



# A Gender Policy Framework for UNCCD



IUCN GENDER OFFICE



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“The UNCCD is about much more than pushing back encroaching deserts, it is about sustainable use of drylands so that they can support human life and nature.

Gender mainstreaming is not an add-on; it is about realizing the full creative and productive potential of women and men to advance the development agenda.”

### Drylands: Some Facts

- ▶ Drylands include sandy deserts, temperate grasslands, savannah woodlands: all have in common their aridity.
- ▶ Drylands are home to 2 billion people, 50% of the world’s livestock and 44% of cultivated ecosystems.
- ▶ Drylands are home to some of the poorest, most marginalized people on the planet: the ‘Forgotten Billion’. It will not be possible to attain the MDGs on poverty and hunger unless their lives are improved.
- ▶ In 5 of the 10 countries at the bottom of the UNDP Human Development Index (Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and Niger), the majority of the population inhabits drylands.
- ▶ Many inhabitants of drylands depend directly upon the highly variable natural resource base for their livelihoods.

# Introduction

Gender continues to be “one of the world’s strongest markers for disadvantage”<sup>1</sup>. All too often the role of women in different spheres of life is overlooked or even denied. This is especially true of the environmental and economic sectors where women’s access to resources is often more limited, leading to differences in benefits derived from their use, resulting in important inequalities. Yet, today it is widely recognized that gender parity can be a real driver of change and of efforts to achieve sustainable development. Women, especially in indigenous communities, have a differentiated knowledge about resources that could make significant contributions to the development of society as a whole.

Gender mainstreaming has been the primary methodology used to integrate a gender approach into development and/or environmental efforts. Gender mainstreaming is not simply about paying lip-service to equality between men and women by adding women’s participation to existing strategies and programmes. Rather, it seeks to transform unequal social and institutional structures to realize the full creative and productive potential of women to reduce vulnerability and enhance efficiency and effectiveness of development projects and programmes.

Gender mainstreaming is gaining in currency among policy makers, international organizations and donors. The importance of gender mainstreaming in environmental efforts and poverty eradication has been recognized in a wide range of global agreements and conventions, including, but not limited to, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the only legally binding international agreement that links environment and development issues to the land agenda.

In light of the importance of the role of women in efforts to combat desertification, the IUCN Gender Office has teamed up with the Secretariat of the UNCCD to develop a Gender Policy Framework (GPF) for the UNCCD and its Secretariat. The following pages present a summary of the main components of this Framework and suggestions for its implementation.

The full text of the Policy is available online at [http://www.iucn.org/gender\\_gpf](http://www.iucn.org/gender_gpf).

<sup>1</sup> Human Development Report, 2005 (UNDP), quoted in UNCCD Gender Policy Framework (GPF) for UNCCD and its Secretariat.



Photo: IUCN



Photo: IUCN

## Women and Food Production: Some Facts

- ▶ The gap in agricultural yield between men and women averages around 20-30%, mainly due to differences in resource use.
- ▶ Some 925 million people are currently undernourished. Closing the gender gap in agricultural yields could bring that number down by as much as 100-150 million people.
- ▶ Bringing yields on land farmed by women up to the levels achieved by men could increase agricultural output in developing countries between 2.5 and 4% and reduce the number of undernourished people in the world by 12-17%.
- ▶ Women make crucial contributions to agriculture and rural enterprises in drylands as farmers, in animal husbandry, as workers and entrepreneurs. Although their roles vary across regions, in every part of the world women face gender-specific constraints that reduce their productivity and limit their contributions to production, economic growth and the well-being of their families, communities and countries.

Source: FAO, *The State of Food and Agriculture*, 2011



## Gender and the UNCCD

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was established in 1994. It is intended to combat and mitigate the effects of drought<sup>2</sup>, land degradation and desertification (DDLDD) in drylands by improving living conditions of affected populations and ecosystems, notably through sustainable land management (SLM).

In its Preamble, the UNCCD recognizes “the important role played by women in regions affected by desertification and/or drought, particularly in rural areas of developing countries, and the importance of ensuring the full participation of both men and women at all levels in programmes to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought”.

Parties to the Convention that are home to drylands undertake to “promote awareness and facilitate the participation of local populations, particularly women and youth, with the support of non-governmental organizations, in efforts to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought”. Successive Conferences of the Parties (COPs) to the Convention have adopted decisions to operationalize the gender element in the implementation of their obligations under the Convention. Among the strategies for giving effect to this are the establishment of partnerships between national authorities, representatives from civil society (including NGOs) and grassroots organizations, research institutions, and representatives from the international community including donors. Through these partnerships, Parties to the Convention work to build capacity to ensure the full participation of women in efforts to combat desertification, establish National Action Plans (NAPs) which promote equal participation of men and women, and work to ensure that all stakeholders – men women, youth, indigenous groups, farmers – have equal access to natural resources and benefits accruing from their use.

The UNCCD Gender Policy Framework (GPF) has been developed to give further expression to global commitments under the UNCCD and other international instruments and to institutionalize gender issues within the work of the Convention and its Secretariat. In so doing, it builds on experience with gender mainstreaming of other global conventions. Crucially, it recognizes there is no single entry point for gender mainstreaming – it has to take place at different levels – and that no single entity is solely responsible – it is a multi-stakeholder responsibility. In light of this, the GPF has developed a set of 20 targets for gender mainstreaming with actions and indicators for operationalization, spread across four spheres – **policy, organizational, constituency, delivery** – all of them interrelated, and defined responsibility for implementation<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Obligations, Article 5.2.

<sup>3</sup> Levy, C. *The Process of Institutionalizing Gender in Policy and Planning: “The Web of Institutionalization”*. Working Paper No. 74. London, Development Planning Unit, UCL. 1996.

# Policy Sphere

## Target 1

Gender and DLDD/SLM are strategic priorities of the Convention.

## Target 2

High-level commitment for gender and DLDD/SLM within the Secretariat is secured.

## Target 3

On-going commitments from funders to support gender and DLDD/SLM.

## Target 4

System in place for gender-screening.

## Target 5

Active involvement of women in decision-making and research.

## Target 6

Rio Conventions have a shared roadmap to promote gender equality.

The policy sphere is concerned with building the necessary institutional framework to provide the mandate, political support, procedures and resources to ensure integration of gender considerations in the implementation of the Convention. It speaks in particular to the Convention Secretariat and its operational units, but also to the Country Parties and their implementing bodies.

Although the text of the Convention explicitly calls for recognizing the importance of gender in efforts to combat desertification, to date this remains only marginally acknowledged. Greater effort is therefore needed to ensure that it becomes a priority. This includes securing buy-in for gender mainstreaming within the Convention Secretariat, among staff and management. It also requires integrating gender concerns fully in Secretariat workplans. Mechanisms should be put in place to report back to the Parties on efforts to mainstream gender within the Secretariat.

Equally, efforts are needed to secure on-going funding to support gender-oriented activities within the work of the Secretariat. This could include the allocation of a specific budget-line for gender activities. Similarly, stronger links are needed between the Secretariat and donors (e.g. Global Environment Facility – GEF, World Bank/IFAD) to secure earmarked funding for the implementation of gender-sensitive initiatives at local, national and global levels.

It is crucial to establish a set of institutional procedures to allow effective gender-screening of policies, projects, initiatives, training packages and communication materials produced under the Convention. These should be accompanied by guidelines drawn up in consultation with staff, Parties and stakeholders.

Any discussion on gender mainstreaming must include the involvement of women, especially those with first-hand experience and expertise in the areas of desertification, land degradation and sustainable exploitation of dryland ecosystems. To advance this, more female experts should be added to the Roster of Independent Experts.

Finally, just as gender mainstreaming cannot be achieved in isolation, either by a particular stakeholder group or at a particular level, so efforts to implement gender mainstreaming cannot be confined to a single convention. Greater efforts are needed to leverage synergies among the different environmental conventions – notably the three Rio Conventions – and to harmonize efforts between them to achieve enhanced participation of women for better environmental governance at the global level.



# Organizational Sphere

## Target 7

Establishment of a structure within the UNCCD Secretariat to support gender mainstreaming.

## Target 8

UNCCD Secretariat recruitments advance gender balance.

## Target 9

Managers and staff members held accountable for gender mainstreaming.

## Target 10

Secretariat staff have the competency to mainstream gender effectively.

The organizational sphere addresses gender equality in staffing of the UNCCD, its institutional capacity, staff development, accountability, related equal opportunity policies, and capacity building of Parties and other stakeholders. It speaks in particular to the management and staff of the UNCCD Secretariat, but also to the Country Parties.

To achieve gender mainstreaming in the organizational sphere, it is recommended that the UNCCD Secretariat appoint a full-time gender focal point (GFP), with the necessary budget and resources, responsible for managing and coordinating the gender mainstreaming process throughout the Convention. The chosen incumbent would require expertise in both gender mainstreaming and DLDD/SLM. At the same time, a Gender Task Force (GTF) should be established to support the implementation of the Gender Policy Framework. The GTF should include a staff member representing each of the coordinating units of the UNCCD.

In the spirit of “walking the talk”, staff appointments within the UNCCD Secretariat should reflect gender as well as regional balance. Similarly, efforts should be implemented to remedy the disproportionate number of male to female staff members in the Convention Secretariat, notably among the professional grades.

To advance gender equality within the Convention, responsibility for gender mainstreaming should be written into the terms of reference (ToR) and workplans of all managers and staff in the Secretariat. Gender knowledge, skills and sensitivity should be part of the recruitment process for new staff. In addition, gender activities should be included in the Performance Appraisal System against which staff are evaluated. Efforts to encourage operationalization of this among existing staff should be accompanied by rewards and incentives. Staff efforts and activities in the area of gender should be reported on in the quarterly progress reports produced by the Secretariat.

Finally, at the organizational level, it may be necessary to build capacity among staff to mainstream gender effectively. This will require identifying the main capacity building needs among the different units and staff. Gender training workshops should be organized; they need to respond to the development needs of individual staff as well as the Secretariat as a whole. The impact of such training programmes should be monitored and evaluated to ensure continued relevance and on-going progress.



# Constituency Sphere

## Target 11

Enable continuous, coordinated and effective input from women to decision-making under the UNCCD.

## Target 12

Build partnerships and establish networks to promote the mainstreaming of gender within the UNCCD.

## Target 13

Link the UNCCD GPF with the UN System's activities.

## Target 14

Parties recognize the traditional and indigenous knowledge of women as fundamental assets in combating DLDD.

## Target 15

Increased women's representation in national coordinating bodies.

## Target 16

Parties and stakeholders effectively mainstream gender in national and regional implementation of the Convention.

The constituency sphere is concerned with creating linkages between the UNCCD and partners – such engagement is a key obligation under the Convention. It is also about building the capacity of stakeholders, particularly women, to realize their full participation in efforts to combat desertification. This sphere speaks to the UNCCD Secretariat, Country Parties and their partners.

Enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of gender mainstreaming, requires that the UNCCD mobilize both existing and new partners in the process – building on existing efforts, best practices and lessons learned. Potential partners include women's groups, academic institutions, non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, indigenous peoples and local communities/authorities, civil society and the business community. Linking to other parts of the UN system including the CBD and other conventions is also crucial.

Crucially, women need to be acknowledged as a major group within the UNCCD. Their participation in COPs needs to be facilitated to enable them to influence and input to all processes. There needs to be increased representation by women in national coordinating bodies for the UNCCD as well as in national and regional implementation of the Convention. Further opportunities are needed for women's groups to interact with other stakeholders. A women's caucus would be a step in the right direction. Where necessary, training activities should be implemented as part of efforts to build capacity of Convention constituents.

Women, especially indigenous and local women inhabiting drylands, are key custodians of local knowledge about resources and their use that could be applied to overcome some of the challenges in drylands and simultaneously to advance development. For example, women are closely involved in food production and cultivation of medicinal plants; they often have knowledge of biodiversity. Yet, much of this knowledge remains untapped. Greater efforts are needed to recognize women's knowledge as a fundamental asset for combating DLDD and achieving SLM and to enhance their capacity to apply it.

Similarly, men and women often have different knowledge about aspects of resource (land, species, water) management in dryland habitats. Greater efforts are needed to recognize this, to differentiate between the knowledge held by men and women, and to apply it to efforts to combat desertification.

Stakeholders and Country Parties to the Convention need to internalize the roles of different partners to effectively mainstream gender in national and regional implementation of the Convention.



# Delivery Sphere

## Target 17

Gender is mainstreamed in NAP alignment process (SRAPs and RAPs).

## Target 18

Gender is included in the performance and impact indicators.

## Target 19

Gender-sensitive communications involve key constituencies.

## Target 20

Build understanding of DLDD/SLM issues among gender and women's organizations.

The delivery sphere refers to how a gender perspective is incorporated in implementation of the UNCCD. In particular it describes the ways in which gender is addressed and streamlined in the development of National Action Plans (NAPs), Sub-Regional Action Programmes (SRAPs), Regional Action Programmes (RAPs), reporting systems, indicators and communications. It speaks to the UNCCD Secretariat and Country Parties.

The implementation of the Convention requires the development of NAPs, SRAPs and RAPs. Gender concerns need to be an integral part of this process. In particular, NAPs and RAPs should make provisions to define the extent of involvement of young people and women in identifying national priorities for combating desertification; they should also make provisions for gender balance within NAP Steering Committees, national coordination bodies and national NGO coordinating bodies. This will likely require gender awareness training. A 2011 analysis of 104 NAPs reveals important discrepancies among regions and countries in gender mainstreaming. Efforts are needed to identify these gaps and rectify this.

Performance and impact indicators are key to assessing successful implementation of any convention. Gender needs to be included as an integral part of this. The UNCCD has recently adopted a new indicator-based reporting system (PRAIS – performance review and assessment of implementation system). It appears that despite its importance, the collection and dissemination of gender-disaggregated data and gender-based analysis have not been fully integrated into the system. This needs to be rectified as a matter of urgency. Experts in both gender and DLDD/SLM should be identified and recruited to input to this process.

The UNCCD Secretariat needs to ensure that gender is fully integrated in the UNCCD Comprehensive Communication Strategy and related materials. The UNCCD Secretariat should develop key information materials including on the relevance of SLM and DLDD to livelihoods, culture, traditional knowledge, health and food security; the link between DLDD/SLM and the provision of basic human rights, such as access to water; and other awareness-raising materials prepared for specific events such as the World Day to Combat Desertification.

The Secretariat needs to reach out to groups in other regions/countries for the preparation of regional/country-specific materials. Parties to the Convention should be encouraged to prepare and disseminate such information and materials.

Finally, awareness campaigns should be conducted among gender and women's organizations to increase understanding of DLDD/SLM issues and encourage action.





Global Gender Policy Series



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