indicators for monitoring and assessing progress and gaps.

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