

Towards a gender-responsive biodiversity framework post-2020

In every society across the globe, relations between men and women are both constructed and delineated along social, cultural and power differences. These differences dictate what roles men and women play in that society, what responsibilities they shoulder, and what level of influence they are able to realize. Women have unique knowledge and responsibilities in the sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity, particularly within rural and indigenous communities. They are also among the most impacted by biodiversity loss and its negative effects on women's livelihoods and the health of their families. Yet women's involvement at the decision-making and policy level remains unsatisfactory and their access to and control over natural resources is severely limited.

The empowerment of women and the respect and promotion of their rights are crucial for effective biodiversity conservation. This document highlights the gender dimensions of biodiversity and the five key elements that are necessary to promote a gender-responsive post-2020 global biodiversity framework.¹

Land tenure and property rights

There is a close link between land ownership, gender, and biodiversity governance. Rights and access to and control over land are not equal among women and men. For example, in the global south less than 20% of all landowners are women.² Moreover, according to the 2014 OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index, the laws or customary practices in 102 countries restrict women's rights to access land.³ This issue is relevant because in many countries, land titles facilitate access to inputs, extension services, credit, and technology. Land rights also influence the roles, responsibilities, capacities and incentives to conserve and manage biodiversity. Therefore, reforms in land tenure can help with reducing gender inequalities and increase biodiversity conservation. Recognizing women's roles as primary land and resource managers is central to the success of biodiversity policies and initiatives.

Different roles and knowledge

Men and women hold specific and complementary local ecological knowledge about species, ecosystems and biodiversity. This knowledge is generated through their different daily roles and activities. Women represent more than 40% of the agricultural labor force in developing countries and possess key knowledge to conserve agricultural biodiversity.⁴ Women are actively involved in the use, management and conservation of their natural environment, for example as food producers and managers of genetic resources for food and agriculture. Women also represent more than 47% of the total global fishing workforce (when all parts of the fishing cycle are taken into account) as they play a considerable role in small-scale shallow-water fisheries and the processing of fish.⁵ Women also interact directly with fragile ecosystems, such as coral reefs and mangroves, so they have a special interest in their management and conservation. The different and complementary knowledge of men and women offer diverse solutions for biodiversity conservation and ecosystem restoration. With a gender perspective, intellectual property regimes would consider women's roles and could promote a more equitable distribution of the benefits derived from biodiversity and its genetic resources.

Lack of representation of women in decision-making processes

Despite women's wealth of knowledge and contributions to agriculture, forestry, fisheries and aquaculture, they tend to be excluded from decision-making processes related to biodiversity. Decision-making power regarding biodiversity and ecosystem management tends to be concentrated among men. In many regions of the world, women face a number of restrictions (such as cultural barriers, household

responsibilities, and lack of time and support) that limit their participation in consultations, committees, and natural resource management boards (e.g. management of protected areas, species, forests, fisheries and others).

Gender-responsive capacity-building

Several studies highlight that the inclusion of women in awareness-raising campaigns and capacity building (e.g. in water management, invasive species reduction, pollution reduction, wildlife conservation and others) had a powerful impact on improving biodiversity conservation as well as income generation.⁶ As such, capacity-building and awareness-raising programmes need to be gender-responsive so that they provide suitable incentives that enable women to participate (e.g. childcare and transportation arrangements) as without these measures women can be excluded from capacity-building processes.

Key elements to consider for a gender-responsive global biodiversity framework

- 1. Enhance women’s agency⁷ and promote their effective participation and leadership in biodiversity conservation.** For example, by establishing and enforcing quotas for women in biodiversity-related decision-making bodies (at all levels), and recognize and map their roles and activities as custodians of biodiversity, and their leadership and knowledge of conservation.⁸
- 2. Promote and protect women’s rights and access to and control of resources.** For example, by enacting, reforming, and implementing legislation to ensure women’s land tenure security and equal access to and control of protected areas, forests, and marine areas.
- 3. Enhance and ensure equitable benefits and human well-being.** For example, by mainstreaming gender-responsive considerations into all national and local biodiversity policies, programmes, budgeting and monitoring mechanisms. As well as developing strategies and 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.
- 4. Include a specific-gender target:** By 2030, ensure that women and girls are taking on effective stewardship of and are equitably benefitting from biodiversity and ecosystem services.⁹
- 5. Embed gender-responsive indicators throughout targets** and make use of relevant gender-responsive indicators that have been agreed under the Sustainable Development Goals framework. There are 80 SDG indicators that are gender-responsive and many of these are relevant for consideration in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.¹⁰

¹This document includes information and facts available in the guide *Towards 2020: A Guide to Advancing Gender Integration in the Aichi Biodiversity Targets* (CBD Secretariat, 2019), as well as contributions from institutions that participated in the *Expert workshop to develop recommendations for possible gender elements in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework* that took place in New York City from 11-12 April 2019 (<https://www.cbd.int/meetings/GB-OM-2019-01>).

² Asian Development Bank. 2013. *Gender equality and food security—women’s empowerment as a tool against hunger*. Mandaluyong City, Philippines, Asian Development Bank, 101 pages

³ OECD Development Center. 2014. *Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) 2014 synthesis report*. OECD Publishing, Paris, 68 pages

⁴ SOFA Team and C. Doss. 2011. *The role of women in agriculture*. *ESA Working Paper No. 11-02, Agricultural Development Economics Division of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Rome, 47 pages*. [\[Link\]](#)

⁵ World Bank. 2012. *Hidden Harvest: The Global Contribution of Capture Fisheries*. World Bank, Washington D.C.

⁶ See *Towards 2020: A Guide to Advancing Gender Integration in the Aichi Biodiversity Targets* (CBD Secretariat, 2019) for detailed examples

⁷ Agency is the capacity to make decisions about one’s own life and act on them to achieve a desired outcome, free of violence, retribution, or fear. *Voice and agency: empowering women and girls for shared prosperity* (Klugman, J., et.al., 2014). World Bank.

⁸ For other concrete actions (for key elements 1,2,3) see UN Women’s submission to the CBD for the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework [\[Link\]](#)

⁹ Target suggested by Costa Rica

¹⁰ See gender-relevant SDG indicators (UNSD, 2018). [\[Link\]](#)