

# Advancing Gender Justice in Biodiversity Data and Policy



Policy Brief  
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## KEY MESSAGES

1. Women-led and community-based organisations are already producing gender-responsive biodiversity data.
2. A major strength of women-led and community-led biodiversity data is the generation of community-rooted evidence, which is central to gender-responsive biodiversity evidence.
3. Qualitative and narrative-based methods dominate much of women-led biodiversity data practices, reflecting the centrality of lived experience and traditional knowledge.
4. Limited funding is the most significant and recurring operational barrier across the data value chain.
5. Data management and digital literacy represent a capacity gap for organisations without formal systems. Training alone is insufficient without resources and infrastructure.
6. The primary obstacle to policy impact is not lack of evidence, but lack of recognition, access, and credibility.
7. There is a strong readiness for peer-to-peer learning and collective capacity strengthening.

## Centering Gender in Biodiversity Knowledge and Evidence

Women's organisations, particularly those rooted in Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendant, and local communities, are key actors in biodiversity conservation and stewardship, generating critical knowledge through their everyday engagement with ecosystems and governance processes. Despite this, there remains limited understanding of how these organisations engage with data, including the capacities they hold, the constraints they face, and the kinds of support that would most strengthen their work.

This gap is directly relevant to the implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), particularly Target 23, as well as the Gender Plan of Action (Decision 15/11), which calls for ensuring gender equality and the full, equitable, inclusive, effective, and gender-responsive representation and participation of women and girls in biodiversity decision-making. Effective implementation and monitoring of Target 23, as well as the broader monitoring (Decision 16/31), reporting, and review (Decision 16/32), depend on the availability of gender-responsive, rights-based, and community-generated data that reflect lived realities at local and territorial levels.

An assessment was undertaken by the CBD Women's Caucus (CBD WC), in partnership with the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) to better understand how women's organisations engaged in biodiversity conservation currently collect, manage, analyse, use, and share data.

The survey focuses on organisations working at local, national, and regional levels, particularly those representing or working with Indigenous Peoples, Afro-descendant, and local communities.

This assessment adopts an exploratory, network-based approach to map existing capacities, practices, and needs related to gender-responsive biodiversity data among women-led and community-based organisations. While the findings are not statistically representative, they offer practice-oriented and directional evidence intended to inform programme design, capacity-strengthening initiatives, and strategic investment decisions.

## What the Assessment Revealed

### 1. Women-led and community-based organisations are already producing gender-responsive biodiversity data

Survey findings show that organisations are already playing an active role across the data value chain, particularly in data communication (77%) and data use (70%), and substantially engaged in data collection (61%) and analysis (56%). This demonstrates that women-led and community-based organisations already generate decision-relevant evidence that can inform biodiversity action.

### 2. A major strength of women-led and community-led biodiversity data is the generation of community-rooted evidence, which is central to gender-responsive biodiversity evidence

Community members and women leaders play a prominent role, particularly in data collection (57%), data use (43%), and data validation (43%). These practices underscore the value of lived experience, local leadership, and local knowledge in shaping gender-responsive biodiversity evidence.

### 3. Qualitative and narrative-based methods dominate much of women-led biodiversity data practices, reflecting the centrality of lived experience and traditional knowledge

Qualitative methods, such as storytelling, testimonials, interviews, community observations, and field-based documentation, are the most frequently used approaches. These approaches centre lived experience and traditional knowledge systems and are particularly effective for capturing gendered dimensions of biodiversity change that are often absent from standard indicators. Organisations collect overlapping data types: Gender and social inclusion data is the most commonly collected (86%), followed by socio-economic data (67%), policy and legal data (61%), biodiversity and ecological data (56%), and traditional and Indigenous knowledge (57%). This integrated approach reflects the complexity of biodiversity, governance, and social inclusion work.

### 4. Limited funding is the most significant and recurring operational barrier across the data value chain

Eighty-six per cent of respondents identified limited funding as the primary challenge, closely linked to lack of access to digital tools and technology (56%) and limited technical skills in data collection (44%). These interconnected constraints restrict organisations' ability to conduct systematic, ethical, and scalable data processes.

### 5. Data management and digital literacy represent a capacity gap for organisations without formal systems. Training alone is insufficient without resources and infrastructure

Basic data management and digital literacy (51%) remain a foundational requirement, particularly for organisations without formal systems. Respondents consistently emphasised that training must be accompanied by access to tools, equipment, and funding, otherwise new skills cannot be effectively applied in practice.

### 6. The primary obstacle to policy impact is not lack of evidence, but lack of recognition, access, and credibility

Despite the availability of relevant community-generated evidence, findings indicate that community-generated and women-led data is often undervalued in formal decision-making spaces.

The findings point to persistent barriers related to access to policy forums, funding, translation of evidence into policy-relevant formats, and perceptions of credibility, which limit policy uptake. Strengthening legitimacy, visibility, and pathways to policy engagement is therefore critical.

### 7. There is a strong readiness for peer-to-peer learning and collective capacity strengthening

An overwhelming 96% of respondents expressed interest in participating in peer-to-peer learning exchanges, signalling high potential for network-based, scalable approaches to strengthen gender-responsive data capabilities across regions and contexts.

## What's Next? Priority Actions for Informing the Formative Process

The findings show that women-led and community-based organisations are already generating and using gender-responsive biodiversity data, particularly to support local decision-making, community advocacy, and rights-based action.

However, lack of recognition, weak data management systems, limited financial and technical resources, and restricted access to policy and decision-making spaces significantly constrain the sustainability, protection, and broader influence of this evidence, especially at national and global levels.

Together, these insights provide a critical evidence base to inform the next phase of collective work by the CBD Women's Caucus, IIED and its partners, including the co-design of peer learning, capacity-strengthening, and advocacy strategies.

The assessment identifies a set of priority actions, outlined below, that should inform the formative process of these efforts, while encouraging institutions, initiatives, and practitioners working at the intersection of gender and data to integrate these priorities into their strategic and implementation frameworks, ensuring that future support mechanisms are grounded in lived realities, ethical data practices, and shared leadership.

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## 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 International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) is a global policy and research organisation that works to promote sustainable development, social justice, and environmental protection. IIED collaborates with governments, communities, and civil society to generate evidence-based solutions, influence policy, and support marginalised groups, including women and Indigenous communities, in addressing environmental and development challenges.



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## FIND OUT MORE

This briefing is part of our work on gender and biodiversity data.

Find out more about our work on this issue at <https://cbd womenscaucus.org/initiatives/gender-and-biodiversity-data/>

## 1. Promote Gender-Responsive, Ethical, and Inclusive Data Practices

Survey findings demonstrate strong demand for learning exchanges on gender and social analysis, alongside persistent concerns related to informed consent, privacy, data ownership, and the protection of sensitive information.

These issues are particularly critical when working with Indigenous Peoples and local communities, whose knowledge systems and data are often extracted without adequate safeguards.

Future programmes should therefore:

- Integrate gender-responsive and intersectional analysis across all stages of data practices.
- Provide practical guidance on informed consent, community ownership of data, and ethical data governance, consistent with human rights-based approaches.
- Support the development and dissemination of simple, adaptable ethical and data protection guidelines, particularly for organisations that currently lack formal frameworks.
- Promote culturally appropriate and locally grounded data collection and validation methods, ensuring respect for Indigenous and local knowledge systems.
- Support effective implementation of the Gender Plan of Action (Decision 15/11) and relevant elements of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, capacity-strengthening initiatives by prioritising gender-responsive, rights-based, and ethical approaches to biodiversity data.

Embedding these practices will strengthen the quality, legitimacy, and sustainability of gender-responsive biodiversity data while advancing equitable participation in biodiversity governance.

## 2. Recognise and Amplify Women-led and Community-Generated Data in Policy and Decision-Making Processes

Despite generating rich and context-specific evidence, women-led and community-based organisations face persistent barriers to having their data recognised as credible within national, regional, and global biodiversity processes.

Survey respondents consistently highlighted that the primary constraint to policy influence is not the absence of evidence, but limited access, resources, and institutional recognition of community-generated data. National monitoring and reporting frameworks should ensure the following:

- Explicitly recognise community and women-led data as valid and complementary sources of biodiversity knowledge within national reporting, monitoring, and review processes.
- Facilitate partnerships with research institutions, media organisations, and technical allies to enhance credibility, visibility, and uptake, while safeguarding community ownership and narrative control.
- Support participation of women-led organisations in national, regional, and multilateral forums, including CBD-related processes, where community evidence can inform policy discussions and implementation.
- Encourage advocacy approaches that bridge community-generated evidence with official datasets, strengthening accountability and inclusivity in biodiversity decision-making.

Elevating community-generated data is essential for ensuring that biodiversity policies and actions reflect lived realities, advance gender equality, and deliver socially just and effective conservation outcomes.