PLACING GENDER EQUALITY at the heart of the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

Key Highlights

- Gender equality and the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity are strongly interconnected, and efforts to achieve gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment are critical for ensuring the effective implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF).
- A review of the implementation of the Gender Plan of Action (2015–2020) identified persistent gaps in capacity development, collection, and analysis of sex-disaggregated data, reporting, and financing related to gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).
- The new Gender Plan of Action (2022–2030) under the CBD outlines a range of indicative actions to address these gaps and promote the gender-responsive implementation of the KM-GBF.
- Pursuing synergies across the three Rio Conventions in capacity development, data collection and analysis, financing, and the implementation of their adopted gender action plans can generate efficiencies in achieving biodiversity, climate, land degradation neutrality, and gender equality objectives.
- Ensuring the full, equitable, inclusive, effective, and gender-responsive representation, participation, and leadership of women, particularly from Indigenous Peoples and local communities, as part of the whole-of-society approach, can help to scale up the gender-responsive implementation of the KM-GBF from local to global.

Background

Gender equality and biodiversity use, management, and conservation are strongly interconnected. Globally, women and girls in all their diversity, and particularly those from Indigenous Peoples and local communities (IP and LCs), rely on healthy ecosystems and play vital roles in the management and conservation of biodiversity, drawing on gender-specific ecological knowledge.[1] However, gender inequalities limit women's rights to land and resources, access to decision-making processes, and the benefits derived from the use of biodiversity.[2] Gender equality is a human right, and women's empowerment and gender-responsive approaches are key for achieving long-term biodiversity goals and the CBD's 2050 Vision of Living in Harmony with Nature.[3]

In 2022, the Convention on Biological Diversity's **Conference of the Parties (CBD COP15) recognized "the importance of advancing efforts to achieve gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment to ensure the effective implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KM-GBF)".**[4] Human rights, including women's rights and equity considerations, are transversal to the KM-GBF, which has targets seeking to "ensure participation in decision-making and access to justice and information related to biodiversity for all" (Target 22), and "ensure gender equality and a gender-responsive approach for biodiversity action" (Target 23).

1 UN Women (2018).
2 Ibid.
3 CBD/COP/DEC/15/11; Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2022).
4 CBD/COP/DEC/15/11

To support and promote the gender-responsive implementation of the KM-GBF, Parties adopted the Gender Plan of Action 2022–2030 at CBD COP15,[5] on the heels of its 2015–2020 predecessor. With three expected outcomes, indicative objectives and actions, and associated deliverables, timelines, and responsible actors, **the Gender Plan of Action provides clear and thorough guidance for placing gender equality at the heart of the KM-GBF implementation to help achieve its goals and targets.** As the focus of CBD COP16 moves from commitments to implementation, this brief provides recommendations, primarily to Parties of the CBD, to support the gender-responsive implementation of the KM-GBF.

Challenges

A review of the implementation of the Gender Plan of Action (2015–2020)[6] identified persistent gaps related to gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the CBD. These included **gaps in capacity development, collection and analysis of sex-disaggregated data, reporting, and financing.** Moreover, the review flagged the emphasis of the Gender Plan of Action (2015–2020) on the CBD Secretariat and its limited focus on the **role of Parties**, relevant organizations and stakeholders, such as **United Nations agencies, intergovernmental or global organizations, and civil society,** in the gender-responsive implementation of the Convention.

Capacity gaps are a core challenge at the national level.[7] Parties have flagged their limited capacity to systematically integrate gender equality aspects in biodiversity actions.[8] For example, gender-biodiversity focal points, when they are appointed, often lack the technical expertise to participate effectively in CBD-related processes and to mainstream gender equality in environmental actions and programs.[9]

Persistent **data gaps** limit understanding of the gender-biodiversity nexus,[10] such as the contributions of diverse groups of people to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and the differential and compounded impacts of biodiversity loss on diverse groups, including women in all their diversity. The lack of gender-specific data and indicators hinders the development of equitable, evidence-based policies, programming, and decision-making, as well as efforts to **monitor and report** progress toward gender equality commitments made under the CBD and the KM-GBF.

Limited financing has been raised as a critical barrier to the gender-responsive implementation of the CBD at local, national, and global levels.[11] UNEP-WCMC et al. highlight the need for financial resources and mechanisms to address and deliver on the specific objectives and achieve the expected outcomes of the Gender Plan of Action (2022–2030).[12] However, the extent to which the gender-biodiversity nexus is recognized in national policies, strategies and instruments, or aligned with national financing commitments, remains unclear.[13]

Critically, the "full and effective participation and leadership of women in all aspects of Convention processes, particularly in policy and action at national and local levels, is vital for achieving long-term biodiversity goals."[14] Yet, **women and girls, particularly from IP and LCs, continue to be discriminated against and marginalized in relevant decision-making processes.** Their meaningful, informed and effective engagement is needed "to address their rights, needs and interests, and to recognize and value their traditional knowledge, innovations, practices, technologies and cultures and their related rights in support of the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and in the fair and equitable sharing of benefits."[15]

5 Ibid.
6 CBD/SBI/3/2/Add.3
7 Casado Asensio, Blaquier and Sedemund (2022); CBD/SBI/3/2/Add.3
8 Similar challenges have been flagged with respect to climate action, e.g., see: Kenya's Submission on Gender and Climate Change.
9 Ibid.
10 CBD/SBI/3/2/Add.3
11 Ibid.
12 Despot-Belmonte et al. (2022); https://www.cbd.int/side-events/4987
13 OECD (2023a).
14 CBD/COP/DEC/15/11
15 Ibid.

Opportunities

Placing Target 23 and the Gender Plan of Action at the heart of the KM-GBF implementation is key to generating a multiplier effect toward achieving the KM-GBF's goals and targets. Furthermore, the Gender Plan of Action (2022–2030) was developed taking into account existing commitments related to gender equality and biodiversity, including those under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the other Rio Conventions (UNFCCC, UNCCD).[16] Therefore, efforts to implement the Gender Plan of Action can also **leverage synergies with relevant processes to achieve environmental and gender equality outcomes.**

Capacity-building

Parties have identified the critical need for awareness-raising and capacity-building for the gender-responsive implementation of the KM-GBF.[17] The Gender Plan of Action includes **several indicative actions on capacity building, including actions for increasing the capacity of women and girls** to effectively contribute to the objectives and processes of the Convention, as well as actions to build the capacity of relevant government entities to integrate gender equality considerations in policy and programming. **Appointing gender-biodiversity focal points and making a commitment to build their technical capacities in the gender-biodiversity nexus** is a vital first step toward addressing capacity gaps for the gender-responsive implementation of the KM-GBF (see Box 1, Annex).

There are opportunities to exchange experiences, good practices, and guidance materials among Parties, as well as to learn from relevant stakeholders about successful capacity-building efforts on gender equality related to biodiversity. Past efforts have been more effective when they have:

- **Tailored capacity-building activities to the needs of different groups** of women and girls, focusing on those facing intersecting forms of discrimination, and adapted them to enable participation.
- **Integrated hands-on learning and concrete follow-up actions** (e.g. funded action plans) to put acquired knowledge into practice (Box 1, Annex) and directly support implementation.
- **Involved men as well as women** in capacity building initiatives to ensure a collaborative and supportive approach towards achieving gender equality and biodiversity outcomes.

Mainstreaming gender-specific capacity-building into ongoing biodiversity-related capacity development efforts, rather than having standalone activities, can generate efficiencies. **Partnering with local women's organizations** can bring relevant expertise to the design and delivery of capacity building initiatives.

Data: collection, monitoring, reporting and analysis

Gender-responsive approaches to data collection, analysis and use are crucial for enabling equitable and sustainable (biodiversity-related) solutions and programming.[18] The **Gender Plan of Action (2022–2030) includes specific objectives and indicative actions on collecting data disaggregated by sex and other characteristics** (such as age and ethnicity) **and developing national capacities** to produce and use gender-specific data and indicators. **The monitoring framework for the KM-GBF[19]** provides an **opportunity to align national efforts with other relevant indicator frameworks,** including from the SDGs, to make visible gender differentiated contributions to a healthy environment and the differential impacts experienced from biodiversity loss.

Enhancing synergies among relevant ministries and national statistics offices can increase data interoperability and enable additional analyses on the linkages between gender equality, biodiversity, climate, food security and sustainable development. Parties can also be creative with qualitative and quantitative data available in their monitoring systems, national statistics, and other sources of data (e.g. from **projects, community-based monitoring**

16 The other Rio Conventions are the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

17 CBD/SBI/3/2/Add.3

18 https://data.unwomen.org/data-portal; Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2022); CBD/SBI/3/2/Add; Githuku et al. (forthcoming).

19 CBD/COP/DEC/15/5

and information systems[20]) to address data gaps on gender-biodiversity linkages (Box 2, Annex).[21] The **whole of society approach** and Target 21 of the KM-GBF offer an opportunity to **broaden the range of knowledge producers, data produced and its accessibility** to multiple stakeholders. Recognizing diverse knowledge systems, including those rooted in traditional knowledge, and including data produced by non-state actors, such as women's and feminist organizations, can help to address data gaps and track progress towards Targets 22 and 23.

Financing

Financing is a key means of implementation. Sources of financing to advance the multiple goals, decisions, and required actions across environmental agreements and policies include national budgets, and public and private finance from bilateral and multilateral sources. Target 19 calls for **increases in finance for biodiversity,** and the gender-responsive implementation of the CBD requires **integration and coherence of investments across environmental conventions and gender action plans** (e.g., UNFCCC and UNCCD).[22] Governments have a critical role to play in ensuring such efficiencies through **inter-department or inter-ministerial coordination of environmental programming.** Aligning national commitments, sectoral policies, enabling reforms, and reporting mechanisms, as well as planning and budgeting instruments at the local level can support this effort.[23]

Financing for gender equality and biodiversity conservation/sustainable use are often separated. Yet, the share of **biodiversity-related ODA provided by members of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) that also includes gender equality objectives has been increasing over time,** in both absolute and relative terms.[24] The rise in **feminist foreign policies**[25] can support efforts to leverage gender-responsive and gender-transformative investments to achieve gender equality-biodiversity and other (development and environmental) outcomes.[26] **Institutional policies promoting gender-responsive finance, for example, through gender-responsive budgeting,**[27] or requirements for advancing gender equality in projects (Box 3, Annex), budgeting for gender actions plans, using gender markers and/or indicators, and reporting on gender-relevant results can play a crucial role in ensuring the gender-responsive implementation of the KM-GBF. **Incorporating gender expertise in financing decisions** by including gender experts and leaders of women's organizations, in particular, grassroots organizations, is key for articulating priorities for gender-responsive biodiversity finance.

Centering the full and effective participation and leadership of women in all actions

Grassroots women's organizations offer invaluable insights into local biodiversity, cultural practices, and gender and power dynamics, ensuring that conservation efforts are effective, inclusive and culturally relevant. The CBD's **Gender Plan of Action** (2022–2030) **prioritizes supporting the engagement of women and girls from Indigenous Peoples and local communities, and those facing all forms of discrimination at all levels.**[28] This priority is shared with the gender actions plans from the other Rio Conventions.[29] The **human rights-based approach** of the KM-GBF "upholds the right to participation, particularly of those in vulnerable situations, acknowledging their agency and capacity to drive transformative change."[30]

20 For example, the Indigenous Navigator offers a "framework and set of tools for and by Indigenous Peoples to systematically monitor the level of recognition and implementation of their rights", and open access resources based on community data.

21 For example, Costa Rica, through a Green Climate Fund-financed REDD+ results-based payments project supported by UNDP, used project-level monitoring to gather gender data: https://bit.ly/3U1GLIe

22 Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2019); OECD (2023b).

23 See, for example, an analysis of how synergies between climate action and the SDGs are pursued, and showing signs of progress, at national and local levels: https://bit.ly/4eAqDWx

24 OECD (2022); OECD (2023a); OECD (2024); OECD, forthcoming.

25 UN Women (2022).

26 For example, Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy mainstreams gender equality across its five priority action areas, including 'Environment and climate action'. Programming under its International Biodiversity Program adopts "an inclusive, feminist approach to delivering biodiversity initiatives."

27 Gender-responsive budgeting (or gender budgeting) entails accounting for the specific needs and interests of different gender groups in developing and implementing budgets to support the achievement of gender equality objectives. For example, gender budgeting is part of the Government of India's annual central government budget, and the Ministry of Women and Child Development has developed a manual and handbook on gender budgeting to be used by all ministries and departments.

28 CBD/COP/DEC/15/11

29 Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (2019).

30 UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (2022).

Enabling the meaningful and effective participation of women's organizations requires providing them with the resources, logistical support, information, training, and decision-making authority to influence biodiversity policy and practice. **Platforms, forums, and coalitions** that include and support women's and feminist organizations, human rights groups, women environmental defenders, and IP and LCs with shared visions and goals can provide a **collective voice** to articulate the perspectives and needs of women in all their diversity (Box 4, Annex). These platforms also facilitate the exchange of knowledge, experiences, resources, and best practices. **Efforts focused on supporting engagement and synergies with relevant networks addressing climate change and land degradation** provide opportunities for coordinated action.

In Hoima, north-western Uganda, women cultivate more than 15 varieties of beans to cope with climate risks.
CIAT/Georgina Smith

Recommendations

- **Review and allocate resources to implement the indicative actions from the CBD Gender Plan of Action,** advancing the achievement of Target 23 and other goals and targets.[31]
- **Pursue synergies on the implementation of the gender action plans from the Rio Conventions, in particular related to financing, capacity development, data collection and analysis** to generate efficiencies in achieving biodiversity, climate, land degradation neutrality and gender equality objectives.
- **Place the full, equitable, inclusive, effective and gender-responsive representation, participation and leadership of women, particularly from IP and LCs, at the center of a whole of society approach** to scale up the gender-responsive implementation of the KM-GBF.

Capacity-building

- **Appoint, resource, and empower national gender-biodiversity focal points** to support knowledge exchange and strengthen institutional capacities.
- **Partner with women's organizations and other non-state actors with gender-biodiversity expertise** to contribute to addressing governmental and institutional capacity gaps.

Data collection and analysis, monitoring, reporting

- **Develop national technical capacity to collect, analyse and report on data disaggregated by sex and other demographic factors** (e.g., age, ethnicity, population group) to enable intersectional analyses on the gender-biodiversity nexus.
- **Identify relevant gender-specific indicators from the monitoring framework for the KM-GBF** and explore their development and use to track progress towards relevant national targets. **Align data collection with SDG indicators related to gender equality and women's empowerment** (e.g., SDGs 1.4.2, 2.3.2, 5.a.1, 5.a.2, 14.b.1). [32]

Financing

- **Provide unrestricted, timely and predictable funding for women's organizations and women-led biodiversity initiatives** to allow them to access financial resources, assets, credit, and other services to support their biodiversity conservation and sustainable use efforts.
- **Conduct gender budgeting and enhance financing for the gender-biodiversity nexus.** Develop institutional policies and mechanisms for integrating gender in biodiversity-related finance, including National Biodiversity Finance Plans[33] and long-term national development plans.

Centering the full and effective participation and leadership of women in all actions

- **Partner effectively and meaningfully with women's grassroots organizations** to identify women's needs and priorities, and co-design initiatives that will address their core interests. Build long-term partnerships based on trust, mutual respect, and shared goals.
- **Collaborate with and resource the CBD Women's Caucus** to ensure that women's perspectives inform the Convention processes, biodiversity policies, and actions.

31 Despot-Belmont6e et al. (2022).

32 https://gbf-indicators.org/metadata/other/23-1-C

33 Ibid.

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Annex:

Examples of gender-responsive actions in the implementation of the Convention

BOX 1

Strengthening capacities to work at the gender equality-biodiversity nexus

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, under the project "Strengthening national implementation of international biodiversity targets",[34] 21 gender focal points from different units of the Ministry of the Environment were trained in integrating gender considerations in environmental policies in their respective technical fields. Together, the focal points designed guidelines to facilitate gender integration into the Ministry's policies and strategies. The Ministry of the Environment, through its gender unit, will collaborate with the Ministry of Gender to strengthen the expertise and actions of gender focal points in this area.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, a diploma program offered as a joint effort by the Indigenous Women on Biodiversity Network (IWBN), the International Indigenous Forum on Biodiversity (IIFB), a university, and an institute, trained over 100 Indigenous women and youth from 15 countries to effectively engage with national biodiversity policies, including reviewing and revising their country's National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs). Participants who attended the virtual training also worked on local advocacy plans, of which the best ones were selected for financial support. Alumni are expected to become leaders in developing concrete actions and promoting the respect and recognition of Indigenous rights under the CBD.[35]

Exploring the KM-GBF at the grassroots level with the Red de Mujeres Indígenas sobre Biodiversidad para América Latina y El Caribe (RMIB-ALC), from Tupí-Guaraní communities, in Brazil.
RMIB-ALC

34 https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/123537.html
35 https://rmib-lac.org/2023/comenzo-la-diplomatura-sobre-el-convenio-de-la-diversidad-biologica-y-el-marco-mundial-kunming-montreal/

BOX 2

A data-driven approach to developing gender-responsive biodiversity policy and programmes in Costa Rica

To develop a Gender Action Plan as part of its REDD+ Strategy, Costa Rica conducted gender analyses and gender gap assessments in its environmental sector, triangulating sex-disaggregated data collected through its 2014 Agriculture Census with data from the National Institute of Women (INAMU). Data showed, *inter alia*, that women only represented 15.6 percent of farm owners, had smaller landholdings, and received less technical assistance and financing than men. From 1997 to 2021, only 15 percent of PES contracts were afforded to women landowners, and 73 percent of women received no payment or remuneration for their work in productive units.[36] The data compiled and visualised led to gender-responsive changes in policy, governance and finance on biodiversity and restoration,[37] while sex-disaggregated data combined with forest data helped to determine priority areas for restoration that now benefit both women and men.

36 UNDP (2023).
37 CBD/SBI/3/2/Add.3

BOX 3

Opportunities with GEF's Global Biodiversity Framework Fund

The Global Biodiversity Framework Fund (GBFF) – the financing mechanism for the KM-GBF under the GEF – includes among its implementation principles an *Inclusive and gender-responsive approach*. The meaningful engagement and participation of women and girls, including from IP and LCs, are considered during project review, and "actively addressing the systemic barriers faced by women and girls, (especially those experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination), in accessing resources and capacity building support will help to contribute to the gender-transformative implementation of the GBF."[38] GEF's policies on gender equality, stakeholder engagement and environmental and social safeguards,[39] all apply to projects funded under the GBFF.

The first three projects included in the GBFF work program[40] indicated their contributions to realizing Targets 22 and 23 of the KM-GBF by, among others:

- Engaging with women's associations from various Indigenous Peoples in land consolidation efforts to help ensure comprehensiveness and sustainability of land management strategies, and allocating a specific budget to tracking and reporting on Targets 22 and 23.
- Promoting women's leadership roles in environmental governance (e.g., in Protected Area councils), supporting their formal education, training, and empowerment, and mitigating risks of gender-based violence.
- Increasing women's participation in land-use planning, community decision-making processes, and restoration activities; improving their livelihoods; and considering their childcare needs, and time and mobility constraints in project design and delivery.[41]

38 GEF/C.64/06
39 GEF/C.53/04
40 GEF/GBFF.02/03
41 The MEx30x30 project, with an $18.5 million GBFF grant, will "support a long-term sustainable revenue stream for protected areas across Mexico with over 70% of the GEF funds supporting Indigenous Peoples and local communities' actions", including those of Indigenous women.

BOX 4

Platforms, coalitions and engagement with grassroots women and their organizations

In September 2023, around 8,000 Indigenous women from across Brazil participated in the III March of Indigenous Women entitled 'Women Biomes in Defense of Biodiversity Through Ancestral Roots'.[42] The convening "aimed to strengthen political action and the occupation of representative spaces by Indigenous women, and also to initiate dialogues for the creation of public policies for Indigenous peoples inside and outside their territories, meeting specific demands of their realities."[43] The march took place in a new political context, in which several women indigenous leaders now hold important public positions, such as the Minister and all the secretaries of the Ministry of Indigenous Peoples (MPI), as well as the President of the National Indigenous Fund (FUNAI).

In Mexico, women act in solidarity in 'Green sorority networks' ('*Redes de sororidad verde*') to care for their environment, overcoming some of the gender-based challenges they face through collective action.[44] Supported by UNDP, Mayan women in more than 100 locations in the Yucatan Peninsula have converged around beekeeping and biodiversity, to address the rapid decline of bee populations and associated pollination services. This network promotes sustainable production practices, financial resilience, capacity building, as well as knowledge-sharing, critical reflection, collaborative leadership and decision-making, and solidarity. The meetings have been a space to discuss challenges and solutions, and have led to a shared action plan towards mutually reinforcing biodiversity and gender equality outcomes.

CBD Women's Caucus with former CBD Executive Secretary, Ms. Elizabeth Maruma Mrema, at the Women's Pavilion at COP15.
CBD Women's Caucus

42 https://news.mongabay.com/2023/10/brazils-indigenous-women-march-again-for-the-rights-of-their-people-and-lives/

43 Ibid.

44 https://www.undp.org/es/mexico/historias/tejiendo-redes-de-sororidad-verde-mujeres-mayas-se-empoderan-y-protegen-las-abeja
https://www.undp.org/es/mexico/redes-de-sororidad-verde-trazan-el-camino-hacia-un-futuro-igualitario-y-sostenible

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