

RESEARCH PAPER

TOWARDS A GENDER-
RESPONSIVE
IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE UNITED
NATIONS CONVENTION
TO COMBAT
DESERTIFICATION



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UN WOMEN

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INTRODUCTION

This discussion paper, *Towards a Gender-Responsive Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification*, was commissioned by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) to serve as a background paper for the capacity-building workshop on gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The workshop was co-organized by the UNCCD Secretariat, UN Women and the UNDP Global Policy Centre on Resilient Ecosystems and Desertification (GC-RED).

The workshop—the first of its kind—was organized in view of the increasing interest of Parties and stakeholders to the UNCCD in gender mainstreaming and the integration of a gender perspective in the implementation of the Convention and in future work aiming towards a gender-responsive land degradation-neutral world. Unlike prior contributions to land degradation and gender analysis, this discussion paper aims to elucidate key linkages between gender equality, the empowerment of women and their human rights and land-related issues in the context of the UNCCD. A gender-responsive approach takes into account existing service-delivery structures affected by gender inequality and seeks to overcome and remove laws and policies that impair gender equality, women’s human rights and women’s empowerment.

This discussion paper incorporates key takeaways from workshop case studies and accounts for outcomes

from the UNCCD 13th Conference of the Parties (COP 13) that took place in Ordos, Inner Mongolia, China in September 2017. The paper sets the context by presenting the gender dimensions of land degradation and the global norms on gender equality, land and natural resources. It then links the discussion to the UNCCD by analyzing key entry points for the integration of gender perspectives in norm-setting as well as in the implementation of the Convention and in future work of Parties to the Convention and other stakeholders. Gender-responsive practices at local and country levels and promising trends from the other Rio Conventions and their implementing entities are presented to highlight promising examples and lessons. The paper concludes with select recommendations for action directed at specific stakeholders informed by the latest adopted COP decisions of September 2017.

DESERTIFICATION AND LAND DEGRADATION FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

More than a third of the earth's land is currently degraded, affecting 2.6 billion people in over 100 countries, according to the Global Environment Facility.¹ The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Secretariat warns that on average 12 million hectares of land are lost annually.² Widespread and unprecedented rapid degradation of lands, including desertification, threatens food production, water availability and quality, biodiversity and energy security worldwide. Land degradation also contributes to climate change, deepens poverty and induces displacement and migration.³

Myriad factors drive land degradation, including land-use conversion to agriculture, over-extraction of natural resources and climate change. These drivers are intensified when they are coupled with insecure land tenure, poor land management, unsustainable farming systems and shortsighted policies.⁴ According to the UNCCD Science Policy Interface, poverty is “a root cause, and at the same time a consequence, of land degradation, and gender inequality plays a significant role in land-degradation related poverty.”⁵ The SPI further concludes that in “most developing countries, land degradation impacts men and women differently, mainly due to unequal access to land,

water, credit, extension services and technology,”⁶ underscoring the need to address the persistent gender inequalities that fuel women's extreme poverty.

The bulk of the world's population living in extreme poverty depends on land. When land is degraded and becomes scarce, women are uniquely and differentially affected, given their substantial role in agriculture and food production. Although they often serve as environmental stewards, women tend to face exclusion from conservation and management of land, lack access to agricultural extension services and institutional credit and encounter barriers to participation in the processes

UNCCD and Gender Equality

To effectively implement the UNCCD and address land degradation more broadly, the diverse realities and experiences of women and men must be identified and addressed. Governments at all levels, policy-makers, the UNCCD Secretariat and national focal points, implementing entities, financing mechanisms, civil society and communities all share the task of taking actions to address gender inequalities in social and legal systems,

structures and processes that affect men and women in agricultural, pastoral and indigenous communities affected by desertification, drought and land degradation. That is, gender analysis and gender-responsive, human rights-based approaches must inform any policy, strategy or programme that addresses land degradation and related issues, and gender equality must be dealt with as a stated, explicit and non-negotiable goal.

of development, planning and policymaking. Unequal power relations and gender-based discrimination in statutory and customary systems in many societies deny women even user rights to plant trees, control soil degradation and enhance soil fertility. Unlike men, women also often have less access to information, resources and legal rights to the land. Without secure land rights, which women typically lack, they are left without resources and incentives to improve the productivity of their land in the face of changing climate conditions. Weak legal and social protections for women's land rights thus increase the likelihood of land degradation.

Gender roles and perspectives

While in some contexts it is difficult to separate tasks by gender, women and men often play different roles in agriculture and food production, land use, conservation, land rehabilitation and restoration, water and energy access, household and care responsibilities and livestock-based livelihood. A recent analysis of existing empirical evidence on gender differentiation in land use found that women tend to prefer crops that meet household consumption and dietary food requirements (with low-value subsistence farming), while men prefer high-value commodities and “cash crops” for income security.⁷ In many cases, where women do not legally own their land or where customs and practices prevent their ownership of land, they are not recognized as farmers or “value-chain” actors. As a result, they are excluded from access to extension services and inputs available to bona fide farmers, most of whom are men. Due to gender bias, rural women are frequently less able to access new agricultural technology and make investments for sustainable land management such as soil conservation and augmentation, terracing, tree planting and establishment of buffer zones. They also tend to have restricted access to seeds, fertilizer and equipment needed to increase land productivity and yields.⁸

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), “agriculture remains the most important source of employment for women in low-income and lower-middle-income countries,” relegating women to “time and labor-intensive activities, which are unpaid or

poorly remunerated.”⁹ Moderate or severe impacts of drought alone affect a striking 52 per cent of agricultural land.¹⁰ Such impact on food availability impacts intra-family food distribution, reducing the nutritional intake of women and children, and women in particular.¹¹ Women generally do most of the unpaid and undervalued work of collecting water, cooking, cleaning and taking care of children, the elderly and sick. According to studies across diverse countries, nearly 90 per cent of the time spent on household food preparation is women's time, which limits their ability to generate income, engage in public life or merely recharge.¹² In some contexts, climate change-induced scarcity is changing established gender roles; men are beginning to collect non-timber forest products alongside women to supplement sparse crops and assisting with water collection, while women are taking up greater roles in natural resource management, albeit in limited situations.¹³

Land rights include some or all of these rights:

- Access (the right to be on the land)
- Use (the right to plant crops and produce food)
- Withdrawal (the right to take something from the land, such as water, firewood, fibers, or produce)
- Management and control (the right to change the land in some way; make decisions about land use)
- Exclusion (the right to prevent others from using the land)
- Alienation (the right to transfer land to others through rental, bequest, or sale)

Based on Doss C. et al. Land, Gender, and Food Security. Feminist Economics 20:1 (2014): 1-23

Laws and practices (legal and social legitimacy of land rights)

For women to benefit in practice, their rights must be both legally recognized and upheld by their community as socially legitimate. Yet in more than half of the world, discriminatory laws and/or biased social norms impose barriers to women's rights to access, use, inherit, transfer, control, benefit from and own land. These laws and social practices may limit women's ability to receive compensation or redress claims over their land and dismiss their input in decision-making fora that determine the fate of their land.¹⁴ Land and natural resource rights and their reforms need to be appropriately embedded within diverse social, cultural and geographic contexts, accounting for communal and customary land governance. Such rights also depend on harmonizing relevant laws on land, property, investment, inheritance and family law (including marital and non-marital property laws).¹⁵

A web of complex and overlapping laws govern issues of land and natural resources. Expertise is often needed to elucidate gender-specific understanding of plural legal systems, some of which recognize and others of which deny women's land and resource rights. Some efforts to formalize land tenure through registration have stripped women of their customary and secondary rights to the land and its attendant natural resources. Robust statutory recognition of communal or collectively-held land (also known as community-based land tenure regimes) has been associated with stronger protections for women's tenure rights.¹⁶ Yet, in some community-based regimes, women continue to be excluded from land-related decision-making.

Women in much of the world's poorest regions have lower literacy rates than their male counterparts which translate to lower awareness of their legal rights or the available avenues for redress. A 2016 World Resources Institute study of Tanzania, Mozambique and the Philippines concluded that "women's lower rates of literacy, limited mobility, and care responsibilities can also present barriers to the exercise of their rights."¹⁷ Many women who seek to claim their land rights face community stigma and at times violence.

Access, use and control of land and resources

Though no systematic global data exists, by some estimates, women make up on average less than 20 per cent of the world's landholders,¹⁸ with a wide range across countries.¹⁹ Based on evidence across multiple measures of land ownership, women own less land and have less secure rights over land than men.²⁰ On average, men control a higher proportion of land than women.²¹ However, land ownership constitutes a narrow slice of a fuller range or bundle of rights that women may hold or desire, such as rights to access and use land, to withdraw non-timber products from forests, and to inherit and bequeath land.

Women's nexus to the land typically depends on the strength of their relationship to male relatives. When male relatives, especially husbands, migrate, women may be left without the authority to make meaningful adaptation and investment decisions concerning the land.²² Studies show that the person who owns and controls the assets within a household also directs household decision-making and resource allocation.²³ A 2017 comprehensive literature review found strong evidence for "relationships between [women's land rights] and bargaining power and decision-making on consumption and human capital investment, and on intergenerational transfers."²⁴ These findings have significant gender-based implications regarding incentives to invest in conservation and in the prevention, rehabilitation and restoration of degraded land.²⁵

In addition to having insecure land rights, women are also less likely to know about, and have access to, technical information and convergence services

Women are central to successful efforts to manage land sustainably, build resilience and ensure food security, and they play critical roles in the agricultural value chain including the availability, access and utilization of food.

Source: UNCCD Science Policy Interface, Conceptual Framework for LDN

Land Degradation Neutrality and Women

The UNCCD's stated goal of achieving land degradation neutrality via reductions in degradation or through rehabilitation and restoration of degraded land will require a shift in many countries away from migration and towards people staying to work on and rehabilitate or restore their land -- a change from "degrade-abandon-move" to "protect-sustain-rehabilitate-restore." To that end, ensuring women's land rights can generate the incentive, security, opportunity and authority to make decisions about ways to conserve the land and to ensure its long-term productivity.

to help improve land use and sustainability, such as extension services, inputs, new technologies for sustainable land management and loans and credit for climate-smart or drought-resistance investments.²⁶ They are less likely to have access to markets and to potential alternative livelihoods. Women may lack risk-management expertise and insurance, and they are often excluded from climate change programming geared towards "landowners" or leaders. For example, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) warns that "a shift to more resilient intercropping systems has sometimes cost women their control over specific crops."²⁷

A 2014 study highlighted the research gaps "on gendered knowledge, preferences, risk taking and access to innovation in land-use decision-making" stressing that "male and female responses in the adoption of agroforestry practices and other investment opportunities [such as those related to ecosystems services] reflect differing exposure to and perceptions of risk."²⁸ In Mali, for example, "households that combine gender-inclusive decision-making with relational agro-ecological knowledge and a mix of intensive and traditional extensive agriculture have [shown] the highest capacity for constructing adaptive soil and tree

management strategies."²⁹ Land-use conflicts, including those sparked by competition over increasingly scarce land and competing needs for crops and grazing, often disproportionately impact women. Conversely, women make more socially-oriented land-use decisions focused on the welfare of the entire household and/or community, leading to reduced incidence of conflict.³⁰

Land governance, participation and oversight

Land governance includes international, regional, national, community and customary systems. To enhance global capacity to cope with land degradation, climate change and biodiversity losses, women's meaningful participation and leadership is essential in land and environmental governance institutions, decision-making processes related to land use and degradation, and desertification, land degradation and drought (DLDD) policies and programming. Women's active engagement, coupled with recognition of their unique knowledge and priorities, has been shown to enhance effective implementation and sustainability of resilience interventions.³¹

Despite increasing numbers of prominent women among land and environmental rights defenders and activists, women in affected communities continue to be excluded from land governance and oversight, including decision-making around large-scale land-based investments and infrastructure, development and conservation projects, resulting in women being excluded from compensation and benefits, schemes or avenues of redress. Women rarely head or chair rural councils in many affected countries.³² For example, in Tanzania, where progressive laws mandate at least 25 per cent council-level participation by women but do not require a gender quorum (i.e., a minimum number of women to be present when decisions and votes are taken), women continue to be absent, silent or marginalized in discussions about major decisions affecting the entire community, including the fate of their livelihood.³³ As governments increasingly seek to recognize

communities' land rights and set up local land and resource governance structures, the definition of community membership and rights continue to exclude women, typically seen as "transient" members of the community, expected to "marry out" of their birth communities or be "guests" in their husbands' villages.³⁴ Without full recognition of women as community members, they remain marginalized from participation, governance and oversight of land, resource and environmental matters.

Resilience and adaptation

Given their role in agriculture and dependence on land, women in the regions of the world most affected by climate change bear the brunt of land degradation, unpredictable rainfall, decreased food production, displacement and increased hunger and poverty.³⁵ There is increasing recognition of the effectiveness and importance of incorporating affected women's expertise and ensuring a gender-responsive approach to managing slow-onset climate change-related concerns such as drought and desertification.

Gender-responsive smallholder-driven rural development through secure tenure and access to alternative livelihood is critical to DLDD resilience and adaptation.³⁶ Emerging evidence suggests that when women hold secure rights to land, efforts to tackle land degradation are more successful, and responsibilities and benefits associated with DLDD and climate change response programmes are more equitably distributed. Nonetheless, overemphasis on women as chief stewards of the environment can overwhelm women's already heavy and disproportionate share of care work, whether of the home or of the planet.³⁷

Data and evidence gaps

There is no global or consistent national data on the true scope of women's land and resource rights.³⁸ Efforts to quantify women's land ownership is

often criticized because no clear, universal definition of land "ownership" for women exists, and women (and men) can access and use land under a broad range of legal and customary land tenure arrangements. There is no systematically collected data on women's land rights or access to land.³⁹

The UNCCD is particularly linked with the Sustainable Development Goal 15 to halt and reverse land degradation, including desertification, as captured in target 15.3 and its associated indicator 15.3.1: Proportion of land that is degraded over total land area.⁴⁰ Notably, the indicators adopted for SDG 15 do not include explicit sex disaggregation or gender-specific data capture. Linking SDG 15 indicators with the other SDG land indicators will help supplement and leverage the data. For example, SDG indicators 1.4.2 (under Goal 1 on ending poverty), 5.a.1 and 5.a.2 (under Goal 5 on achieving gender equality) provide global guidance to governments on tallying data on women's land rights in law and in practice, both as formally documented and as based on women's (and men's) perceptions of the security of their land rights.⁴¹

Better sex-disaggregated data hold the potential to revolutionize and improve government-led processes to craft evidence-based policies and programming and to empower communities and women to monitor and enforce their land rights. To this end, gender-specific qualitative research and case studies to complement and nuance the quantitative data⁴² will generate evidence and lessons from impact and resilience strategies of women in lands affected by degradation and desertification.⁴³ The UNCCD Science Policy Interface recently mandated that all land degradation neutrality (LDN) efforts that include monitoring of indicators be sex-disaggregated and cautioned that "if gender is excluded from the analysis of preliminary assessment data (e.g., poorly selected indicators, lack of advanced planning for the disaggregation of data by sex), then the findings will be incomplete or misleading."⁴⁴

Definitions

Gender Equality

This refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development.

Source: UN Women, [OSAGI Gender Mainstreaming - Concepts and definitions](#)

Empowerment of Women and Girls

The empowerment of women and girls concerns their gaining power and control over their own lives. It involves awareness-raising, building self-confidence, expansion of choices and increased access to and control over resources and actions to transform the structures and institutions which reinforce and perpetuate gender-based discrimination and inequality. This implies that to be empowered women must not only have equal capabilities (such as education and health) and equal access to resources and opportunities (such as land and employment), but they must also have the agency to use these rights, capabilities, resources and opportunities to

make strategic choices and decisions (such as is provided through leadership opportunities and participation in political institutions).

Sources: UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women, [Gender Equality, UN Coherence and You](#)

Gender Mainstreaming

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.

Source: ECOSOC agreed conclusions 1997/2

Human Rights-Based Approach

A human rights-based approach includes three essential elements: i) laws, policies and programs must aim to fulfill human rights; ii) rights-holders are empowered to participate in policy formulation and claim their entitlements, and duty-bearers meet their obligations and are held accountable for actions that impact or impede human rights; and iii) international human rights principles and standards guide all policies and programming in all sectors and in all phases of the process.

Source: UN Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, [Human Rights and Climate Change](#)

GLOBAL NORMS ON GENDER EQUALITY, LAND AND NATURAL RESOURCES

International human rights instruments guarantee women equality and non-discrimination in rights to land and access to natural resources.⁴⁵ Secure rights to land and natural resources are often a precondition for women’s ability to realize other human rights enshrined in international human rights treaties,⁴⁶ including economic livelihood, adequate standard of living, housing, food security, education, health, freedom from violence and participation in decision-making at all levels.⁴⁷

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) instructs States to address food security (“freedom from hunger”) by “developing or reforming agrarian systems in such a way as to achieve the most efficient development and utilization of natural resources,” including land.⁴⁸ The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) requires States to modify socio-cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of discrimination and stereotypes.⁴⁹ The recent General Recommendation 34 on the rights of rural women of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women directly instructs States Parties to uphold rural women’s rights to land and natural resources, and provides detailed guidance to this end.⁵⁰

The rights of indigenous peoples are increasingly recognized as foundational to conservation and successful natural resource management.⁵¹ While at times collective rights and women’s individual freedoms can clash, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) calls on States to particularly attend to the rights and special needs of indigenous women and to ensure that indigenous women “enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and

discrimination” (art. 22). Global policy documents, such as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action⁵² and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reinforce a focus on gender equality and the empowerment of women in access and control of natural resources such as land.

The 2030 Agenda’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recognize women’s land rights as an explicit cross-cutting catalyst for ending poverty (Goal 1), reaching food security and improved nutrition (Goal 2), and achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls (Goal 5), which could potentially revolutionize implementation of normative standards through newly consistent data collection on women’s rights to land and natural resources critical to addressing land degradation. Spearheaded by FAO and the Committee on World Food Security, the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security emphasize gender equality as a principle. Aligned with this principle, they give direction on tenure governance. They also task States to “ensure that women and girls have equal tenure rights and access to land, fisheries and forests independent of their civil and marital status.”

ENTRY POINTS FOR INTEGRATION OF A GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN UNCCD PROCESS AND IMPLEMENTATION

The UNCCD is among the leading multilateral agreements on land and development that explicitly addresses gender concerns and women’s roles in addressing desertification.⁵³ As the only Rio Convention with explicit reference to women’s roles and participation in the text of the Convention, and with the experience gained over the past decades, the UNCCD offers significant opportunities for accelerated gender-responsive implementation. A UNCCD review of gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the Convention over the past few decades argues for a stronger approach to addressing gender inequality in the context of the Convention.⁵⁴ In addition, the Scientific Conceptual Framework for Land Degradation Neutrality, issued in 2017, advocates for gender assessments and data collection as prerequisites for effective implementation.

This section outlines gaps and promising points of entry for integrating a gender perspective and for gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the Convention’s core mandate through its associated processes and instruments. There is a special emphasis on the landmark achievement for gender equality during the COP 13 that took place in Ordos, Inner Mongolia, China in September 2017.

The UNCCD

While the Convention contains references to women and girls, it stops short of employing a gender-sensitive and human rights-based approach⁵⁵ and of drawing a clear connection between gender equality issues and the realization of Parties’ obligations under the UNCCD. While there are several explicit references to women in the text of the Convention, they pertain primarily to increasing the participation and capacities of women to combat land degradation.⁵⁶ The need for a gender perspective in the fulfillment of UNCCD

obligations is implied under Article 4(2)(c) which obligated Parties to “integrate strategies for poverty eradication” in their efforts to combat land degradation. Given the well-established relationship between gender inequality and poverty, UNCCD implementation efforts would benefit from further clarity on the role of women’s empowerment in the successful eradication of poverty and in measures addressing land degradation and desertification. The regional implementation annexes provide more detailed, context-specific elements Parties should include in their national action programmes, but with few references to women. In responding, for example, to the UNCCD regional annex for Africa call for decentralization and empowering of local communities,⁵⁷ Parties could take targeted measures to promote gender-equal social norms and local traditions aligned with constitutional and human rights of community members, particularly women.

Several declarations and decisions by the COP 13, most notably the recently adopted 2017 Ordos Declaration,⁵⁸ “pledge to address gender inequalities which undermine progress in the implementation of the Convention,” including by pursuing gender-responsive implementation at all levels. The Namibia Declaration⁵⁹ and the Ankara Initiative⁶⁰ call for specific actions related to gender issues and are indicative of the evolving commitment to gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the UNCCD.⁶¹ Several COP 13 decisions further recognize the crucial contributions of gender equality and empowerment of women to

the effective implementation of the Convention and the 2018-2030 strategic framework, as well as the 2030 Agenda’s Sustainable Development Goals. A landmark decision on “gender equality and women’s empowerment for the enhanced and effective implementation of the Convention”⁶² recognizes that mainstreaming gender will “strengthen the effective and efficient implementation of action on the ground.” UNCCD Parties formally adopted the Gender Plan of Action (discussion in section on Gender Plan of Action (2017) below).

Gender Mainstreaming in National Reports

The current UNCCD reporting process, i.e. the Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System (PRAIS), is used by more than 100 countries to report on progress made towards achieving land degradation neutrality (LDN), and as part of the LDN Target Setting Programme (LDN) implemented by the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD. With the adoption of the new strategic framework, Parties will likely have the opportunity to report on different aspects relating to DLDD. To date, the PRAIS does not seem to include a specific requirement for reporting on gender-responsive progress in these contexts.

A UNCCD review of gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the Convention analyzed national reports submitted between 1999 and 2014. Reporting guidelines during the period assessed, including the standardized PRAIS framework applicable to reports submitted between 2010-2014, did not require gender-specific reporting. Between 2010-2014, overall 23 per cent of submitted national reports explicitly referenced addressing gender issues or actively involved women. About 17 per cent of Parties’ reports from Africa mentioned

gender issues; 24 per cent of Parties from Asia (with an unexplained drop from a higher level in 2010); 9 per cent of Latin America and Caribbean; and about a third of the handful of Northern Mediterranean reports submitted. The bulk of all reports highlighted women’s participation in programmes. The more recent reports display more critical analysis of complex gender dynamics and the need for a comprehensive approach to gender equality and women’s empowerment. In 2016-2017, the UNCCD secretariat piloted case studies in five countries to identify gender gaps in implementation and to propose best practices and lessons learned for mainstreaming a gender perspective in LDN processes. The relatively small-scale case studies – government-run LDN projects in Ethiopia and Uganda, and civil society-driven sustainable land management efforts in Burkina Faso, Chad and Senegal - emphasized livelihood, including women’s primary needs, as critical to identifying gender-based capacity gaps and entry points for women’s empowerment. They further highlighted building women’s capacities to access markets, including more accurate estimation of real production costs of their goods.

Source: UNCCD, Overview of gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the Convention: 1998-2018, ICCD/COP(13)/CRP.1 (2017)

UNCCD Strategic Framework 2018-2030

The UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework adopted at COP 13 paves the way for Parties and the Secretariat to undertake concerted efforts to ensure its gender-responsive implementation. The COP's adoption of the Future Strategic Framework (7/COP.13) mandates all UNCCD stakeholders and partners to take into account the need for gender-responsive policies and measures, strive for full and effective participation of both men and women in planning, decision-making and implementation at all levels, and enhance the empowerment of women, girls and youth in the affected areas. The newly adopted UNCCD Gender Plan of Action will support gender-responsive implementation of the Strategy (see discussion in the sections on Advocacy Policy Framework on Gender and Gender Plan of Action below).⁶³

The new Strategic Framework itself explicitly refers to women only once under strategic objective 2 “to improve the living conditions of affected populations” (2.3) so that “local people, especially women and youth, are empowered and participate in decision-making processes in combatting DLDD.”⁶⁴ The Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) has previously stressed the need to clearly articulate concerns affecting women in the context of the objective on the living conditions of affected populations.⁶⁵ The Strategic Framework contains several gender-neutral expected outcomes that bear particular relevance and disproportionate impact on women. Expected outcomes in terms of adequate food security and access to water (2.1), improved and diversified livelihoods (2.2), community resilience to drought (3.2), enhanced land productivity (1.1) and sustainable land management (1.4, 4.1) could be significantly enhanced by identifying and addressing the difficulties faced by rural and indigenous women in achieving these goals given their insecure tenure rights and obstacles to accessing inputs required for investment in land conservation and yields.

The Strategic Framework contains no mention of “land tenure” or “land rights” critical to supporting incentives for effective DLDD implementation, but

rather focuses on sustainable land management, land productivity, ecosystem services and land degradation neutrality. Implementation efforts – emboldened by the COP 13 focus on the foundational importance of land rights, including in the Ordos Declaration⁶⁶ – could better acknowledge diverse land rights regimes and their effect on women's rights.

Decision 7 adopting the Strategic Framework requires that a gender perspective be mainstreamed into all types of DLDD plans, policies, projects and research. Efforts are therefore needed to ensure that implementation is based on the foundational prerequisite of gender analysis to capture and address gender-specific impacts of land degradation, to include gender components in the reporting and monitoring framework of the new 2018-2030 Strategic Framework and to capture gender statistics and sex-disaggregated data to tailor policies and gauge progress.⁶⁷

Workplans

The comprehensive multi-year workplan for the Convention (2018–2021) and two-year costed work programme for the Convention (2018–2019) (“workplans”)⁶⁸ operationalize the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework through a decisive gender mainstreaming mandate evidenced by the adoption of the Gender Plan of Action and specific internal references to such priorities.

A main outcome for the 2018-2021 workplan requires that “[g]ender issues are increasingly taken into account in plans to address desertification/land degradation and drought.”⁶⁹ In defining Strategic Objective 2 on improving the living conditions of affected populations, the workplans' results framework outcome 2.2 calls on affected Parties to draw on “UNCCD guidance and technical advice on integrating gender issues into UNCCD implementation and design of transformative LDN projects” as part of plans to address desertification, land degradation and drought. As with guidance on operationalizing the drought initiative and voluntary sand and dust storm framework, the Secretariat and partners should focus on developing, disseminating and bolstering capacity to provide “technical advice, policy guidance and partnerships on integrating gender issues and promoting

gender equality in UNCCD implementation and design of transformative LDN projects.”⁷⁰

The detailed workplans, referenced as ICCD/COP(13)/8-ICCD/CRIC(16)/2 further call on the Secretariat to focus, inter alia, on supporting “UNCCD stakeholders in taking a pragmatic, results-oriented approach to issues that are critical for effective implementation but often difficult, for various reasons, to work on. Such issues include the role of women in managing and using land, and land rights in a broader sense” (para. 10 (a)).⁷¹ The New York Liaison Office of the UNCCD Secretariat is tasked with promoting land-related partnerships and initiatives involving various stakeholders, notably youth, women, civil society and academia” (para. 18).⁷² It will be important to develop clear parameters to capture how these activities will be monitored and progress assessed. The Gender Plan of Action should clearly instruct that such steps must be prioritized and adequately resourced.

During 2018-2019, the External Relations, Policy and Advocacy (ERPA) programme will prioritize support for implementation of “critical elements of the proposed gender plan of action to aid Parties in their efforts to increase the share of women benefitting from the implementation of LDN, and drought and risk mitigation efforts” (para. 23(b)).⁷³ The focus on increasing the number of possible female beneficiaries is a critical and positive step and should serve as the impetus to systematically address and barriers to women’s engagement and to seek deeper gender equality outcomes.

The Secretariat’s capacity-building activities aim to strengthen staffing competency for gender mainstreaming (para. 38) and provide a “toolbox” for gender matters (para. 39(e)).⁷⁴ The budget allocation proposed for these activities bear examination to assess whether the amount will be sufficient for effective and thorough execution.

The COP 13 decision on capacity-building (decision 8/COP.13) requests the Secretariat to “develop and strengthen partnerships to build the required capacities to mainstream gender in the implementation of the Convention in order to enhance the role of women and youth in combatting [DLDD] and increase the resilience of the women vulnerable to DLDD.”⁷⁵ However,

these efforts must be executed within “existing resources.” Given the great need and demand for capacity development on gender issues, DLDD and LDN, such limitation will likely curtail the reach of efforts due to the currently inadequate human and financial resources dedicated to the development of a gender unit and architecture within the UNCCD Secretariat.

Advocacy Policy Framework on Gender (2011)

Although not formally adopted, the 2011 Advocacy Policy Framework (APF) on Gender⁷⁶ contains 20 time-bound and action-oriented targets for gender mainstreaming across four spheres: policy, organizational, constituency and delivery, and it is aimed to serve as a key guiding instrument for the implementation of the UNCCD and its strategy.⁷⁷ The 2011 APF policy process-oriented approach was interpreted as focusing primarily on women’s participation and gender-balance in representation, particularly among experts and civil society representatives. Nevertheless, this APF remains relevant and instructive on creating an enabling environment for implementation of national plans, as well as concrete guidance on paths for enhancing robust, gender-equality advocacy within the UNCCD framework and processes.

Gender Plan of Action (2017)

Accompanied by a landmark decision on “gender equality and women’s empowerment for the enhanced and effective implementation of the Convention,”⁷⁸ UNCCD Parties adopted the Convention’s first Gender Plan of Action (GPA) during COP 13 in September 2017. The GPA aims to advance national efforts to achieve the LDN target.

The GPA is designed to support gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the 2018-2030 Strategy and to supplement rather than replace the existing APF on Gender. Drawing on the Convention, it outlines three key implementation areas for women’s engagement: (a) awareness-raising and participation in the design and implementation of programmes; (b) decision-making processes at the local level in the governance of development, implementation and review of regional

and national action programmes (RAPs and NAPs); and (c) capacity-building, education and public awareness, particularly at local level through the support of local organizations (para. 6). Importantly, the GPA recognizes structural inequalities that curtail women's land use and management rights (para. 11) and asserts that gender mainstreaming is essential "to address the gender inequalities that disproportionately undermine women's effectiveness as agents of change in the implementation of the Convention, [and] would enhance the achievement of land degradation neutrality (LDN) targets" (para. 8).

The GPA outlines four priority thematic areas to close the gender gap: (a) Participation in decisions taken during the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of initiatives to implement the UNCCD; (b) Integrating women's economic empowerment in UNCCD implementation activities in order to eradicate their extreme poverty; (c) Strengthening women's land rights and access to resources; and (d) Enhancing women's access to improved knowledge and technologies that relate to effective UNCCD implementation (para. 17). The GPA's five objectives for potential interventions are to: (a) enhance women's role as agents of change by addressing the gender inequalities they face; (b) build the capacities of women and girls to access the resources they need to improve their livelihoods, manage land sustainably and become resilient to drought; (c) build the technical capacities of UNCCD stakeholders at all levels to design and implement gender-responsive plans and programmes, including in LDN interventions; (d) develop a baseline on gender-related issues in land degradation and desertification, and monitor, report and regularly review progress in the implementation and achievement of objectives; and (e) mobilize adequate resources to achieve these objectives (para. 15).

Refining the GPA

In adopting the GPA, the COP invited Parties and other stakeholders to use the plan and, based on lessons learned, contribute to its refinement at the next biennial meeting.⁷⁹ It further called on UN Women and other relevant UN entities, international organizations and partners to roll out the plan and to support Parties

in piloting it, stressing synergies and the promotion of women's and girls' empowerment in the implementation of the Convention.⁸⁰

The GPA provides a critical basis and launch pad for more systematic and consistent gender mainstreaming in implementing the Convention, new strategy and workplans. Despite strong objectives for integrating a gender perspective, the GPA's proposed mechanisms for implementation focus on access to resources, rather than tackling needed structural and institutional changes (paras. 18-21), such as the establishment of a dedicated UNCCD Women Major Group and mandated gender reviews of LDN target-setting programmes and NAPs.

Gender Analysis in LDN

The UNCCD Science Policy Interface recommends integrating gender considerations into implementation of the UNCCD, including through LDN planning and implementation, decision-making, stakeholder engagement and the preliminary assessments for LDN. In particular, SPI argues that excluding gender from the analysis of preliminary assessment data for LDN activities will lead to incomplete or misleading findings.

Source: UNCCD Secretariat, *Advocacy Policy Frameworks: Gender, Drought and Sand and Dust Storms* (2017), para. 12.

The GPA's conclusions and recommendations section "encourages" Parties to "incorporate gender perspectives into their activities towards implementing the Convention" (para. 66 (a)(ii)). The integration of a gender perspective in implementation of the UNCCD should be seen as an integral prerequisite of all such activities, including through conditioning of financial resources support.

In rolling out the GPA, Parties and supporting UNCCD entities should at a minimum require a gender analysis and collection and use of sex-disaggregated data — a foundational aspect of any gender mainstreaming work — at the outset and throughout a policy or

intervention process (e.g., in implementing the strategy and workplans, developing an LDN Target Setting Program, NAPs and RAPs) to its lessons-learned phase.⁸¹ Gender mainstreaming would delineate and elucidate the impacts on all women and men to ensure targeted and effective policies and interventions.

GPA implementation should set as a clear objective that Parties ensure a national legal and regulatory framework for gender equality, especially in areas related to the Convention such as women's rights to land and productive resources. Given that women are more harshly affected by land tenure insecurity due to direct and indirect discriminatory laws and practices at the national, community and family level, the GPA could promote changes to laws and social norms that impose barriers to such rights.

The GPA recognizes as one of four priorities the need to strengthen women's land rights and access to resources (para 17(c)). In doing so, GPA pilots should clarify that land rights are not limited to ownership and tenure security but account for a range of land rights that must be legally recognized, socially legitimized, enforceable and include women's right to participate in decision-making about land use and governance.⁸²

In addition, the GPA rollout should reinforce the COP decision on integrating SDG 15 in UNCCD implementation (Decision 3/COP.13) by ensuring the wider elements of the 2030 Agenda, including promoting gender equality and empowering all women and girls.⁸³ GPA pilots should address SDG 5 (gender equality), but equally account for SDG 1 (end poverty). This goal is especially relevant to women's land rights (indicator 1.4.2), and covers all types of land (not only agricultural land as under indicator 5.a.1) and a broader set of land tenure regimes and rights.

The GPA should closely inform the implementation of the Policy Advocacy on Drought (Decision 29/COP.13) and Policy Advocacy Framework to Combat Sand and Dust Storms (Decision 31/COP.13)⁸⁴ by providing pragmatic guidance and concrete measures for gender mainstreaming in those policy frameworks, insisting on gender-responsive implementation and equipping the Secretariat and Global Mechanism (GM) staff with expert personnel, structures, mechanisms and

tools to support gender-responsive implementation of national policies on drought and sand and dust storms (SDS).

Finally, the GPA (as well as the policy advocacy framework on drought and SDS)⁸⁵ should consider adopting an explicit human rights-based approach rooted in equality and non-discrimination, human dignity and empowerment that challenges power dynamics through participation, transparency and accountability.⁸⁶

Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) efforts

The UNCCD's focus on Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) efforts have noticeably shifted towards inclusion of gender issues.⁸⁷ The SPI's Scientific Conceptual Framework for Land Degradation Neutrality, released in conjunction with COP 13, instructs Parties to integrate a gender perspective in planning and implementation of LDN, mandates preliminary LDN assessment that includes consideration of gender inequality and women's land tenure security, calls for ensuring women's genuine contributions in stakeholder engagements accounting for gender imbalances in power and access to information and requires inclusion of gender-sensitive indicators and sex-disaggregated data to accurately monitor progress.⁸⁸

The LDN Scientific Framework contains a specific section on "Gender considerations for the design of preliminary assessments" setting out recommended practices ranging from gender-sensitive data collection

In assessments and implementation of LDN, if women are not actively invited to participate and regularly engaged, the impact of interventions designed to avoid, reduce or reverse land degradation will be much less than their potential because the strong influence of women in most land-based livelihood systems.

- SPI, *Conceptual Framework for LDN*, p. 74

to engagement of gender experts to refine research methodology and incorporate a nuanced context analysis of the factors that undercut women's land rights (see text box).

By the end of COP 13 in September 2017, 113 countries had joined the LDN target-setting programme which supports countries in the establishment of voluntary LDN targets, accelerating the implementation of transformative programmes and projects with positive changes. Equipped with new, gender-sensitive guidance by the SPI, UNCCD organs and Parties are poised to more systematically and consistently mainstream gender in the definition of meaningful targets at national level. In addition, transformative projects and programmes will take a strategic gender-responsive approach, contribute to the achievement of LDN and address the needs of the most vulnerable groups, such as small farmers, rural communities and indigenous peoples, with a particular focus on women and young people, while securing local communities' and women's land tenure, as well as other land-related rights. They will also contribute to creating jobs and additional sources of income.

Notably, of 14 summary reports from participating Parties in the initial LDN pilot target-setting project in 2014-15, only two, Chad and Ethiopia, mentioned women or gender issues,⁸⁹ though most of the pilot countries have made efforts to ensure a balanced representation of men and women in their LDN Working Groups that led the LDN target-setting process at the country level.

The Global Mechanism (GM) has also been supporting countries in the definition of LDN targets and will continue to provide support to countries in designing and implementing LDN transformative projects and programmes and mobilizing necessary resources. In addition to translating the LDN conceptual framework⁹⁰ into practice and fostering alliances among financing partners, the GM will promote gender-responsive and socially-inclusive LDN transformative projects and programmes, demonstrating economic benefits of LDN investments, in particular for women.

Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN (2017) by the Science Policy Interface

Recommended practices include:

- Collect information about both men and women. Ask questions about specific individuals or groups and identify them by sex.
- Collect information from men and women.
- Those collecting and analyzing the data need to understand gender roles and social dynamics, with questions adapted for context.
- Budget and plan for the collecting of sex-disaggregated data.
- Work with a gender expert early in the process to define the research question and methodology.
- Make use of FAO's Gender and Land Rights Database which highlights the major political, legal and cultural factors that influence the realization of women's land rights throughout the world.

Finance mechanisms

Several major international mechanisms disburse environmental and climate financing, including for implementation of the UNCCD and other Rio Conventions. Over the past few years, most such major financing institutions have adopted gender-specific policies and action plans. The Global Environment Facility (GEF), for example, has led efforts through the adoption of a Gender Equality Action Plan⁹¹ with requirements for national-level project design and financing, such as: undertaking project gender analysis; consulting with women, individuals and networks that work on gender equality and including gender experts in projects; developing project components with gender targets; collecting sex-disaggregated data; and creating budget items for gender-related activities.⁹² In addition, the GEF Accreditation Panel requires that all applicants seeking to become a GEF

Project Agency must demonstrate compliance with the minimum gender equality action requirements.⁹³ The GEF, for example, reviews member entities to ensure compliance with its Gender Equality Action Plan, which revealed general compliance with incorporating gender perspectives in project development.⁹⁴

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) has a gender policy and strategy currently under review. In late August 2017, the GCF launched its first gender equality guide to climate finance.⁹⁵ The GCF is now the first and only climate finance mechanism to mandate an initial gender and social assessment and a gender and social inclusion action plan as part of its funding proposal submission process.⁹⁶ It provides guidance to accredited entities submitting funding proposals on the type of gender-related documentation required during the project planning, preparation and development stage. To date, 84 per cent of all GCF's approved funding proposals contained an initial gender assessment and 67 per cent contained a project-level gender and social inclusion action plan.⁹⁷

Decision 3/COP12 mandates the Global Mechanism to assist in the creation of an independent LDN Fund to be made available for the full realization of LDN initiatives. The Fund was launched at COP 13 to invest in sustainable land management and land restoration projects worldwide, within a strict environmental and social safeguard framework.⁹⁸ The new LDN Fund is touted as a “first-of-its-kind investment vehicle leveraging public money to raise private capital for sustainable land management and land restoration projects worldwide.” Such public-private partnerships have been criticized in other contexts as tending to sideline gender issues and prioritize “return on investment” over a rights-based perspective that aims to ensure that those most marginalized and affected benefit.⁹⁹ A micro-financing component is also contemplated to bridge women and women's groups access to financing. The GPA framework can provide institutional legitimacy in devising thoughtful, enforceable social and gender safeguards and transparent gender-responsive monitoring and reporting to guide the LDN Fund.

National-level entry points

Parties have a unique opportunity to promote gender equality in the Land Degradation Neutrality Target-Setting Program. Gender considerations are critical to the formulation of voluntary targets to achieve LDN at national and sub-national levels by 2030. During the LDN target-setting processes, Parties, with support from the GM and regional bodies, facilitated the convening of women's organizations and indigenous, rural and community women leaders to gather inputs and ensure that gender perspectives are systematically reflected in LDN targets and measures. The development of transformative projects and programmes to achieve the nationally determined targets will also require a gender-responsive approach to ensure successful implementation and delivery of multiple benefits to women. The GM is currently working on developing a gender and social framework for transformative projects and programmes and will provide support to national entities in ensuring that the realization of LDN ambitions is gender-responsive.

UNCCD-mandated National, Regional and Sub-regional Action Plans should undergo gender equality and gender-responsiveness analysis, including of elements to strengthen women's land rights. This review can be carried out by an entity designated by the UNCCD Secretariat and national women's rights organizations with relevant expertise.¹⁰⁰

The new UNCCD workplans referenced above likewise outline several potential entry-points of support to Parties by UNCCD structures, as cited above, such as the ERPA 2018-2019 priority “to aid Parties in their efforts to increase the share of women benefitting from the implementation of LDN drought and risk mitigation efforts” (para. 23(b)).

While not currently called for under the GPA, Parties should conduct (or draw upon existing) gender-sensitive review of national land and property rights-related laws (this would include an analysis of gender equality provisions in the constitution and laws on land, inheritance, family and marital property and community governance). Such information can help feed into existing indicators, such as those for reporting under SDGs 1, 5 and 15 a.¹⁰¹

Section IV Highlights: UNCCD-Related Entry Points for Gender Mainstreaming

UNCCD (Convention)	Strategic Framework 2018-2030	Workplan (2018–2021) and costed plan (2018–2019)	Gender Plan of Action (2017) <i>-Link to APF Gender 2011</i>	Advocacy Policy Frame- works on Drought and on Dust and Sand Storms	LDN Efforts <i>-LDN Frame- work (SPI) -LDN Target Set- ting Programme</i>	Finance Mechanisms <i>-LDN Fund</i>
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- Focus on participation
- Take a human rights-based approach in connection to Parties' UNCCC obligations
- Set clear objective that Parties ensure a national legal and regulatory framework for gender equality, women's land rights
- Clarify that land rights are not limited to ownership and tenure security
- Mandate gender analysis and review
- Specify how to equip Secretariat & GM, national focal points to support gender-responsive implementation of national policies for drought, SDS, LDN.
- Establish dedicated gender mechanisms (Women's Major Group or WGC)
- Utilize CRIC, Committee on Science and Technology/SPI to integrate gender indicators and sex-disaggregated data, take a gender approach, and promote a focus on gender issues in thematic reviews
- Promote and fund inter-Rio Synergies, joint initiatives and trainings for, at a minimum, secretariat staff and national focal points

PROMISING GENDER MAINSTREAMING PRACTICES IN LOCAL EFFORTS TO ADDRESS LAND DEGRADATION

This section outlines promising practices in integrating a gender perspective in policies, programmes, interventions and initiatives aimed to prevent and mitigate land degradation and desertification or decrease rural poverty. Successful cases typically employ a combination of complementary strategies and approaches. The examples outlined below highlight several critical aspects of gender mainstreaming.

Addressing gender roles to empower women

Women-led mitigation of land degradation and desertification

Affected countries offer examples of women's mitigation and adaptation measures in water management, land conservation and land rehabilitation. Rural and indigenous women and men have continued to struggle to save their natural resources from deforestation and damaging extraction of minerals, oil and gas and against further expansion of corporate-led monocrop plantations. Women's agro-ecological approach has helped in coping with desertification through practices such as water harvesting, agroforestry, use of simple structures like farm ponds for building resilience on farms, enhancing soil fertility through organic means to improve water holding capacity, changing the way crops are grown and introducing drought-resistant crop varieties.¹⁰²

Brazil: Aimed to empower women in their role as "guardians of the forest," the Bolsa Floresta Program is an example of women leading restoration and rehabilitation of degraded forest lands. Brazil's first project to be nominally recognized as a REDD (Reducing

Emission from Deforestation and Degradation) project with funding from the state of Amazonas, Bradesco Bank and the Coca-Cola Company, the Bolsa Floresta Program provided a combination of payments to families, community associations, social development projects and income-generating activities as incentives to avoid deforestation. The monthly payments to families, modeled on the highly popular Bolsa Familia, were issued through bank cards in the name of married women with children to maximize women's role in the family and ensure more efficient spending on immediate family needs.¹⁰³ Equipped with bank cards, women were able to access formal economy inputs and increased their participation in community meetings due to their enhanced social status and personal confidence.¹⁰⁴ The programme also led to greater reliance on non-timber forest products for income.¹⁰⁵

Senegal: A USAID-funded Feed the Future project allocated parcels of degraded, abandoned land to women and provided training and inputs in exchange for land restoration.¹⁰⁶ From the beginning, the broader programme hired women as project implementers, with women constituting 40 per cent of programme leadership positions and 25 per cent of programme positions. Additionally, women comprised 25 per cent of the agents and 25 per cent of the members

of the community working groups. The intervention increased women's knowledge of agricultural techniques and diverse sources of nutrition, appointed them as gatekeepers of new technologies (such as biofortified foods), enabled equal participation in governance-related activities and provided access to land. By 2014, the programme had 52 locations, which spanned 80 hectares and benefitted nearly 4,000 thousand women.¹⁰⁷ The programme delivered on securing women's land rights, which boosted incentives for restoring land and promoted sustainable agricultural practices. The women used a suite of innovative conservation agricultural techniques to make the land more productive and resilient and to sustain low maintenance, micro-nutrient-rich crops. In addition to restoring lands, the crops produced provide women with nutritious food and a new stream of income.¹⁰⁸

China and India: In 2004-05, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), in collaboration with national governments, launched two major projects in China and India. In the desert-like land area of Wulin Mountains, efforts were made to overcome gender-based discrimination while promoting land conservation. Women were trained for food and cash crop production through a series of land improvement activities, including the conversion of dryland to paddies, livestock and fish production. Likewise, a year earlier IFAD supported a project for revival of traditional soil and water conservation methods (e.g., percolation ponds and pitcher irrigation) for indigenous women in drylands of Andhra Pradesh, India. The results of these projects noted increases not only in

the productivity of land, but also and more importantly in women's self-esteem and social position. These indigenous and rural women advocated at various local, regional and international forums to maintain sustainable production and consumption thereby increasing economic resiliency and capacity to address desertification and improve local livelihoods.¹⁰⁹

India: India's flagship rural employment programme, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005, with the participation/involvement of a significant number of women, has created jobs and improved wages. It is tailored to provide equity for women. Its green jobs have produced environmentally sound productive assets under the decentralized administration of village local councils (Gram Panchayats). These productive assets include durable and sustainable water conservation, water harvesting and irrigation works, drought proofing through afforestation and tree planting, rural connectivity, renovation of traditional water bodies and land development. Research has validated the impact of the productive assets produced under MGNREGA, finding improvements in the environment and natural resource regeneration. Specifically, water availability has expanded, dual cropping has been implemented and agricultural output has improved (due to better irrigation access supporting crop diversity). Independent research has also found that the economic opportunities afforded under MGNREGA were linked to women's broader empowerment.¹¹⁰

Kenya: National Gender Machinery and its Role for Intra-Governmental Environment and Gender Integration

While gender issues related to UNCCD have been articulated, the relevant strategies and implementation frameworks for addressing these issues need to be addressed at the country level. In particular, national gender equality mechanisms are needed to provide capacity, guidelines and tools on how to mainstream a gender perspective in Rio Convention implementation processes; otherwise a common default is for implementers to “turn a blind eye” on such matters. In Kenya, the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC), established by the Constitution, plays that role by actively engaging national ministries, county-level government offices and public and private actors on gender mainstreaming, and by producing a government “score card” on gender integration. The NGEC ensured Kenya’s national Gender Policy provisions on gender and the environment include clear implementation frameworks to be jointly

advanced by the two bodies. It has coordinated with the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources on climate change matters under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and identified the need to add a focus on the UNCCD. The NGEC was appointed by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources to integrate a gender perspective in Kenya’s Nationally Determined Contributions plan. Under the legal mandate of Kenya’s new climate change law, which requires a gender strategy for its implementation, the NGEC is working with national and county-level bodies to develop gender-responsive implementation frameworks. It has also convened public and private actors to engage in the issue of gender-responsible implementation actions and plans to monitor and evaluate the inclusion of gender perspectives in all climate change programming.

Source: Commissioner Winfred Lichuma, The NGEC Collaboration with the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources as a Good Practice presentation, COP 13: Gender Day, Ordos, China (2017).

Enshrining rights in law and practice

Gender-responsive recognition and documentation of land rights

Communities reap impressive benefits in countries with progressive laws and gender-responsive interventions to ensure social acceptance of gender equality laws. Collectively-held land covers the majority of the world’s land, but the rights of its users are largely undocumented and as such vicarious.¹¹¹ While titling is not a panacea, legal rights to land especially for women have been shown to not only enhance tenure security but to lead to multiple benefits such as greater status within the household, a greater decision-making role and greater likelihood of investing in soil conservation and agroforestry.¹¹² However, where the titling process fails to ensure the protection of women’s rights and address gender

inequalities, it is common for women to be excluded. In collectively-held or community-based land systems, the community group holds the rights to the land and typically allocates rights to households or individuals based on their membership in the group. Women – especially those who marry into a community – may not always be seen as equal members, stripping them of land security.

Ethiopia: The land certification and registration process in Ethiopia undertaken in the early 2000s increased tenure security and boosted by 20 to 30 per cent landowners’ likelihood to invest in soil and water conservation measures. As a result, landowners’ income and agricultural outputs have increased.¹¹³ Furthermore, the process included women. Specifically, the process instructed that land certificates issued for spouses should contain the names of both spouses as joint holders and a federal regulation mandated that the consent of both spouses is required to sell

or rent land. Given the lower status, education level and participation in public activities by women in rural Ethiopia, the programme undertook several gender-specific measures. The local committees that defined the boundaries of common-use areas and registered individual farmers' plots included women who headed households, including widows and divorcees. Methodologies were developed collaboratively through local participation and legitimation (important given the dominance of the customary tenure system in rural areas). States that required photographs of both spouses and had dedicated space on the land certificate form for such photos had a higher rate of joint certification.¹¹⁴ Such registration and the resulting increases in tenure security had a strong positive effect on conservation, maintenance and improvement of plots, which has increased agricultural productivity and contributed to reducing poverty.¹¹⁵

Rwanda: The establishment and implementation of new legal, regulatory and institutional frameworks was aimed at increasing land tenure security of vulnerable groups, including women. The community was consulted at all phases of the process, from the preparatory and consultation phase to the legislative reform phase. The land registration process was participatory and community-led, with members managing parcel demarcation, adjudication, dispute resolution and issuance of land leases. Women were not merely consulted but played an active role in running the reform programme. All land commissions and land committees had to have at least 30 per cent women. Both men and women had to be present during registration of land ownership, ensuring joint title of married property owners. Children were registered as individuals with beneficial interest in parents' land, ensuring equal inheritance rights for sons and daughters. Women's land rights were protected in land transactions, as land transfer template forms require dual consent of joint owners (i.e., a wife and husband must both agree and sign contracts). With their names on land parcels, women were able to use the land as collateral for loans from banks and microfinance institutions.¹¹⁶ Research found that after the Government of Rwanda implemented the 2006 land registration programme, registered owners were over two times more likely to invest in conservation

measures than unregistered owners. This included women-headed households, leading to increased incomes and enhanced socio-economic resilience.¹¹⁷

Brazil: A sustainable development project, called the Dom Hélder Câmara Project, funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) from 2005-2010 in a semi-arid region of northeast Brazil, focused on fostering sustainable relationships between farmers and environment. A key campaign focused on securing land rights for women and livelihood improvement. It included a campaign to provide identity documents for more than 14,000 women, in order to recognize citizenship and ensure secure land rights and other state benefits. Their secure land rights led to community organizing, increased agricultural and income-generating activities and leadership among women. The project improved women's empowerment and farmers' relationship to the environment.¹¹⁸ Brazil's Ministry of Agricultural Development subsequently scaled the campaign to provide women with identity documents.¹¹⁹

Northern Madagascar: The German-Malagasy Environmental Programme initiated by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) promoted sustainable charcoal production as a means to reduce deforestation while meeting domestic energy needs. Key to reforesting degraded state lands was a focus on afforestation achieved through allocating households private long-term use rights to degraded land, which were documented and also endorsed by a community council decree. Land users who became landowners through the programme own three hectares of wood-fuel forests and have enjoyed an approximate 40 per cent increase in their income. Importantly, women can enroll in the afforestation programme, increasing women's opportunity to own land and resources and thereby strengthening women's economic position.¹²⁰

Enforcement of women's equal rights to land

China: Local governments and women's organizations tackled the lack of review or appeal process of village committee decisions concerning women's land and inheritance rights, showcasing the key role

local government can play to effectively monitor and amend village rules that infringe on gender equality. The Nanhai district government of Foshan City in Guangdong Province actively addressed the violation of the land rights of women who, as typical in the community, marry and relocate to their husbands' village (termed "married-out" women). The district government established a working group of government officials to review village rules and work together with villagers to change discriminatory provisions on land rights, complemented by judicial procedures to enforce compliance where villages refused to change rules that discriminated on the basis of gender. One year of the intervention resulted in 18,000 married women obtaining equal land rights (approximately 95 per cent of married women in the district). In addition, women's organizations carried out training and educational initiatives to shift norms relating to women's land rights among village leaders and community members with a focus on active participation and open discussion where community members, both women and men, reflect on traditional norms and identify for themselves those that are discriminatory towards women. Some villages involved in the project amended rules through democratic processes to guarantee women equal land rights.¹²¹

Equalizing access, use and control of land and resources

Gender-responsive land use and resource management

Senegal: The Climate Change Adaptation Project in the Areas of Watershed Management and Water Retention, part of the Agricultural Value Chains Support Project (PAFA), 2012-2016, aimed to increase resilience of agricultural production systems and associated value chains to climate impacts on water resources. The approach included: 1) capacity-building, awareness-raising and knowledge management at the national level; 2) water harvesting and watershed management; and 3) water conservation and efficient irrigation. The capacity-building component includes targeted training and workshops on improving gender-sensitive agricultural productivity. Successful practices/actions included improved rehabilitation

and restoration of agricultural land and natural resources, as well as positive socio-economic impacts such as women's economic empowerment and focus on kitchen gardens.¹²²

South Africa: To combat land degradation, South Africa's UNCCD National Action Plan explicitly emphasized the role of women, promoting alternative livelihood strategies aimed at income-generating activities for women. Implementation has reduced pressure on natural resources, improved income for rural families and increased women's participation in decision-making processes.¹²³

Burkina Faso, Niger and Senegal: A programme focused on the Sahel, financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) in collaboration with the Office to Combat Desertification and Drought, promoted local land use management that included resource management training, income-generating activities and micro-financing for women. Findings concluded that all efforts to combat desertification must begin and end with local land users, women and men.¹²⁴

Niger: In the context of reduced legal restrictions on tree cutting and legal recognition of customary rights in forest reserves, a reforestation initiative known as farmer-managed natural regeneration (FMNR) enabled farmers to re-green 5 million hectares of land. FMNR offered incentives to encourage farmers to experiment with low-cost conservation methods to promote natural regeneration of naturally occurring trees and forests. FMNR (and its ability to restore formerly degraded land) specifically sought to benefit women and widows by increasing their land access, income-generating opportunities and social status.¹²⁵

Jordan: The Zarqa Basin restoration project restored the local Hima resource tenure system as a means to secure land rights and to reverse rangeland degradation by supporting sustainable land management for Jordan's pastoral communities living within that area. Developing and implementing grazing protocols through the Hima system's grazing enabled forage growth to improve while also recognizing and "respecting women's rights to use and benefit from Hima land."¹²⁶

Uganda: Gender Smart, Climate Smart Agriculture

In northern Uganda, a UNDP- and FAO-funded project focused on assisting districts in scaling climate-smart agriculture (CSA) and supporting a CSA taskforce. It aimed to: 1) scale the number of farmers using CSA in five districts; 2) establish systems to develop input supply and create markets to foster sustainable CSA initiatives; and 3) bolster research geared at producing national-level recommendations for CSA promotion. The project targeted multiple beneficiaries, including women and men farmers, Uganda's government ministries, district-level government, community-based organizations and civil society organizations, private sector actors, primary schools, and researchers. The project identified several gender-based constraints, such as: inequitable access to productive resources (e.g., land, tools, seeds, information/knowledge), especially for women, which limits their engagement; women engaged at the lowest level of the production chain, and very few participating in the marketing of produce; more men involved in decision-making in the value chain than women; women carrying out most of the work load; inadequate knowledge across actors about the role and contribution of women in development; and low interest and engagement of youth in agriculture.

The project found that women's lack of access to productive resources relegated them to subsistence production, constraining the surpluses they

Source: Stephen Muwaya, Presentation on CSA Pilot Project in Eastern Uganda, COP 13 Gender Day, Ordos, China (2017).

might otherwise produce and could market. At the same time, many women-led households reported facing transitional food insecurity. Because the project held the view that women and men should enjoy equal access to productive resources, it targeted women when scaling up CSA. Several strategies were used to tackle gender issues, including: prioritizing co-ed farmer groups to enable women to access productive resources through these programs; setting targets for equal numbers of men and women to partake in trainings; promoting climate-smart technologies that reduce workload for women and increase productivity and allow women to have additional income, such as from selling their own crops; and encouraging newly formed farmer cooperatives to include women in leadership roles and "treat them equally" (with equal explained as giving them "equal opportunity to get what men get, do what men do, learn what men learn, and sell their products at same prices as men").

As a result of the project, 212 women and 270 men became CSA farmer champions, 1,500 hectares of land used CSA and sustainable land management practices, another 1,500 hectares are under CSA by those who have learned from project beneficiaries, 100,000 agroforestry trees were planted, and the average maize and bean crop yield has tripled in project sites.

Syria: In response to the crisis in Syria, programming has aimed to restore livelihoods, improve food security and create jobs, particularly for women-headed households. Specifically, the Dar Al Salam Food Processing Initiative created a dairy farm and processing unit and has employment beneficiary households.

Seventy-five per cent of these households were headed by women. As a result of this initiative, reasonably priced dairy products were more available at local markets. This benefitted 3,000 people, 60 per cent of which are women.¹²⁷

Ensuring women's participation in land governance and decision-making

Gender-sensitive, community-led sustainable natural resource and land management

Jordan: An agricultural resource management project, Mainstreaming Sustainable Land Management (SLM) Practices, 2010-2015, focused on building local and national capacities and improving income-generating activities, especially for women. The strategy to improve the quality of life of rural communities affected by land degradation consisted of: 1) gender-sensitive empowerment of communities; 2) supporting SLM best practices at the local level; and 3) embedding SLM best practices into local and national frameworks. The project evaluation found overall successful restoration and rehabilitation with critical uptake of agroecosystem restoration and reduced erosion; climate change adaptation and mitigation; and improved biodiversity. Socio-economic impacts included reliable water supply, increased productivity and community empowerment, especially of women. Community Action Plans, driven by local people, were the sole mechanism for allocating resources to farm and community investments. The elected "local community committees" were encouraged to ensure representation of all targeted community members, with representation of women. Other targeted efforts to engage women included participation in training and entrepreneurship (i.e., income-generating activities and credit).¹²⁸

Women's equal and meaningful participation in land governance

Land, particularly community-based/collectively-held land, is typically governed by male-dominated systems and structures. While some laws—for example in Tanzania and Kyrgyzstan—require a quota of women participants, meaningful engagement entails more than mere presence. It requires knowledge and understanding of the issues, confidence, skills and an enabling environment of respect to express views safely. The timing, place and format of the meetings might

also exclude women tasked with care duties. When women do partake meaningfully in land governance structure, their interests and rights are more likely to be recognized and the community as a whole to benefit.

Peru: Peru recognizes the autonomy and property rights of indigenous and peasant communities who in turn set their own rules of membership, participation and decision-making. In the Sierra region women are generally excluded from leadership and participation in such governance structures, often because they are not considered as qualified community members. While rules over who is a community member vary, they can require that the person be the head of the household (typically men) or allow only one vote per family (which the man typically makes without necessarily consulting female household members). While many men have migrated for work, they remain the family representative, despite women taking up family and farm work, leading to the breakdown of the governance systems. A local network of nongovernmental organizations led by Servicios Educativos Rurales (Rural Educational Services) helped facilitate targeted interventions in two communities to support women's participation in community governance of communal land.

The intervention included capacity development training for the indigenous and rural women on gender equality and land rights, leadership and negotiations skills; arranged for experiences exchanges between rural women leaders at the local, national and regional level; advised and prepared women ahead of participation in land governance meetings; increased community awareness about the importance of women's engagement; encouraged modification of community laws to uphold women's right to participate in decision-making and hold land rights; and helped communities to develop proposals for funding from local government. As a result of the intervention, six communities successfully amended their laws to mandate women's right of participation and decision-making, certifying both men and women as qualified community members and discarding outmoded notions of head of household (which previously only counted widows and single mothers). Women were elected to leadership positions on communities' boards in 75 per cent of project target

communities, including one community in which the president is a woman and four communities in which the vice president is a woman.¹²⁹

Senegal: In 2014, Senegal launched a national multi-stakeholder platform on the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security, using it as a tool for incorporating the Voluntary Guidelines into the National Tenure Reform Commission. The platform provides a vehicle for multiple stakeholders at multiple levels of governance to engage in participatory dialogue.¹³⁰ With targeted capacity development activities, non-state actors have been able to participate in the platform and to access state actors, which has been important in enabling the inclusion of women.¹³¹

Morocco: The Programme Oasis Sud spent 25 to 26 per cent of its total budget to advance women's empowerment (and other activities included local development planning, livelihoods enhancement, sustainable land

and water management). Additionally, the programme created and bolstered a "Network of Locally Elected Women" as a means to boost their capacity and their role in decision-making processes.¹³²

Tunisia: In rural areas of Tunisia, the Rural Water Governance Programme improved access to safe drinking water for 18,500 people—over half of whom were women. It restored and upgraded 14 drinking water networks. Women were trained and actively involved in 14 water users' associations.¹³³

Mali: A World Bank's Natural Resource Management Project focused on gender mainstreaming ensured the entire project staff was equipped to address gender issues in day-to-day operations, particularly in skills-development, decision-making and management aims. The development of the project included consultation with local women and women's groups and ensured implementation of women's input via a "women's veto right."¹³⁴

Nicaragua: Strong Laws, Gender-Responsive Land Rights, Access to Market and Governance

Nicaragua's National Human Development Plan (NHDP) aimed to simultaneously spur economic growth, increase jobs, decrease inequality and reduce poverty. From 2007 to 2010, the NHDP decreased inequality as measured by improvements in living conditions, especially among groups suffering from poverty. The NHDP had a focus on secure land and property rights. The government has designed strong legal frameworks and is "implementing a nationwide property regularization plan to contribute to comprehensive property titling."¹³⁵ This included "[t]itling of land for rural women and titling of properties to female heads of families."¹³⁶ Moreover, Nicaragua's Law No. 717 (2010) created a gender equity fund for purchasing land for rural women, creating a means for women to enjoy physical possession and legal ownership over land. It provides the legal framework for families to access finances, with female heads of household enjoying a priority. This law has the

potential to enable improvements in people's quality of life.¹³⁷ At the passage of the law, it was estimated that there were a little over a million rural women in Nicaragua, most of whom did not own land. The law, if implemented, could help rectify gender inequality in land ownership and control¹³⁸ that are key for sustainable land management and efforts to reach land degradation neutrality.

Redistributive government policies have contributed to such results.¹³⁹ For example, the government's Food Production Program, also known as the "Zero Hunger" Program, has been highly successful in quickly fulfilling the food needs of rural poor families. The programme helped capitalize women by issuing a Food Production Bond in their name. From 2007 to 2010, the programme organized nearly 60,000 women, had a goal to capitalize 84,000 families, and by 2010 enabled programme beneficiaries to save C\$51.9 million (approximately

USD 1.7 million). The programme pursued a gender approach¹⁴⁰ and provided rural women a means for accessing markets, entering the economy and enhancing economic independence, enabling more equitable futures.¹⁴¹

Further, under the NHDP, “Direct Democracy for Municipal Planning” is a crosscutting program that works to share the responsibility for municipal planning and development amongst municipal and regional government and the citizenry. Significantly, citizen power cabinets have included the direct

participation of women’s organizations. Such organizations “have proposed social projects with gender-equal practices that benefit vulnerable (poor) groups in communities.”¹⁴² Additionally, the programme has trained over 2,000 male and female leaders of citizen power cabinets, spanning 153 municipalities.¹⁴³ This type of initiatives appear to have had a positive influence in empowering women’s equal and meaningful public participation. As of December 2017, Nicaragua ranked fourth globally in terms of women’s representation in parliament.¹⁴⁴

Closing the Gender Data Gap

Collecting gender-sensitive and sex-disaggregated data to better inform programmes and policies

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan: UN Women provided extensive training to government staff and civil society groups to improve gender sensitivity and enhance understanding about laws governing land rights. Capacity development activities targeted local government. Heads of village councils heard directly from women about women’s land rights violations they faced and about laws relevant to women’s inheritance and land. Village and district-level land specialists were further trained on gender-sensitive data collection to better

enable them to respond to rural women’s concerns and provide more accurate information to inform policy and implementation reform.¹⁴⁵

Guyana: The Government of Guyana increased awareness and facilitated the participation of women in UNCCD implementation initiatives.¹⁴⁶ The government participated in UNCCD’s global LDN Target Setting Program to stop land degradation through establishing targets for managing land degradation.¹⁴⁷ The programme activities include a National Survey to identify land degradation hot spots with participation from over 205 men and 241 women, identifying and addressing issues arising at the intersection of gender and land use and land management and engaging in gender-responsive monitoring and reporting.¹⁴⁸

INTEGRATION OF A GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN THE OTHER RIO CONVENTIONS: LEARNINGS AND SYNERIES

While the UNCCD is the only of the three Rio Conventions that contains gender concerns in the Convention text itself,¹⁴⁹ the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) have made important gains towards integrating gender perspectives and including women into their implementation processes. Perhaps because these conventions lacked gender-sensitive language, advocates have demonstrated innovative entry points and coordinated advocacy.

An FAO analysis of the Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs), which, under the Paris Agreement of December 2015, will guide country-level action on climate change in the coming years, shows that in all regions agriculture will play a pivotal role in accomplishing the goals related to climate change by 2030. Of the 188 countries that submitted INDCs, more than 90 per cent included agriculture as a sector considered for mitigation and adaptation initiatives...With regard to gender equality, agriculture is highlighted as a sector which — more than any other — provides diverse opportunities for empowering women as well as reducing their vulnerability to climate change.

— FAO, *The State of Food and Agriculture, Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security* (2016).

UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

Women's rights organizations and their allies have successfully introduced gender equality and human rights approaches to the UNFCCC, a convention which lacks textual foundation for either. Given the prominence and urgency of climate change in public discourse, civil society mobilized for effective engagement. Established in 2009, the Women and Gender Constituency (WGC) is one of the nine official stakeholder groups of the UNFCCC. Together with other women's organizations, including networks comprising civil society organizations representing the Global South and Global North, the WGC works to ensure that women's voices and their rights are embedded in the work and outcomes of the UNFCCC.¹⁵⁰ This advocacy was later on supported by Parties, prominent figures and UN system entities, including the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC secretariat, all of which helped ensure that gender equality and women's human rights became central to the ongoing

discussions. The engagement of Parties was critical in bringing gender issues in the frontline of key priorities of the UNFCCC, which led to the adoption of gender-specific decisions and the reflection of gender perspectives in UNFCCC decisions regarding adaptation, finance, technology development and transfer, capacity-building and loss and damage, and other relevant issues.

All these constituencies and voices elevated the profile of and made a strong case for the consideration of gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment in climate action. Research and analysis, case studies, data, tools and methodologies were developed, published and presented to show gender-specific impacts of climate change and women's leadership in climate action. The adoption of the "Doha Miracle" – the decision on improving women's participation in the UNFCCC process (Decision 18/CP.23) which formally included gender and climate change as a COP agenda item – has allowed the consideration of gender equality at the annual COPs and at their subsidiary meetings. By having a dedicated agenda item, the consideration of gender equality and women's rights has advanced at the UNFCCC far ahead of the two sister Conventions. In 2014, the Lima Work Programme on Gender was adopted, and in 2015, at COP 21, the Paris Agreement became the first climate agreement to recognize gender equality and women's empowerment as critical to climate action. In November 2017, Parties of the UNFCCC adopted a gender action plan to ensure an effective implementation of the decisions in all work areas of the UNFCCC with gender-related mandates.

The most recent decision—Decision 21/CP.22 on gender and climate change—illustrates effective merging of political will with concrete action points for all stakeholders including the UNFCCC secretariat, subsidiary and constituted bodies, the Parties, UN system entities and civil society organizations. The decision, following the mandate of the Lima Work Programme, also calls on Parties to equip female and male delegates with technical understanding on gender and climate change as well as with skills and capacity to participate effectively in UNFCCC meetings.¹⁵¹

To date, despite calls for setting up a gender-focused UNCCD constituency, such as a UNCCD Women Major Group,¹⁵² coordinated efforts around gender perspectives and UNCCD need greater attention and visibility.

Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Despite a solitary mention of women's vital role in conservation and the need for their participation in its preamble,¹⁵³ CBD has adopted and implemented gender plans of action since 2008. The current Gender Plan of Action 2015-2020 tackles gender mainstreaming through proposals by Parties (for which the Plan outlines specific possible actions) and integration of a gender perspective framework by its secretariat.¹⁵⁴

A 2016 IUCN assessment of Gender Action Plan implementation in 254 National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) from 174 countries submitted between 1993 and May 2016 found that only slightly more than half (56 per cent) of plans contained reference to "gender" and/or "women" with overall limited consideration of women and gender issues. Also, although many countries flagged the importance of women as stakeholders, few specified the measures needed to support women's engagement.¹⁵⁵ Of the 17 per cent of countries that raised women's vulnerability to climate change, their plans largely failed to account for gender-differentiated resource use and management. A mere 4 per cent of countries characterized women as agents of change.¹⁵⁶ Yet progress has been encouraging when more recent NBSAPs (5th National reports, 2014-2016) were analysed and 67 per cent countries included at least one reference to "gender" and/or "women", and over a third (34 per cent) included activities for women or addressed gender issues.¹⁵⁷ The Gender-Responsive NBSAPs Pilot Project, launched in 2016 with funding from the Government of Japan, seeks to develop the capacity of developing country Parties to integrate gender considerations into their NBSAPs, conduct global analysis of gender integration in the NBSAPs and support three pilot country initiatives – in Brazil, Mexico and Uganda – to foster gender integration in the process of NBSAP revision.¹⁵⁸ In addition to systemic gender integration review in national plans, the CBD has also produced

guidelines to support countries to mainstream gender activities in the Development and Implementation of Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans¹⁵⁹ and within national biodiversity planning processes (NBSAPs). These guidelines present the background and legal framework for gender mainstreaming in NBSAPs and suggest step-by-step guidance.¹⁶⁰

Cross-coordination potential

The Joint Liaison Group (JLG), made up of the Executive Secretaries of the CBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC, aims to enhance coordination among the three Rio Conventions and explore options for further cooperation. While currently JLG's key areas of thematic synergy do not

specifically mention gender mainstreaming,¹⁶¹ its publication on gender in the Rio Conventions prepared for RIO+20 outlines important areas for individual and cross-convention gender mainstreaming.¹⁶² The potential for leveraging the inter-related knowledge, solutions and advocacy platforms of the three Rio conventions is immense. It could include: (i) bringing the gender and environment groups and constituencies to work jointly across the Rio Conventions; (ii) combining gender responsiveness and skills trainings for secretariat staff and delegates; (iii) streamlining overlapping mandates for ease of gender integration and reporting in national plans and programmes; and (iv) identifying points of leverage for effective implementation across the conventions.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

This section outlines select pragmatic policy recommendations to guide Parties, the UNCCD Secretariat and its implementing entities, including UN agencies, inter-governmental organizations, regional organizations, financial mechanisms (e.g., GEF, GCF) and civil society actors in systematically integrating a gender perspective into efforts to implement the UNCCD and address land degradation. This preliminary guidance reflects key elements discussed above as critical to gender mainstreaming in policies and actions to combat desertification and land degradation, namely: gender roles and perspectives; laws and practices; equal access, use and control over land and natural resources; gender-sensitive resilience and implementation strategies; and closing the gender data gap.

Integrate a gender perspective and increase women's full and meaningful participation

Parties, UNCCD Secretariat and implementing entities:

- Ensure representation of women in Sustainable Land Management (SLM) and DLDD policymaking and finance strategies, including of women delegates, women's rights groups and experts, and women from affected countries.
- Conduct gender sensitization training for key technical and management staff, particularly those who are engaged in implementing the land conservation/soil management policies at the local and national levels.
- Condition funding for LDN programmes (including through the new LDN Fund) and UNCCD-related funding initiatives on integration of a gender perspective in implementation and ensuring outcomes that promote gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment.

Parties:

- Equip female and male delegates with technical know-how on gender perspectives and SLM, LDN and DLDD, as well as with the skills and capacity to

participate effectively in UNCCD meetings, including negotiation skills, legal drafting and strategic communications.

- Incorporate assessments of how gender inequality and its impacts are addressed in LDN and DLDD implementation plans.
- Disseminate and build national-level capacity, including by UNCCD focal point ministry staff, about integrating the 2017 UNCCD Gender Plan of Action, including greater emphasis on working with and through women's organizations.
- Include measures and policies on gender equality and DLDD into reporting to regional and international bodies, such as under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, to feature and elevate such gender equality-promoting efforts.

UNCCD Secretariat:

- Adopt a gender-responsive human rights-based approach to UNCCD implementation strategies, workplans, frameworks and financing mechanisms, focusing on women and men as rights holders and accounting for gender dimensions of unpaid care and domestic work and political power.

- Develop concrete, practical guidance protocols, tools and policy guidance, and provide supplementary, on-going technical support on integrating gender issues into UNCCD implementation, including uptake and application of the 2017 UNCCD Gender Plan of Action, and design of transformative LDN projects, operationalizing the drought and sand and dust storms initiatives.
- Develop, in conjunction with other UNCCD entities and stakeholders, gender-specific reporting, monitoring, and evaluation frameworks and tools to capture and analyze such information.
- Coordinate with other Rio Convention mechanisms, including through the Joint Liaison Group, to organize joint gender training for Rio Convention focal points and other relevant decision-makers and implementers, and develop cross-cutting tools to respond to implementation and impact needs of the three interrelated conventions.

Robust and enforced legal frameworks

Parties:

- Review laws, policies and practices, including by communities and officials, to identify and address direct and indirect gender-based discrimination.
- Issue clear guidelines and directives to government agencies, local authorities and justice institutions to ensure gender-equal implementation in effect, and require sex-disaggregated data on implementation of programmes and services.
- Allocate funds and conduct outreach to increase women's and communities' legal literacy about land rights.

Civil society:

- Advocate, monitor and point out gaps in law and implementation; advise on reforms based on consultation with affected women; and provide legal literacy and support and advice to women and communities.

UNCCD Secretariat and implementing entities:

- Address systematically gender issues among deliverables in financing and partnerships.

Equalizing access, use and control over land and natural resources

UNCCD Secretariat, Parties and implementing entities:

- Equip rural and indigenous women with skills and new technologies to conserve and manage their land and related resources. Provide a scholarship programme for skills development for rural and indigenous women to encourage more participation of women in land management and agriculture.

Parties:

- Ensure rural women receive land documents and technical solutions, financial services, subsidized equipment and access to free basic energy for household consumption and production use, including for agriculture and small-scale enterprises.
- Mandate and facilitate women's equal and meaningful participation and leadership in land and natural resource governance, decision-making and in conflict resolution mechanisms addressing land and natural resource disputes.
- Monitor large-scale land-based investments to ensure gender-responsive, socially-responsible consultation and consent by indigenous peoples and communities.

Gender-sensitive resilience and implementation strategies

Parties, UNCCD Secretariat and implementing entities:

- Promote rural and indigenous women's roles, knowledge and agency in addressing desertification and preventing and reversing land degradation. Mandate consultations with rural and indigenous women,

women's organizations and other concerned civil society groups, as well as academics, researchers and practitioners in designing sustainable land management, land rehabilitation, land restoration and water management projects and programmes.

- Require a gender impact assessment of UNCCD-mandated National, Regional and Sub-regional Action Plans and ensure that such plans include measures on strengthening women's land and resource rights.
- Develop and disseminate, including through training of UNCCD Secretariat staff and nationally designated authorities, technical guides and tools on integrating gender-responsiveness in LDN and DLDD plans, programmes and interventions and on reporting and monitoring progress and impact.
- Through COP action, establish formal gender expert groups/mechanisms (possibly modeled on UNFCCC Women and Gender Constituency) for systematic engagement on integration of a gender perspective into UNCCD implementation; review procedures to ensure participation of women's organizations.
- Strengthen cross-cooperation and knowledge sharing among the three Rio Conventions and their secretariats and JLG.
- Develop strategic partnerships with civil society organizations engaged in the other Rio Conventions, including through JLG facilitation and with academic institutions and UN Women.

Parties:

- Bolster and resource rural livelihood schemes to teach and incentivize sustainable land use management, soil conservation and drought proofing through water harvesting, agroforestry and other green economy measures that at the same time strive to empower rural women.

Closing the gender data gap towards evidence-based responses: Gender-responsive data collection, monitoring, review and reporting

Parties, UNCCD Secretariat and implementing entities:

More accurate data collection:

- Ensure data collection that is sex-disaggregated and gender-sensitive per UNCCD implementation, including the LDN programme and SDGs indicators (integrating Indicators 1.4.2, 5.a.1, 5.a.2 and 15.3.1).
- Fund and conduct larger-scale, longitudinal, comparative or multi-country quantitative studies to bolster the evidence base on varying responses of gender-based design interventions to address land degradation, their impact and outcomes, to compare their effectiveness to reduce vulnerability and enhance adaptive capacity across regions.
- Develop gender targets and approaches for training and skill development to support greater access to technology and skills for women to address DLDD; collect sex-disaggregated information, including through participatory monitoring by affected women, on policy impact; and monitor effects of gender mainstreaming policies to flag policy and programmatic shortfalls for course correction.
- Incorporate gender indicators and disaggregation requirements into all relevant elements of UNCCD reporting to strengthen the ability, including of the Science Policy Interface (SPI), to use gender data analysis to inform science-policy knowledge and advice on DLDD.¹⁶³

Review process:

- Review the implementation reporting tools, including the Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System (PRAIS), to ensure they contain specific requirements for Parties to report on progress on gender analysis, integration and impact; and supplement mandatory reporting requirement with practical, detailed guidance to Parties for consistent reporting on gender.¹⁶⁴

- Ensure that the CRIC review process mandates gender-related reviews and dedicates a thematic report and interactive session to gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in the context of the implementation of the Convention based on the qualitative information submitted by Parties on the implementation framework of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework.¹⁶⁵
- Ensure that the SPI synthesis report to COP 14 contains sex-disaggregated data, gender-specific indicators and analysis to inform policy recommendations on ways LDN implementation can better enhance the well-being of both ecosystems and people affected by land degradation (L.4).

Reporting and research:

- Strengthen the Rio Convention Secretariats' coordination and institute joint, periodic thematic reports on gender equality in the context of the Conventions. Institute a financing mechanism to support reporting on gender-specific activities and outcomes.
- Invest in compiling experiences, best and promising practices related to implementation activities

by Parties and other stakeholders, and identify research gaps to generate evidence and lessons from impact and resilience strategies for women affected by land degradation and desertification to inform more effective programmes and policies.¹⁶⁶ Provide access to knowledge sources of partners in order to facilitate the dissemination of relevant knowledge to all stakeholders.¹⁶⁷

- Task specific entity with mandate to collect best and promising practices on actual and potential SLM- and LDN-focused interventions and policies and their impact on gender equality, the role of and impact on women and link to the Management Knowledge Platform, such as the UN Environment Knowledge Repository, as well as the UNCCD Knowledge Hub and new digital communication platform initiatives, such as the UNCCD's Global Land Outlook.
- Draw on evidence base and emerging trends to mobilize resources, better implement and advocate for more effective, gender-responsive approaches to DLDD and environmental concerns.

APPENDIX 1: ACRONYMS

APF	Advocacy Policy Framework
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
COP	Conference of the Parties
CRIC	Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention
DLDD	Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought
ERPA	External Relations, Policy and Advocacy
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GM	Global Mechanism
GPA	Gender Plan of Action
INDCs	Intended Nationally Determined Contributions
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
JLG	Joint Liaison Group
LDN	Land Degradation Neutrality
NAPs	National Action Programmes
NBSAPs	National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans
PRAIS	Performance Review and Assessment of the Implementation Strategy
RAPs	Regional Action Programmes
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SDS	Sand and Dust Storms
SLM	Sustainable Land Management
SPI	Science–Policy Interface
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
WGC	Women and Gender Constituency

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ENDNOTES

- 1 Global Environmental Facility, "Land Degradation." Available from <http://www.thegef.org/topics/land-degradation> Accessed 24 August 2017. Landscape degradation, worsened by desertification and drought caused by climate change, affects an estimated 1.5 billion people: 42 per cent of those who are very poor, and 32 per cent of those who are moderately poor (Agostini, P. and E. Connor (2017). "Programmatic Approach to Land Degradation in Burundi," paper presented at the World Bank Land and Poverty Conference, Washington DC, 20-23 March 20-23, p. 1). Moderate or severe impacts of drought alone affect a striking 52 per cent of agricultural land. Note however that there is currently no standardized global assessment and monitoring system of land degradation and estimates have ranged from 15 per cent to 63 percent of all land (See International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (2015). *Land Degradation Neutrality: Implications and Opportunities for Conservation* (Nairobi).
- 2 United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) (2016). *Land Degradation Neutrality: The Target Setting Programme* (2016). Available from http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Publications/4_2016_LDN_TS%20_ENG.pdf Accessed 24 August 2017.
- 3 UNCCD. *Desertification, Land Degradation & Drought (DLDD)—Some Global Facts and Figures*. Available from <http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/WDCD/DLDD%20Facts.pdf> Accessed 24 August 2017.
- 4 See UNCCD (2017). *The Global Land Outlook* (Bonn, Germany). Available from <https://global-land-outlook.squarespace.com/the-outlook/#the-bokk>; IUCN, Land Degradation Neutrality, p. 2.
- 5 Orr, B.J., and others (2017). *Scientific Conceptual Framework for Land Degradation Neutrality: A Report of the Science-Policy Interface* (Bonn, Germany) UNCCD, p. 73. Available from http://www2.unccd.int/sites/default/files/documents/2017-08/LDN_CF_report_web-english.pdf.
- 6 Ibid.
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- 8 BRAC & Landesa (2017). *Issue Brief: Land Tenure as a Critical Consideration for Climate Change-Related Displacement in Slow-Onset Disaster Zones* (Hilton Prize Coalition). Available from http://prizecoalition.charity.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/HPC_CollaborativeIssueBrief_Landesa_BRAC_053117.pdf.
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- 10 Agostini, P., and E. Connor. "Programmatic Approach to Land Degradation in Burundi", p. 1.
- 11 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (2016), *The State of Food and Agriculture, Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security* (Rome), p. 9. Available from <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i6030e.pdf>.
- 12 World Food Programme, "Women and Hunger: 10 Facts". Available from [https://www.wfp.org/ou\(2017\)r-work/pre-venting-hunger/focus-women/women-hunger-facts](https://www.wfp.org/ou(2017)r-work/pre-venting-hunger/focus-women/women-hunger-facts) Accessed 24 August 2017.
- 13 Aguilar, L., and others (2015). *Roots for the Future: The Landscape and Way Forward on Gender and Climate Change* (Washington, DC) IUCN and Global Gender and Climate Alliance, p. 32. Available from <http://wedo.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Roots-for-the-future-final-1.pdf>.
- 14 Mor, Tzili (2016). "Why Land is a Feminist Issue", 8 September. Available from <http://www.landcoalition.org/en/regions/global-including-europe/blog/why-land-feminist-issue/> Accessed 24 August 2017.
- 15 Gaps in legal protection further deny land rights to women. For example, women in partnerships not recognized as formal marriages, such as long-term cohabitating unions, may lack legal protections. United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (2013). General recommendation No. 29 at its fifty-fourth session. Article 16-Economic consequences of marriage, family relations and their dissolution, CEDAW/C/GC/29, para 30: "Some States provide a legal framework for recognizing de facto unions at some point, such as upon the death of a partner or the dissolution of the relationship. Where such legal frameworks do not exist, women may be exposed to economic risks when a cohabiting relationship ends, including when they have contributed to maintaining a household and to building other assets." See e.g., In Rwanda, Landesa found that about one in three women in Kayonza and Nyagatare Districts are in informal unions and as such lack formal legal protections of their land and property rights.
- 16 Rights and Resources Initiative (2017). *Power and Potential: A Comparative Analysis of National Laws and Regulations Concerning Women's Rights to Community Forests*, p. 8. Available from <http://rightsandresources.org/en/publication/power-and-potential/#.WZ8jEihg7IU> Accessed 24 August 2017.
- 17 Salcedo-La Viña, C., and M. Morarji (2016). "Making Women's Voices Count in Community Decision-making on Land Investments", Working Paper (Washington DC) World Resources Institute, p. 13.
- 18 UN Women, "Facts and Figures. Poverty and Hunger". Available from <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/mission-on-the-status-of-women-2012/facts-and-figures> Accessed 24 August 2017.
- 19 "As of 2010, only 15% of land in sub-Saharan Africa is managed by women. Rates are generally worse in Asia—only 13% of landholders in India are women, dropping to 11% in the Philippines and 9% in Indonesia. In Latin America, the situation is slightly better—more than 25% of land managers are women in some Latin American countries, although some studies note continued disparities in access to land in parts of the region." Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA) (2016), *Gender and Climate Change: A Closer Look at Existing Evidence*, p. 10. Available from

<http://gender-climate.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/GGCA-RP-110616.pdf>

20 Note however that there is no systematically collected data on women's land rights or access to land.

21 Landesa (2017), *Women's Land: Closing the Gender Gap in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Infographic. Available from <https://www.landesa.org/resources/wlr-africa/> Accessed 24 August 2017.

22 BRAC & Landesa (2017), *Issue Brief: Land Tenure as a Critical Consideration for Climate Change-Related Displacement in Slow-Onset Disaster Zones* (Hilton Prize Coalition). Available from http://prizecoalition.charity.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/HPC_CollaborativeIssueBrief_Landesa_BRAC_053117.pdf.

23 Meinzen-Dick, Ruth, and others (2017). "Women's land rights as a pathway to poverty reduction: A framework and review of available evidence," IFPRI Discussion Paper 1663 (International Food Policy Research Institute). Available from <http://ebrary.ifpri.org/cdm/ref/collection/p15738coll2/id/131359>.

24 Ibid.

25 Ibid. Note that the study found "a high level of agreement, but weaker evidence on the relationship between WLR and natural resource management, government services and institutions, empowerment and domestic violence, resilience and HIV risk and consumption and food security," and called for more empirical studies on these links.

26 "Lack of access to cash and credit is in turn reflected in gendered disparities in the ability to access tools, seeds and fertilizer to help adapt to climate disruptions. For example: A cross-national study examining India, Ghana, Uganda and Ecuador notes that women farmers are less likely than men to have access to small agricultural tools.

- Baseline data from a series of asset-building projects in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia suggest that while men tend to claim sole ownership of more agricultural assets than women, many household assets are jointly owned by women and men.
- In South Africa, female and male household heads own assets at similar rates, while women who are not household heads are substantially less likely to own assets than male or female heads.
- In Senegal and Benin, men largely control the use of household productive resources (such as donkey carts and labor). As a result, women's fields are planted last, such that their crops are often not harvested until well into the rainy season, when they are more susceptible to failure from dry spells.
- In Ghana, women are less likely to have access to important resources, such as fertilizer or insecticides, to adapt to rainfall variability.
- In Kenya, female farmers are substantially more likely to manually till fields, rather than use animals or tractors" (GGCA, *Gender and Climate Change*).

27 FAO (2016). *The State of Food and Agriculture, Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security*, p. xv.

28 Villamor, G., and others (2014). "Gender Differences in Land-Use Decisions", p. 128.

29 Ibid., p. 130, citing Assé, R., and J.P. Lassoie (2011). "Household Decision-making in Agroforestry Parklands of Sudano-Sahelian Mali," *Agroforest Syst*, vol. 82.

30 Mwangi, Esther, and others (2011). "Gender and Sustainable Forest Management in East Africa and Latin America," *Ecology and Society*, vol. 16, No. 1, p. 17; Mullaney, E.G. (2012). "Countertopographies of Agriculture, Gender, Food Production, and Development in a Globalizing World," *Consilience: The Journal of Sustainable Development*, vol. 8, No. 1, pp. 101-114.

31 Kratzer, Sebastian, and Virginie Le Masson (2016). *10 Things to Know: Gender Equality and Achieving Climate Goals*. Available from <https://policy.practicalaction.org/component/dspace/item/10-things-to-know-gender-equality-and-achieving-climate-goals> Accessed 24 August 2017. "In India, the equal participation and leadership of women improved the sustainability of activities and institutions supposed to maintain services.... At city level, where women's participation was either very low or non-existent, many of the committees have stopped functioning. City Steering Committee meetings with zero women participants are no longer taking place.... When projects not only support the participation of women but also enable them to be involved meaningfully in decision-making, development outcomes are improved. This may be linked to the fact that the planning and implementation of activities traditionally associated with women's roles (including access to water, healthcare, education) are more effective if women are fully involved and their knowledge is recognized." In Peru, "women's participation in decision-making contributed to project sustainability, including invoking more detailed analyses, more effective committee functioning, access to potable water and the uptake of community-based adaptation techniques." Ibid., p. 11.

32 Women head or chair councils in only 0.2 per cent in Bangladesh and 7 per cent in Cambodia (Landesa, "Land & Gender", Land Portal. Available from <http://landportal.info/book/thematic/land-and-gender> Accessed 24 August 2017.

33 Ibid.

34 A 2014 study in 21 provinces in China found that 18 per cent of married rural women lack documented rights in both their parental village and their husband's village. If the government or investors take or convert the land, women who lack property rights within their communities stand to lose everything and receive no compensation (Huiying, Li (2016). "Rural Land Rights Certificates Should Safeguard Women's Legal Interests: Expert." 22 April. Available from <http://www.womenofchina.cn/womenofchina/html/opinion/1604/1578-1.htm> Accessed 24 August 2017.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid. Without effective legal control over the land they farm or the proceeds of their labor, women often lack the incentive, security, opportunity or authority to make adaptation decisions about ways to conserve the land and to ensure its long-term productivity.

37 Ibid.

38 IUCN p. 3. Land data is generally lacking. For example, there is currently no standardized global assessment and monitoring system of land degradation and estimates have ranged from 15 per cent to 63 per cent of all land.

39 Landesa, "Land & Gender", Land Portal.

40 UNCCD, *Land Degradation Neutrality*, Target 15.3: By 2020, combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land-degradation neutral world.

41 Goal 1 on ending poverty stands to generate comprehensive, systemic evidence of both state-documented land rights and beneficiaries' perceptions of their land tenure security (Indicator 1.4.2). Indicator 1.4.2: Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, with legally recognized documentation and who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and by type of tenure. Indicator 5.a.1: (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, type of tenure; 5.a.2: Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control.

42 Note that "Although some earlier literature suggests that part of the problem facing advocates of gender mainstreaming is a lack of sufficient gender-disaggregated data on climate change issues, this is becoming less of a problem as more organizations recognize the importance of gender and climate linkages and changing their data collection practices accordingly, allowing for the development of many ... publications." (GGCA, *Gender and Climate Change*, p. 5).

43 UNCCD Secretariat (2017). *Advocacy Policy Frameworks: Gender, Drought and Sand and Dust Storms*, ICCD/COP(13)/19. Available from <http://www2.unccd.int/sites/default/files/>

[sessions/documents/2017-08/ICCD_COP%2813%29_19-1711042E.pdf](#). “The Scientific Conceptual Framework for Land Degradation Neutrality states that the drivers of land degradation are not gender neutral. It stresses that poverty is both a root cause and a consequence of land degradation, with gender inequality playing a significant role in the process, worsening the impacts on women.”

- 44 Orr, B.J., and others, *Scientific Conceptual Framework for Land Degradation Neutrality*, p. 74.
- 45 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (article 2) establishes the principle of non-discrimination based on sex, among other distinctions, in the enjoyment of UDHR-guaranteed rights, including to property. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights guarantees equality between the sexes (article 3) and prohibits sex-based discrimination (article 2). The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (article 3) binds States Parties to work to “ensure the equal right of men and women to the enjoyment of all economic, social and cultural rights.” The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women requires States Parties to end de jure and de facto discrimination against women. Article 14 focuses on rural women, requiring States Parties to “take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development” Article 15 requires States Parties to grant women equal rights to administer property and to form contracts. Article 16 binds States Parties to “take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations.”
- 46 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Article 14(2) instructs States to facilitate equal participation in and “benefit from rural

development” and in, particular, women’s right to “equal treatment in land and agrarian reform.” Article 15(2) mandates equal rights to women “to administer property,” and Article 16(1) (h) extends equal rights to “both spouses in respect of the ownership, acquisition, management, administration, enjoyment and disposition of property,” which is interpreted to include land.

- 47 See e.g., equality (ICESCR Arts. 2.2, 3), adequate standard of living (ICESCR Art. 11.1), housing (ICESCR Art. 11.1), food security (ICESCR Art. 11.2), education (ICESCR Art. 13), and health (ICESCR Art. 12.1). CEDAW’s General Recommendation 21 clarifies that “[t]he right to own, manage, enjoy and dispose of property is central to a woman’s right to enjoy financial independence, and in many countries will be critical to her ability to earn a livelihood and to provide adequate housing and nutrition for herself and for her family.” CEDAW, General Recommendation No. 21 (13th sess., 1994) Equality in marriage and family relations, para. 26; see also, CEDAW, General recommendation No. 27 (47th sess., 2010) Older women and protection of their human rights, para. 48 (“Laws and practices that negatively affect older women’s rights to housing, land and property should be abolished. States parties should also protect older women against forced evictions and homelessness); para. 52 (“States parties must repeal all legislation that discriminates against older widows in respect of property and inheritance, and protect them from land grabbing.”); it further stressed that “[i]n countries that are undergoing a programme of agrarian reform or redistribution of land among groups of different ethnic origins, the right of women, regardless of marital status, to share such redistributed land on equal terms with men should be carefully observed.” CEDAW, General Recommendation No. 21, para. 27.
- 48 ICESCR, Article 11(2)(a). Article 1.2 asserts the right of peoples to “freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources ...based

upon the principle of mutual benefit.”

- 49 CEDAW, Article 5(a): States Parties shall take all appropriate measures: (a) To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women. *See also*, General recommendation No. 28 (47th sess., 2010), The Core Obligations of States Parties under Article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, para. 31 (“States parties have an obligation to take steps to modify or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices which constitute discrimination against women.”).
- 50 CEDAW, General Recommendation No. 34 on the rights of rural women (2016), UN Doc. CEDAW/C/GC/34, para. 5. “Globally, and with few exceptions, on every gender and development indicator for which data are available, rural women fare worse than rural men and urban women and rural women disproportionately experience poverty and exclusion. They face systemic discrimination in accessing land and natural resources. They carry most of the unpaid work burden due to stereotyped gender roles, intra-household inequality, and lack of infrastructure and services, including with respect to food production and care work.”
- 51 International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (No. 169) of 1989 recognizes the ownership and possessory rights “of the peoples concerned over the lands which they traditionally occupy.” The principle of free, prior and informed consent allows these communities to grant or withhold their consent to projects impacting their lands. Adopted in 2007, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), in article 26, recognizes indigenous peoples’ rights to “the lands,
- territories and resources that they possess ...” Further, it calls on States to legally recognize and protect these rights. Article 44 equally guarantees to all individual indigenous men and women all the rights recognized in UNDRIP.
- 52 Under the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, governments pledged to remove legal and customary obstacles and cement in law “women’s equal access to economic resources, including land ... as a means to further the advancement and empowerment of women and girls.” Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. UN. The Fourth World Conference on Women. 1995. para. 35. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDPfA%20E.pdf>.
- 53 See UNCCD articles 4, 19; Decisions 8/COP9, 9/COP10, 9/COP11, 36/COP11, and 3/COP12; UNCCD, Mandate on Gender. <http://www.unccd.int/en/programmes/Thematic-Priorities/gender/Pages/UNCCDMandateOnGender.aspx>; Poulsen, L. (2003). COP 6 and the Promotion of Women. IUCN. https://portals.iucn.org/union/sites/union/files/doc/cop6_and_the_promotion_of_women.pdf (“COP 6 and the Promotion of Women: How the gender dimension could be elevated during the 6th Conference of the Parties for the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought and thereby promote the role of women in the implementation of UNCCD.”).
- 54 UNCCD (2017). Overview of gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the convention: 1998-2018. ICCD/COP(13)/CRP.1 (7 September) http://www2.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2017-09/ICCD_COP%2813%29_CRP.1-1715571E.pdf
- 55 For guidance on human rights in the implementation of the UNCCD, see e.g., UNCCD Secretariat and UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Human Rights and Desertification: Exploring the Complementarity of International Human Rights Law and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

- (2008), <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/ClimateChange/Submissions/UNCCD.pdf>.
- 56 The need for women's participation is first expressed in the Preamble to the Convention, which stresses the critical role women—particularly rural women in affected regions—must play at all programmatic levels of the UNCCD. UNCCD, http://www2.uncccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2017-01/UNCCD_Convention_ENG_o.pdf. This principle is reinforced in Article 19 on the significance of capacity-building, in which Parties are called upon to promote the full participation of women in local efforts to combat land degradation. Article 19(1)(a). Gender equality is somewhat addressed in the obligations of Parties to the Convention, as the participation of women is also briefly mentioned in Article 5 obligations of affected country Parties. There is no reference to women in the Article 6 obligations of developed country Parties.
- 57 See e.g., Regional Implementation Annex for Africa, art. 8(c).
- 58 Conference of the Parties (2017). Ordos Declaration, Decision 27/COP.13 (15 September), see in particular para. 12, at http://www2.uncccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2017-11/cop21add1_eng.pdf
- 59 See the Namibia Declaration. <http://www.uncccd.int/en/about-the-convention/the-bodies/the-cop/cop11/Pages/default.aspx>
- 60 See the Ankara Initiative launched in compliance with the decision COP12/29 <http://www2.uncccd.int/ankara-initiative>.
- 61 See Decisions 8/COP.9, 9/COP.10, 9/COP.11, 36/COP.11, and 3/COP.12. UNCCD Gender. <http://www2.uncccd.int/issues/gender>
- 62 COP (2017). Gender equality and women's empowerment for the enhanced and effective implementation of the Convention, Decision 30/COP.13 (15 September), at http://www2.uncccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2017-11/cop21add1_eng.pdf
- 63 Draft Advocacy Policy Frameworks: Gender, Drought and Sand and Dust Storms accompanies the strategy to implement the 2018-2030 Strategy. The Summary reads: "... this document proposes a gender plan of action to support gender mainstreaming during implementation in the context of the future strategic framework (2018–2030)." http://www2.uncccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2017-11/cop21add1_eng.pdf. It presents a revised advocacy policy framework on drought, and proposes an advocacy policy framework on the emerging issue of sand and dust storms. The report concludes with recommendations for action for consideration by Parties at the thirteenth session of the COP.
- 64 COP (2017). The future strategic framework of the Convention, Decision 7/COP.13 (15 September), at http://www2.uncccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2017-09/ICCD_COP%2813%29_L18-1716078E_o.pdf. Notably, the prior Strategy (2008-2018) prioritized this as the first Strategic Objective ("to improve the living conditions of affected populations"), but failed to reference the disproportionate effect that land degradation has on women, particularly poor rural women in either of its Expected Impacts. See Strategic Objective 1, Ten-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention (2008–2018), para.9, <http://www.uncccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/10YearStrategy/Decision%203COP8%20adoption%20of%20The%20Strategy.pdf>.
- 65 UNCCD (2017). Overview of Gender Mainstreaming in the Implementation of the Convention: 1998-2018, ICCD/COP(13)/CRP.1 (7 September), citing ICCD/CRIC(15)/7.
- 66 COP (2017). Ordos Declaration, Decision 27/COP.13 (15 September), Preamble.
- 67 UNCCD, Gender and Desertification (thematic fact-sheet series, No. 4).
- 68 Comprehensive Multi-Year Workplan for the Convention (2018–2021) and Two-Year Costed Work Programme for the Convention (2018–2019) ICCD/COP(13)/8-ICCD/CRIC(16)/2 (21 June 2017), at http://www2.uncccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2017-11/cop21add1_eng.pdf
- 69 COP (2017). Multi-Year Workplans of the Convention Institutions and Subsidiary Bodies, Decision 1/COP.13 (15 September), Annex, Outcome 2.2, at http://www2.uncccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2017-11/cop21add1_eng.pdf
- 70 COP (2017). Multi-Year Workplans of the Convention Institutions and Subsidiary Bodies, Decision 1/COP.13, Annex: United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Results Framework for 2018–2021, outcome indicator 2.2.
- 71 Comprehensive Multi-Year Workplan for the Convention (2018–2021) and Two-Year Costed Work Programme for the Convention (2018–2019) ICCD/COP(13)/8-ICCD/CRIC(16)/2 (21 June 2017), at http://www2.uncccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2017-07/ICCD_CRIC%2816%29_2-1710706E.pdf
- 72 *Ibid.*
- 73 *Ibid.*
- 74 *Ibid.* UNCCD Secretariat has also produced important publications promoting gender integration, including substantive policy briefs, reports and factsheets on dryland women's empowerment. See <http://www2.uncccd.int/issues/gender>.
- 75 COP (2017). Enhancing the implementation of the UNCCD in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through the enhancement, strengthening and promotion of capacity building, 8/COP.13 (15 September), para. 1(d), at http://www2.uncccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2017-11/cop21add1_eng.pdf
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- 80 *Ibid.*, para. 4.
- 81 For example, the GPA states that women in DLDD-affected regions produce up to 60-80 per cent of the food in developing countries. However, more nuanced research on agricultural labor provided by men and by women in various activities, from land preparation to harvesting, found that women provide an average of 40 per cent of the agricultural labor hours in crop production across the six African countries, with wide variation across countries and even within countries. Researchers cautioned against propagating the oft quoted 60-80 per cent figure, also cited in the APF, to stress the importance of nuanced, gender research to better identify paths to enhanced productivity and enhanced land use and management. Doss, C. (2015). Debunking the Myth of Female Labor in African Agriculture. CGIAR. 25 June. <http://pim.cgiar.org/2015/06/25/debunking-the-myth-of-female-labor-in-african-agriculture/>.
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- simply women's right to 'own' land. Across the globe, access to and use of land is subject to a broad range of legal and customary land tenure arrangements. To capture this broader and more accurate understanding of land rights, States should account for the *quality, legality and effective implementation, participation and enforceability* of land rights for women." UN Working Group on Discriminating Against Women in Law and in Practice, Position Paper: Women's Land Rights (2017) <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WGWomen/Pages/WGWomenIndex.aspx>. For additional concrete guidance to Parties on women's land rights and rural women's rights, see CEDAW, General Recommendation 34 on Rural Women.
- 83 COP, Integration of Sustainable Development Goal 15 and related target 15.3 which states: "to combat desertification, restore degraded land and soil, including land affected by desertification, drought and floods, and strive to achieve a land degradation-neutral world," into the implementation of the UNCCD (2017), Decision 3/COP.13 (15 September) at http://www2.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2017-09/ICCD_COP%2813%29_L7-1715955E.pdf.
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- Ensuring the representation of women's voices, experiences, needs and capacities in the UNFCCC process and to provide gender perspectives within all related discussions;
 - Developing and advocating for common positions based on climate justice principles and work together towards achieving shared goals;
 - Contributing women and gender-sensitive perspectives and a wider critical analysis of current developments within and around the official negotiations to help foster communication between women and gender organizations and groups, and in national and international fora;
 - Facilitating and engaging in the daily women and gender caucus during the negotiations;
 - Liaising with other caucuses and constituencies, especially to identify and build upon common ground;
 - Collaborating on funding opportunities in a transparent manner and according to agreed guidelines, in order to support the collective work and diverse representation of the constituency in the UNFCCC process and allow for enhanced capacity building and knowledge sharing. WGC (2017). Welcome Letter to New Members, 16 July (on file with Landesa.); *See also* Women and Gender Constituency, About Us, <http://womensgenderclimate.org/about-us/>. Accessed 24 August 2017.
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