



# UNFCCC GENDER ACTION PLAN & CBD GENDER PLAN OF ACTION

Synergies for implementation at national level

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## 1. CONTEXT & PURPOSE

The Rio Conventions – the [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) (UNFCCC), the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) (CBD), and the [United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification](#) (UNCCD) – were adopted at the 1992 Earth Summit to address climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation. While these agendas are inherently interconnected, their implementation has historically evolved in parallel, often through separate institutional, policy and funding processes. In recent years, Parties and institutions have increasingly recognised the need to strengthen synergies across the Conventions, resulting in joint initiatives, shared approaches and growing efforts toward coordinated implementation.

At the same time, there is growing recognition that there is an inextricable link between environmental and gender justice, and no action to address the former will be complete without an effective gender lens, including an intersectional approach. In this context, the CBD’s [Gender Plan of Action](#) (GPA) and the UNFCCC’s [Gender Action Plan](#) (GAP) provide structured frameworks to advance gender justice and women’s rights in the implementation within each Convention.

However, despite the existence of these frameworks, implementation at national level remains fragmented, often under-resourced, and insufficiently coordinated across sectors and institutions. This limits the ability of countries to fully realise both gender equality and environmental objectives, particularly given the interlinked causes of climate change and biodiversity loss.

Recognising this implementation gap, the CBD Women’s Caucus and the Women and Gender Constituency under the UNFCCC have come together to support more coherent and coordinated implementation of the two Gender Action Plans. This collaboration reflects the practical reality that, at national level, both Plans are often implemented by the same institutions and actors, and aims to facilitate alignment between them in support of coordinated implementation by governments and women’s organisations.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF THE GENDER ACTION PLANS: UNFCCC AND CBD

The UNFCCC Gender Action Plan (GAP) and the CBD Gender Plan of Action (GPA) are the current primary frameworks guiding gender-responsive implementation under their respective Conventions. While developed through different processes and institutional contexts, both Plans share common objectives, structures and implementation entry points, particularly at national level.

Understanding their respective priorities, mechanisms and areas of convergence is essential for identifying opportunities for coordinated implementation. The following section provides a brief overview of each Plan, highlighting elements most relevant for national-level actors and for cross-convention alignment.

### 2.1 THE UNFCCC BELÉM GENDER ACTION PLAN

Adopted in 2025 through [Decision –/CP.30](#), the Belém Gender Action Plan is the third and most ambitious iteration of the UNFCCC’s gender action plans. It operationalises the Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender ([Decision 7/CP.29](#)) through concrete actions, actors, indicators, and timelines, organised around five priority areas: capacity-building, knowledge management and communication; gender balance, participation and women’s leadership; coherence; implementation and means of implementation; and monitoring and reporting. From the preamble, the Belem GAP recognizes the differentiated impacts as “shaped by multidimensional factors”, explicitly naming groups that have been structurally excluded, such as migrant women, women with disabilities, and women of African descent, among others. Beyond this, the consideration of “multidimensional factors” features 10 times across its deliverables and activities, signifying a deeper commitment to advance an intersectional understanding of climate change.

Other key priorities include strengthening coherence across UNFCCC bodies and other UN entities– including a direct mandate to cooperate with the CBD (Activity C.4) – and promoting cross-ministerial coordination (a whole of government approach) at the national level. The Belem GAP strengthens gender responsive climate action through capacity-building, tools, and guidelines on “emerging issues” such as care, gender-based violence, and health, with particular attention to gender- and age-disaggregated data.

### KEY MESSAGES

- Implementation of the Gender Action Plans remains fragmented, under-resourced, and poorly coordinated across sectors and institutions.
- Aligning climate and biodiversity frameworks at national level offers a concrete pathway to strengthen impact, efficiency, and gender-responsive outcomes.
- Women’s organisations are key implementation actors and must be recognised, resourced, and engaged as strategic partners.
- Effective implementation requires coordination across ministries, focal points, and planning instruments (e.g. NDCs, NBSAPs, NAPs, LNDs).
- Ambition must be matched with financing, data, and accountability systems to translate commitments into real change.

On participation, it seeks to go beyond counting participation: it explicitly mandates safety and protection mechanisms for women, including women environmental defenders, and requires UNFCCC operations and events to be gender-, care-, safeguard-, and accessibility-responsive.

The Belem GAP also attempts to tackle two historically weak areas. On finance, it advances methods for improving the gender-responsiveness of climate finance including hosting annual dialogue with national gender and climate change focal points on finance and invites financial institutions to report on their own progress. On monitoring, it strengthens accountability through voluntary national reporting guidelines and tracking of Party delegation composition – laying groundwork for more consistent measurement of progress over time.

## 2.2 THE CBD GENDER PLAN OF ACTION

Adopted in 2022 through [Decision 15/11](#), the CBD Gender Plan of Action (2023–2030) provides the primary framework to support gender-responsive implementation of the Convention and its [Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#) (KM–GBF), in particular Target 23. It translates global commitments on gender equality into a structured set of objectives, actions and implementation pathways for Parties and other actors.

The current GPA represents a shift from its earlier iterations ([2008](#) and [2012](#)) toward a more operational approach.

It is organised around three expected outcomes: (i) equal opportunity and capacity for all women and girls to contribute to the Convention’s three objectives; (ii) gender-responsive biodiversity policy, planning and decision-making at all levels; and (iii) enabling conditions for gender-responsive implementation. These are supported by fourteen objectives, indicative actions, deliverables, timelines and responsible actors, providing a clearer implementation architecture.

The GPA is grounded in a human rights-based and intersectional approach, recognising women and girls in all their diversity, including from Indigenous Peoples and local communities, as rights-holders, knowledge-holders and agents of change. Its priorities include strengthening land and resource rights, equitable access to finance, technology and knowledge, women’s leadership and participation, the protection of women environmental human rights defenders, and the development of gender-responsive data and indicators.

At national level, the GPA identifies key implementation entry points, including the integration of gender into national biodiversity strategies and action plans (NBSAPs), the designation of Gender and Biodiversity Focal Points, and the use of gender-responsive indicators and reporting mechanisms. It also emphasises institutional coordination, capacity-building and resource mobilisation, positioning the GPA as a mechanism to embed gender equality across the implementation of the KM–GBF.

DOMAIN	UNFCCC GENDER ACTION PLAN	CBD GENDER PLAN OF ACTION
<b>1. OVERALL PURPOSE &amp; SCOPE</b>	Gender-responsive climate action under the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement	Gender-responsive implementation of the Convention and particularly the KM-GBF
<b>2. STRUCTURE &amp; APPROACH</b>	5 priority areas (capacity-building, knowledge management and communication; gender balance, participation and women’s leadership; coherence; implementation and means of implementation; and monitoring and reporting)	3 expected outcomes (capacity & rights, decision-making, enabling conditions) 14 objectives with indicative actions, deliverables, timelines and responsible actors
<b>3. NATIONAL PLANNING ENTRY POINTS</b>	Integration into NDCs, NAPs, LNDs and other national climate policies	Integration into NBSAPs and national biodiversity targets
<b>4. INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS &amp; ACTORS</b>	National gender and climate change focal points; roles for UNFCCC bodies, Parties and other stakeholders	Gender and Biodiversity Focal Points; roles for Parties, Secretariat, GEF, Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women’s organisations and other actors
<b>5. DATA, FINANCE &amp; CAPACITY</b>	Gender-disaggregated data, reporting frameworks, climate finance dialogues, capacity-building tools	Gender indicators, sex-disaggregated data, resource mobilisation, capacity-building for implementation
<b>6. RIGHTS-BASED &amp; EMERGING PRIORITIES</b>	Addresses multidimensional factors; includes safeguards, care, and recognition of gender-based violence and protection measures in processes	Explicit human rights-based approach; strong focus on land and resource rights, gender-based violence, and protection of women environmental human rights defenders

**TABLE 1. COMPARATIVE OVERVIEW OF THE UNFCCC GAP AND CBD GPA**

### BOX 1: GENDER FOCAL POINTS

The UNFCCC currently has [170 national gender and climate change focal points](#) across **120 countries**, established since COP25 (2019).<sup>1</sup> The CBD, similarly, since COP15 (2022) has invited designation of [Gender and Biodiversity Focal Points](#), and now counts **70** of such focal points across **59 countries**.<sup>2</sup>

These focal points are a shared institutional asset, yet they are chronically overburdened and under-resourced, often individually responsible for tracking dozens of commitments with little institutional backing.

### BOX 2: FUNDING GAPS

Neither the UNFCCC GAP nor the CBD GPA has dedicated, earmarked funding streams. Implementation depends on voluntary contributions, project-based finance, and the absorptive capacity of national focal points – none of which provides the predictability or scale required.

This is a reflection of broader trends in gender and environmental finance. Estimates suggest that **only around 2% of global climate finance is gender-responsive**.<sup>3</sup> Even more limited is funding that directly reaches those most engaged in implementation, **women-led climate initiatives receive less than 0.2% of global climate finance**.<sup>4</sup>

Without structural reform of how resources flow – particularly to women's organisations, local governments and communities – implementation will remain constrained regardless of the quality of the Plans themselves.

While the two Plans differ in structure and scope, their alignment at national level offers concrete opportunities to strengthen efficiency, coherence and impact. The following section outlines key areas where such synergies can be operationalised.

## 3. SYNERGIES OPPORTUNITIES

While both Gender Plans were developed under different Conventions, at the country level they are frequently implemented by the same institutions (ministries of environment, foreign affairs and/or gender), through the same mechanisms, to the same communities. This convergence makes coordination not just useful, but mandatory for their successful implementation.

### Women's organisations as strategic partners:

Although the objectives of the action plans are the responsibility of all, women's organizations are strategically positioned to advance them in a way that is effective and reflective of those on the frontlines of the environmental and climate crisis. A significant number of women's organizations working on the environment engage in both conventions making cross-convention learning practical and informed by their institutionalized leadership. Engaging and supporting women's rights organizations at national level to implement both Gender Plans provides predictable sustained support – recognising them as strategic partners in policy design, programme delivery, and monitoring, not merely consultees or beneficiaries.

**Aligning national instruments:** Both Plans' operational actions are expected to be integrated into NBSAPs, NDCs, NAPs, and LDN plans, among other national plans. Equally, integrated into gender-related national policies and budgets to explicitly recognize and embed the commitments contained in the Plans. This broader integration to the multiple national plans speaks to the 'a whole of government approach' which is essential for addressing systematic barriers hindering realization of gender justice in the context of climate crisis and biodiversity loss.

### Connecting focal points & enhancing coherence:

Both Plans rely heavily on national focal points. Structured exchange between Gender Focal Points across the two conventions, including joint planning, monitoring and review, capacity-building, shared technical guidance, and peer learning, could significantly strengthen implementation of both gender plans at national level.

This should go hand-in-hand with cross-ministerial coordination to avoid siloed gender-environment approaches.

**Data as a pillar:** Both plans have an emphasis on data – both its collection, production and general increase of the evidence base. This is a key opportunity, as it requires a holistic approach on addressing and increasing environmental gender data as we engage with national data mechanisms that may offer great rewards for the implementation of both plans.

## 4. SHARED CHALLENGES

Reviews of previous Gender Plans consistently point to the same structural barriers outlined below:

### Undervalued role of Women's Organizations:

Despite being among the most effective actors in implementing gender-responsive environmental action on the ground, women's organisations frequently encounter institutional resistance, from governments reluctant to formally engage them, to funding architectures that exclude them. Both Plans identify Women's Organizations as contributing and in some instance leading actors in implementing Gender Plans activities; yet they are heavily under-resourced, with limited national government support.

**Participation without power:** A persistent pattern across both Plans is the conflation of gender justice with women's participation – reducing a structural equity agenda to the question of whether women are present in a room. Inclusion framed as consultation or project beneficiary status, rather than meaningful decision-making authority, risks instrumentalising women's contributions while leaving underlying power imbalances intact.

**Gender as an add-on:** Across both Conventions, gender considerations are frequently treated as add-ons, siloed or even worse: actively resisted or watered down during negotiations, particularly within the operating context of a gender backlash and anti-rights movement within multilateral spaces. At national level, especially in the majority of global south countries where governments are faced with a long list of priorities, gender responsive environment actions are always the first to be taken out of the priority list. With significant mandates channeled to national and regional processes, deliberate efforts need to be made to ensure gender is treated as the core issues for effective implementation of both Conventions.

## 5. LESSONS TO CARRY FORWARD IMPLEMENTATION

Both Gender Plans represent both a normative commitment and a practical implementation tool. For national-level actors, the following lessons highlight priority areas to strengthen implementation in practice:

### AMBITION REQUIRES INFRASTRUCTURE:

The effectiveness of the plans depend on sustained political will, predictable financing, institutional accountability, and strengthened collaboration across conventions.

#### *In practice:*

- Embed gender priorities across national plans (e.g. NDCs, NAPs, LDNs, NBSAPs)
- Strengthen coordination between environment, gender and finance ministries
- Establish clear institutional responsibilities and accountability mechanisms
- Integrate gender into monitoring frameworks and reporting processes

### RESOURCE MOBILISATION IS KEY:

Direct access to finance is central to both Plans, yet remains limited in practice. Without strengthening how resources are allocated and accessed, implementation will remain constrained.

#### *In practice:*

- Integrate gender-responsive budgeting into national planning processes
- Align funding proposals across climate and biodiversity portfolios
- Facilitate access to finance for women's organisations and local actors
- Engage with national and international funding mechanisms to prioritise gender-responsive action

### IMPLEMENTATION REQUIRES SHARED RESPONSIBILITY:

No single actor can carry a system. Focal points, nor women's organisations, can carry the system alone.

#### *In practice:*

- Establish regular coordination between gender focal points across conventions
- Create cross-ministerial working mechanisms on gender and environment
- Different actors must implement the actions they have been tasked, e.g. the GEF
- Facilitate multisector and multi-actor coordination at all levels

### ADDRESSING STRUCTURAL INEQUALITIES AND POWER:

Both Plans include provisions that address structural barriers, including gender-based violence and the protection of women environmental human rights defenders. These elements are essential to achieving equitable environmental outcomes.

#### *In practice:*

- Integrate measures on gender-based violence and protection of women environmental human rights defenders into environmental and sectoral frameworks
- Move beyond participation targets to ensure women's influence in decision-making processes and control over outcomes
- Ensure that monitoring and reporting frameworks capture changes in access, rights and decision-making power, not only participation rates

## 6. CONCLUSION

The CBD GPA and the UNFCCC GAP are not parallel instruments operating in silos, but complementary tools essential for achieving equitable and lasting outcomes for both environmental integrity and sustainability and gender justice. Their effectiveness lies in coherent and coordinated implementation, while the shared challenges they face require shared responses. Advancing this in practice depends on stronger alignment across national planning processes, institutional coordination, and adequate resourcing. Strengthened collaboration between governments, focal points and women's organisations will be key to ensuring both the implementation and continuity of these commitments over time.

### NOTES

1. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), National Gender & Climate Change Focal Points (accessed March 2026),

<https://unfccc.int/topics/gender/resources/list-of-gender-focal-points-under-the-unfccc>

2. Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), List of Gender and Biodiversity Focal Points (accessed March 2026),

<https://www.cbd.int/doc/lists/nfp-gender.pdf>

3. Climate Policy Initiative, Global Landscape of Climate Finance (2019–2020), cited in Climate Finance Lab (2024) – <https://www.climatefinancelab.org/news/beyond-box-ticking/>

4. CARE International UK, "CARE International calls for UK Government to act for women on climate finance gap" (2024) – <https://www.careinternational.org.uk/press-office/press-releases/care-international-calls-for-uk-government-to-act-for-women-on-climate-finance-gap/>

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#### **Contact:**

[amelia@cbdwomencaucus.org](mailto:amelia@cbdwomencaucus.org) and [claudia@wedo.org](mailto:claudia@wedo.org)

### PARTNERS

The CBD Women's Caucus (CBD WC) is the women's constituency within the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). It stands as a self-organised global platform, supporting women and girls worldwide to advocate for their rights within biodiversity-related decision-making processes across all levels.

The Women and Gender Constituency (WGC) is one of the ten official constituencies of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It connects grassroots movements, researchers, and advocates to global climate negotiations – ensuring those most impacted by climate change have the power to shape the decisions that affect their lives.



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