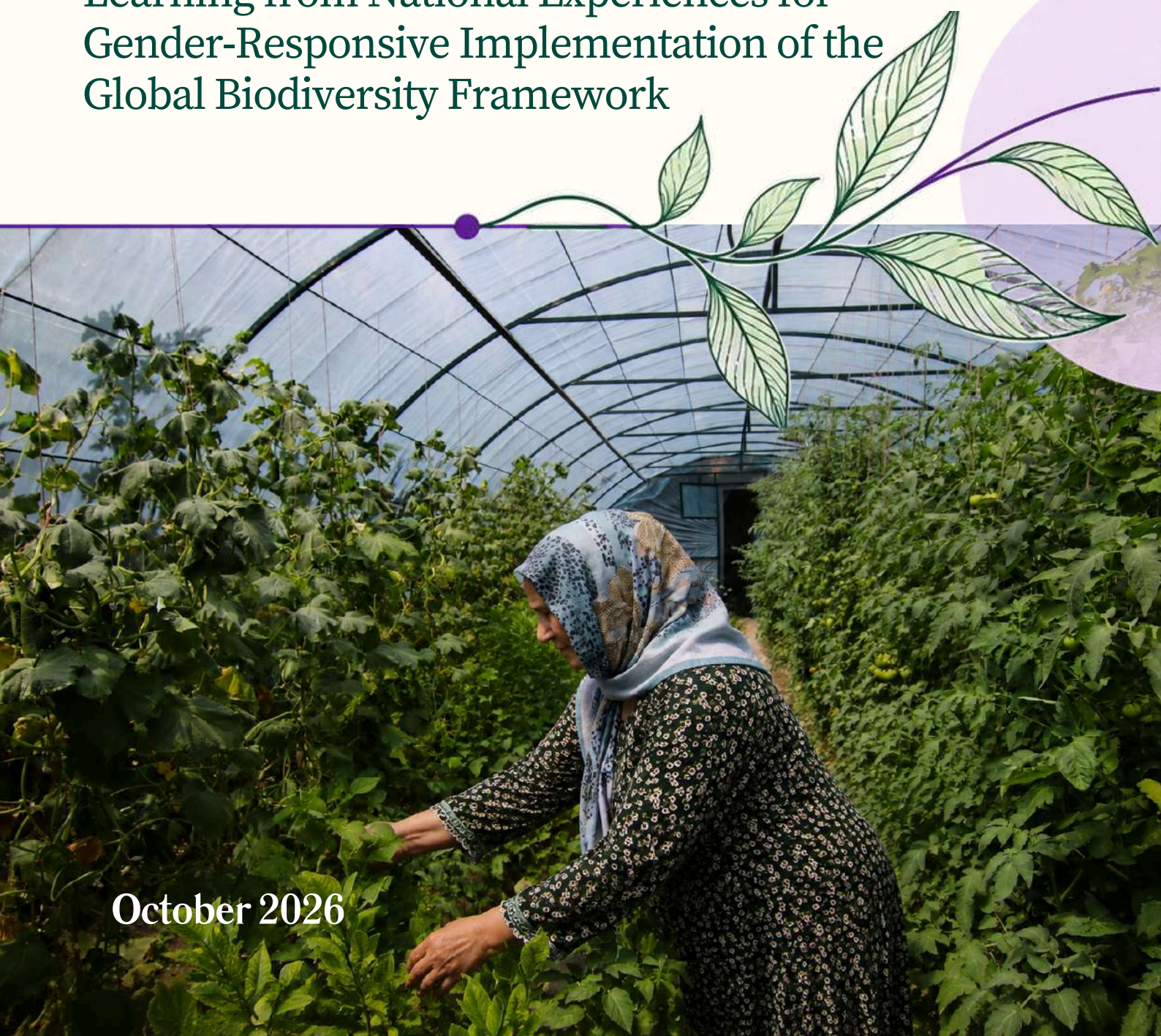


POLICIES IN PRACTICE

Learning from National Experiences for
Gender-Responsive Implementation of the
Global Biodiversity Framework



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Cover photo credit: National Center for Biodiversity and Biosafety (NCBB), Tajikistan

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List of Acronyms

Acronym	Full name
2SLGBTQIA+	Two-Spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual and additional sexual and gender identities
BMC	Biodiversity Management Committee (India)
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CCA	Community Conserved Area
CLA	Community Land Act (Kenya)
CLMC	Community Land Management Committee (Kenya)
COMGESA	Gender Committee of the Environmental Sector (Mexico)
CONABIO	National Commission for the Knowledge and Use of Biodiversity (Mexico)
CONAGEBIO	National Commission for Biodiversity Management (Costa Rica)
COP	Conference of the Parties
EAD	Environmental Affairs Department (Malawi)
ECCC	Environment and Climate Change Canada
EECEP	Elopa Etugu Community Eco-Cultural Preserve (India)
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
ENB2	National Biodiversity Strategy 2016–2025 (Costa Rica)
ENBioMex	National Biodiversity Strategy of Mexico and Action Plan
ENBPA-RD	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (Dominican Republic)
ESRC	Economic and Social Research Council
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FONAFIFO	National Forestry Financing Fund (Costa Rica)
FPIC	Free, prior and informed consent
FRA	Forest Rights Act (India)
FSDA	Federal Sustainable Development Act (Canada)
FSDS	Federal Sustainable Development Strategy (Canada)
GBA+	Gender-Based Analysis Plus (Canada)
GBF / KMGBF	Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework
GBFP	Gender and Biodiversity Focal Point
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIGUP	Gender Equality Award for Productive Units (Costa Rica)
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German development agency)
GPA	Gender Plan of Action
GROOTS	Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood (GROOTS Kenya)
GRULAC	Group of Latin American and Caribbean States
IAA	Impact Acceleration Account
IBSAP	Indonesian Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
ICCA	Territories and areas conserved by Indigenous peoples and local communities
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
IKI	International Climate Initiative (Germany)

ILC	International Land Coalition
ILK	Indigenous and local knowledge
INAMU	National Women's Institute (Costa Rica)
INDER	Rural Development Institute (Costa Rica)
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
IPLC	Indigenous peoples and local communities
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
KEIF	Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund
KUPS	Social Forestry Business Group (Indonesia)
LUANAR	Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (Malawi)
MAG	Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (Costa Rica)
MEB	Multiple Evidence Base
MINAE	Ministry of Environment and Energy (Costa Rica)
MoEFCC	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (India)
MoTA	Ministry of Tribal Affairs (India)
NBA	National Biodiversity Authority (India)
NBSAP	National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
NBSC	National Biodiversity Steering Committee (Malawi)
NCBB	National Center for Biodiversity and Biosafety (Tajikistan)
NEA	National Ecosystem Assessment (Malawi)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
ONE	National Statistics Office (Dominican Republic)
PAGCC-RD	Gender and Climate Change Action Plan (Dominican Republic)
PEGDHCC	Strategic Plan for Gender, Human Rights and Climate Change (Mexico)
PESA	Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (India)
PLANEG III	National Plan for Gender Equality and Equity 2020–2030 (Dominican Republic)
POA	Annual Operating Plan (Dominican Republic)
PROCODES	Conservation Programme for Sustainable Development (Mexico)
PROIGUALDAD	National Programme for Equality between Women and Men (Mexico)
PSKL	Directorate General of Social Forestry and Environmental Partnership (Indonesia)
REDD+	Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, plus conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks
SEMARNAT	Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (Mexico)
SIAGroBD	Agrobiodiversity Information System (Mexico)
SINAC	National System of Conservation Areas (Costa Rica)
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
UKRI	UK Research and Innovation
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP-WCMC	UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WAGE	Women and Gender Equality Canada
WEF	World Economic Forum
WiBAN	Women in Biodiversity Action Network (Malawi)

Introduction

Biodiversity loss and gender inequality are often treated as separate policy challenges, but growing evidence shows they are deeply intertwined. Women and girls are key users, managers and knowledge holders of biodiversity and their exclusion from decision-making, resource rights and benefit-sharing can undermine both social equity and conservation outcomes [1]. Effective biodiversity conservation and sustainable use depend on addressing gender inequalities. Recognising this, Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) adopted Target 23 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (KMGBF), committing to a gender-responsive approach to biodiversity implementation so that “all women and girls have equal opportunity and capacity to contribute to the three objectives of the Convention”. The Framework recognises women and girls’ equal rights and access to land and natural resources, and their full, equitable, meaningful and informed participation and leadership at all levels of action, engagement, policy and biodiversity decision-making. The Parties also adopted the Gender Plan of Action (GPA) as the guiding instrument for Target 23’s application.

Whilst many countries have at least one national target mapped to Target 23, the level of ambition varies and progress on implementation four years after the adoption of the KMGBF remains limited. Draft global assessments prepared for CBD processes ahead of COP17 [2] show that significant gaps persist particularly regarding women’s rights to land and natural resources, sex-disaggregated data, monitoring systems, and the translation of commitments into practical action. Most of the 127 Parties that submitted national targets mapped to Target 23 have written in commitments to a general gender-responsive approach (63%) and to participation and leadership (56%), but far fewer have committed to the more concrete issues of women’s equal rights (27%) and access (25%) to land and natural resources.

Delivery lags even further behind what’s written into targets: only 49% of Parties scored highly on the indicator tracking whether they have legal, administrative or policy frameworks in place to implement the target. Among the Parties whose targets are strongly aligned with Target 23, self-reported progress is weak: just 41% are on track, 54% report little or no progress, and only 1% say the target has been achieved. Few Parties (13%) submitted quantitative data on progress, and where they did, negative trends outnumbered positive ones (21% versus 12%).

While global assessments identify where progress is lagging, they do less to explain how it is being achieved where it occurs. Despite the recognised barriers to implementation of Target 23, innovations in gender-responsive biodiversity action are emerging across different national contexts. Some countries have begun to develop practical approaches that strengthen women’s participation, secure access to land and resources, improve gender-responsive monitoring, and build stronger institutional coordination. Often, these initiatives pre-date the KMGBF but provide valuable examples of how Target 23 and the GPA can be implemented in practice, moving discussions beyond commitments towards implementation.

This report documents and analyses these experiences to support learning among Parties working to advance gender-responsive biodiversity action. It responds to demand from Gender and Biodiversity Focal Points for practical, contextualised evidence of gender-responsive practice. Evidence is presented from 10 case studies illustrating real-world implementation of gender-responsive biodiversity policy across different levels of governance, from national policy to community-level practice. Key findings are synthesised to contribute to the evidence base on what works. The report is also intended to support implementation of the CBD GPA. The case studies have therefore been analysed against the GPA’s objectives and actions.

The report is divided into two parts. Part One synthesises overall findings from across the case studies, and findings aligned with particular objectives of the Gender Plan of Action. Part Two presents country profiles that document in more depth specific policy contexts, approaches, outcomes and lessons learned in each of the countries examined. The report is intended to be useful to government officials and Gender and Biodiversity Focal Points, as well as civil society and practitioners.

For governments and focal points, Part One's structure offers a way to identify the GPA objectives and actions most relevant to their national context. Country profiles can serve as a peer-learning resource for finding countries that have faced similar challenges and seeing how they responded. The cases also provide evidence to support domestic arguments for resources and institutional coordination. For civil society organisations and practitioners, the profiles provide concrete examples of what gender-responsive implementation looks like, which can support advocacy. The analysis of enabling factors and challenges can help anticipate barriers when designing interventions. The intersectionality sections draw attention to how implementation can reach the most marginalised women.

Methodology

To identify country case studies where progress has been made on Target 23 and gender-responsive biodiversity policy, two complementary approaches were used. First, a review of 7th National Reports to the CBD prioritising Parties who had submitted information in preparation for the mid-term review of the GPA 2023-2030. Second, an open call was issued through the thematic, women and governmental networks and groups including social media channels inviting government representatives, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations and other practitioners involved in the design, implementation, monitoring or evaluation of gender-responsive biodiversity policies to share examples of relevant initiatives. Respondents filled in a short survey providing information about the policies.

For both approaches, the criteria for selecting country case studies were that there were policies, regulations, strategies, or plans that had been formally adopted and implemented at national, subnational, or local levels — including within territories of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and Afro-descendant peoples. The report includes a diverse range of policy instruments, geographic regions, levels of implementation and areas of the GPA. Following the initial screening process, National Biodiversity Focal Points, Gender and Biodiversity Focal Points, survey respondents, and other relevant stakeholders were contacted to provide additional information on the shortlisted cases.

[1] Howard, P.L. (ed.) (2003). *Women and Plants: Gender Relations in Biodiversity Management and Conservation*. New York: Zed Books.

[1] Woodhouse, E., Moreau, M., Booker, F., Anthem, H., Coulthard, S., Eghenter, C. and Goldman, M. (2022). Why gender matters for biodiversity conservation. IIED, London. Available at <https://www.iied.org/21266iied>

[2] *Convention on Biological Diversity* (2026). Global Review of Collective Progress in the Implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework. CBD/SBSTTA/28/2/Add.1/Rev.1. Montreal: Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity. Available at: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/5611/c35f/aa96bdcd816f5952d586a777/sbstta-28-02-add1-rev1-en.pdf>

The final selection of case studies was guided by the availability of sufficient evidence to support an in-depth and contextualised analysis. Rather than providing a comprehensive picture of global progress towards Target 23 and the GPA, the case study approach aims to document and analyse practical, real-world experiences of policy implementation to provide lessons to other countries and organisations.

For each selected country, at least one interview with relevant experts was conducted, such as government officials including Gender and Biodiversity National Focal Points (GBFPs), representatives of civil society organisations, researchers and community practitioners to understand how selected policies and interventions are translating into practice on the ground. Interviews were semi-structured, lasting approximately 60 minutes, and were conducted remotely between June and September 2026 in the participants' preferred language (English, Spanish or French). In three cases, written responses to interview questions were submitted. In total, 18 interviews were conducted. Interview data was supplemented by a review of national policy documents, National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), 7th National Reports to the CBD, and academic and grey literature.

Findings are structured around the GPA's defined outcomes and objectives. Figure 1 illustrates how the GPA is organised including its three outcomes, each with its own objectives and actions.

Structure of the CBD Gender Plan of Action

Expected outcomes, objectives and indicative actions



Source: CBDICOP/15/L_24 (2022), Annex — Gender Plan of Action, Expected Outcomes 1-3

PART

1

Gender and Biodiversity Policies: An Overview of Findings



This section presents the overall findings on developing and implementing gender-responsive biodiversity policy generated from a synthesis of the case study evidence. How policy works in particular countries is highly contextual but we identified commonalities that serve as important lessons for implementing Target 23. The overall findings are followed by a summary of key points from relevant case studies organised by the outcomes and objectives of the CBD Gender Plan of Action 2022–2020 [3]. The GPA contains seventeen objectives and numerous associated actions spanning three expected outcomes. This section does not attempt a comprehensive assessment of implementation against every objective or action as many fall outside the scope of what the case studies examined here can speak to. Instead, the objectives and actions serve as an organising framework for the evidence that the case studies do provide, grouping national experiences thematically to enable comparison.

A comparative synthesis of common approaches—national policies, legal and institutional frameworks, programmes and initiatives used to implement GPA outcomes and objectives—along with important differences between cases is presented. The organisation of the material is designed to support Parties to the CBD and other implementing organisations to identify and translate solutions and lessons for their own country context as they work to implement the GPA. Further context and details about specific policy and how it has been applied can be found in the corresponding country case studies in Part Two.

[3] [Convention on Biological Diversity](https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/f64f/e1b9/e8da56802bc2c458a56fcefa/cop-15-l-24-en.pdf) (2023). Gender Plan of Action (2023–2030). CBD/COP/DEC/15/X. Adopted at COP15. <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/f64f/e1b9/e8da56802bc2c458a56fcefa/cop-15-l-24-en.pdf>

Overall Findings

APPROACHES & COORDINATION

- **Effective approaches to gender-responsive implementation of biodiversity policy depends on action across multiple levels.** National policy frameworks provide the mandate and monitoring architecture, sub-national institutions adapt and operationalise that mandate, and community-level processes generate the on-the-ground participation with local knowledge giving gender policy real substance. Critically this relationship is not only top-down and effectiveness depends on how the levels interact. Coordination between institutions is therefore crucial, as are channels through which community actors and local experience can inform how national policy is designed and adapted.
- **Target 23 has provided an integrating framework for existing national efforts rather than initiating gender-biodiversity action from scratch.** Strong gender policy and strong biodiversity policy can exist side by side without reinforcing each other; a coordinating mechanism or catalysing framework is often what brings them together. Rather than creating entirely new biodiversity-specific mechanisms, countries have frequently worked by adapting existing gender, land, agricultural or Indigenous Peoples' rights frameworks to biodiversity objectives.

- **Gender responsive approaches work best when they are built into biodiversity policies from the design stage rather than later.** Retrofitting is harder and less effective than building in from the outset. Where countries are developing new strategies or assessments, early integration allows gender considerations to shape policy objectives, participatory processes, implementation arrangements, indicators and resource allocation. It can also help identify structural barriers, including unequal access to land and resources, care responsibilities, safety concerns and unequal decision-making power. Where policies are already in place, gender can still be integrated later, although this can risk it being treated as a standalone component rather than woven into objectives.
- **Multi-stakeholder partnership is critical in successful cases of gender-responsive policy.** National government action alone is rarely enough: local government, civil society organisations, community paralegals and international technical partners have each played a distinct, and often decisive, role in translating policy commitments into change on the ground.

RIGHTS & PARTICIPATION

- **Rights must accompany representation.** The strongest examples of gender-responsive biodiversity governance move beyond women's participation alone to address underlying rights to land, forests, water and other natural resources. The case studies demonstrate that participation without secure rights can leave women present in governance structures but with limited influence over decisions and access to benefits.
- **Participation is not the same as influence.** Meeting numerical targets for women's presence on a committee, in a consultation, or in a forest-based enterprise does not by itself mean women are shaping the decisions being made. In many contexts, meaningful participation was enhanced through women-only assemblies, leadership programmes or dialogue spaces. These approaches recognise that formal inclusion in mixed-gender institutions does not automatically overcome social norms, confidence gaps or existing power imbalances. Dedicated spaces can therefore act as a bridge between representation and influence.
- **Formal legal rights are necessary but not sufficient on their own.** Legal change creates the conditions for progress, but sustained investment in enforcement and capacity-building is what determines whether those rights get exercised in practice. A recurring challenge is translating formal gender commitments into substantive changes in implementation and outcomes. The cases therefore highlight the importance of looking beyond the existence of gender-responsive provisions to how they are implemented, resourced, monitored and experienced in practice.
- **Enhancing participation in biodiversity governance depends on recognizing women as knowledge holders, producers and innovators.** Across the cases, women contribute vital environmental knowledge that informs local resource management, biodiversity planning and adaptive responses to environmental change. Policy approaches that value and integrate this knowledge support more substantive forms of participation strengthening women's influence. For these contributions to be sustained governments will need to create the conditions for knowledge to be maintained and transmitted across generations.

PERSISTENT GAPS

- **Monitoring and data systems remain a key challenge but are also an important area of innovation.** Several countries are developing gender-responsive indicators and more institutionalised monitoring systems, including mechanisms that move beyond simply counting women's participation towards assessing the conditions and quality of their participation. At the same time, data remain fragmented across institutions and insufficiently disaggregated, particularly by ethnicity, geography and other intersecting characteristics, while community-level data are not consistently captured. An emerging shift is from data collection driven primarily by periodic international reporting requirements towards more continuous, multi-institutional national monitoring systems that can inform implementation and policy.
- **Intersectionality is recognised but not always achieved in practice.** Many countries recognise that women are not a homogeneous group and gender intersects with other social characteristics to shape experiences of oppression and privilege. This is reflected in some targeted approaches, including dedicated participatory spaces, culturally adapted information and engagement with specific groups of women. However, translating intersectional commitments into implementation remains challenging due to continuing unequal power relations, limited data, and institutional capacity.
- **Countries are at different stages in institutionalising domestic financing for gender-responsive biodiversity action.** International funding has been critical in piloting initiatives and developing new tools, but some cases suggest that further integration into national budget processes is essential for sustainability. A key challenge is therefore not only mobilising additional resources, but embedding gender-responsive biodiversity action within regular national planning and budget processes to support continuity and sustainability beyond individual projects and funding cycles.
- **Legal and policy reforms are often constrained by deep-rooted social norms and institutional cultures.** Several case studies show that formal equality measures alone struggle to address embedded gender relations, for example traditional masculine norms and behaviours, discriminatory workplace cultures and social expectations of women's roles. Addressing these relations requires specific initiatives that work towards transformational change in collaboration with communities and institutions.

Meeting the objectives of the Gender Plan of Action

EXPECTED OUTCOME 1: ALL PEOPLE IN PARTICULAR ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS, HAVE EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND CAPACITY TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE THREE OBJECTIVES OF THE CONVENTION

OBJECTIVE 1.1: INCREASE ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS' RIGHTS TO OWNERSHIP AND CONTROL OVER LAND AND ACCESS TO NATURAL RESOURCES AND TO WATER, TO SUPPORT THE CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF BIODIVERSITY

Women's substantive rights to ownership, control and access to land, natural resources and water are essential for their autonomy, livelihoods, security, access to benefits and control over biodiversity use. Moreover, unequal, insecure or limited rights and control over land and resources are a critical structural barrier to women's meaningful participation in biodiversity governance. A key part of Target 23 is therefore to strengthen women's rights over land and resources, and in doing so, break down a critical structural barrier to their meaningful participation in biodiversity governance. Control over land determines access to support programmes, eligibility for payments for ecosystem services, participation in agrarian governance, and ability to make decisions about the use of natural resources [4]. Across the countries studied, national approaches to addressing these inequalities take different forms, including reforms to land and resource tenure, changes to eligibility and membership rules, requirements for women's representation in land and resource governance, and incentives designed to strengthen women's and girls' future tenure rights.

Mexico and Indonesia illustrate approaches that seek to remove legal and administrative barriers to women's direct access to land and resource rights. In Mexico, the National Agrarian Registry has undertaken targeted outreach to women smallholders (*mujeres agraristas*), simplified land titling procedures and launched the Women in the Territory (*Mujeres en el Territorio*) initiative. Women's share of certified agrarian rights increased from 29% to 38.4% between 2016 and 2024.

In Indonesia, the 2021 social forestry regulation changed forest permit eligibility from a household-head basis, which had effectively excluded many women [5], to one representative per family, with equal gender opportunity explicitly incorporated into the rules. This has increased women's formal access to forest resources, though gender biases in the delivery of extension services continue to limit women's ability to benefit in practice [6].

Kenya and India demonstrate approaches that combine recognition of land or resource rights with provisions concerning women's participation in the institutions governing those resources. Kenya's Community Land Act (2016) requires individual recognition of adult community members, including women, while Community Land Management Committees are subject to the constitutional two-thirds gender rule. India's Forest Rights Act (2006) similarly provides for joint titling of individual land rights with women recognised as equal rights-holders, explicitly recognises single women, widows and female-headed households as eligible rights-holders, and requires at least one-third of Forest Rights Committee members to be women. These cases illustrate an important distinction: recognising women as rights-holders creates a basis for participation and decision-making, but formal representation in governance structures does not in itself demonstrate equal influence or control.

Costa Rica offers a different approach, using economic incentives to encourage changes in future land tenure arrangements. Through GIGUP, families that formally include girls in inheritance documents receive higher scores when accessing productive support. Rather than directly conferring land rights, the mechanism therefore uses access to incentives to encourage families to strengthen girls' prospective tenure rights while linking productive support with environmental objectives.

The cases suggest that there is no single pathway to strengthening women's land and resource rights. Legal recognition and administrative reform can remove formal barriers to ownership or access; governance provisions can strengthen women's representation in institutions controlling collectively held resources; and incentive mechanisms can encourage changes in household-level tenure practices.

At the same time, the evidence points to an important implementation gap between formal rights, actual control and meaningful decision-making. Increased registration, membership or representation should therefore not be treated as equivalent to women exercising effective control over land and natural resources.

[4] Agarwal, B. (1994). *A Field of One's Own: Gender and Land Rights in South Asia*. Cambridge South Asian Studies, No. 58. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Meinzen-Dick, R., Quisumbing, A., Doss, C. and Theis, S. (2019). 'Women's land rights as a pathway to poverty reduction: Framework and review of available evidence.' *Agricultural Systems*, 172, pp. 72–82.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.agsy.2017.10.009>

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (2011). *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010–11: Women in Agriculture — Closing the Gender Gap for Development*. Rome: FAO. 247 pp. ISBN: 978-92-5-106768-0. Available at: <https://www.fao.org/4/i2050e/i2050e.pdf>

[5] Elmhirst, R. (2011). 'Migrant pathways to resource access in Lampung's political forest: Gender, citizenship and creative conjuality.' *Geoforum*, 42(2), pp. 173–183. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2010.12.004>

[6] Yuliati, Y., Cahyono, E. D., Maulana, R., & Arissaryadin. (2024). Gender exclusion in Indonesia's community-based forest management extension program. *Gender, Technology and Development*, 28(1), 153–177. <https://doi-org.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/10.1080/09718524.2023.2260654>

OBJECTIVE 1.2: ENSURE EQUAL ACCESS FOR ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS TO RESOURCES, SERVICES AND TECHNOLOGIES TO SUPPORT THEIR ENGAGEMENT IN THE GOVERNANCE, CONSERVATION AND SUSTAINABLE USE OF BIODIVERSITY (INCLUDING FINANCIAL SERVICES, CREDIT, EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RELEVANT INFORMATION)

The GPA highlights that women's access to economic resources and women's engagement in biodiversity conservation must be treated as connected policy problems. Whether women can contribute to conservation depends on whether they can access the finance, advisory services, training and information that biodiversity-related programmes offer. Several cases show how the design of support schemes can exclude women, through rules that assume a male household head (Indonesia's former forest-permit requirement) or a minimum farm size (Costa Rica). The countries studied have responded in three main ways: linking women's access to finance with biodiversity outcomes, adjusting eligibility and delivery to fit women's circumstances, and addressing gaps in information and training.

The first approach builds incentives for sustainable land use into economic support programming, thereby treating economic access and environmental outcomes as interrelated. Tajikistan's National Strategy for Activating the Role of Women links women's access to economic support with ecological outcomes in its annual grant programme. It supports rural women in establishing small and medium agribusinesses, and has integrated a biodiversity-friendly agriculture criterion into its eligibility requirements, meaning women must demonstrate an ecologically sound business approach to qualify for support. The second approach adjusts

the rules of support schemes so that they fit women's circumstances. In Mexico, the National Forestry Commission allows up to 20% of support payments to cover unpaid care work, recognising care responsibilities as a practical barrier to women's participation. Water sector programmes apply gender-differentiated scoring in grant allocation and give women extended deadlines to demonstrate land access. In Costa Rica, where women receive a disproportionately small share of technical assistance, credit and environmental payments, GIGUP deliberately targets "productive units" rather than farms. This is because women's plots are typically under two hectares and so fall outside policies designed for larger, mostly male-owned farms.

Access to information and training remains a gap: formal eligibility means little if women cannot find out about, understand or take part in the services that support it. In Indonesia, knowledge of the social forestry scheme remains uneven in permit areas, and women can be sidelined when extension services are organised around men's availability, for example through evening sessions that clash with caring responsibilities [7]. In Kenya, the laws and by-laws designed to enable community and women's participation in land governance are written in English, which, combined with lower literacy rates,

limits women's ability to understand and use their rights. There, these gaps have been partly addressed through intermediaries rooted in the community, such as the community-based paralegals and peer-learning activities for women committee members supported by civil society organisations. This suggests that equal access depends not only on eligibility, but on delivering services in ways that are culturally appropriate and responsive to women's circumstances.

These cases suggest that equal access is rarely achieved only by opening schemes to women and deeply rooted social customs, or structural barriers can impede their access. Improving access depends on examining how eligibility rules, payment structures and delivery channels work in practice, and on collecting sex-aggregated data on who actually receives support.

[7] Toumbourou, T.D., Dunphy, M.B., Mulyani, L., Auwalin, I., Rumayya, Hartoto, A.S., Aji, G.B., Utomo, M.M.B., Amin, N.A., Yaman, Y., Fakhrani, F.A., Yasmin, P.A., Afriyani, A.A., Masri, Arisanti, D., Tjawikrama, D., Friedman, R.S. and Rawluk, A. (2025). 'Social forestry for a good life? The uneven well-being benefits of Indonesia's social forestry scheme.' *People and Nature*, 7, pp. 1443–1463. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pan3.70042>

OBJECTIVE 1.4: PROMOTE WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES IN BIODIVERSITY-BASED SUPPLY CHAINS AND SECTORS, THAT SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT AND PRODUCTION PRACTICES

Research suggests that greater participation and leadership in biodiversity-based sectors and supply chains can bring sustainability and conservation considerations into economic decision-making [8]. Biodiversity-related sectors such as forestry offer an instructive test case for what gender mainstreaming in a natural resource industry can look like in practice and what it can reveal about the relationship between women's participation and conservation outcomes.

Sweden's experience in the forestry sector illustrates how a long-standing national gender-mainstreaming agenda, applied to a sector that covers approximately 70% of the country's land area, can create enabling conditions for women as workers, professionals and forest owners. The sector-wide gender equality strategy adopted in 2011, and the establishment of the Forest Sector Gender Equality Council in 2022, have brought together forestry companies, forest owner associations, trade unions, universities and women's networks around shared commitments to equal participation and organisational culture change.

Notably, research suggests that female forest owners in Sweden tend to place greater emphasis on biodiversity conservation and are more open to alternative uses of forests — for tourism, health and ecosystem services — than their male counterparts. This points to a dynamic that extends beyond equity objectives: expanding women's voice and decision-making power in forestry may itself shape the balance struck between production and conservation in the management of forest landscapes. Sweden's case thus demonstrates that gender mainstreaming in biodiversity-relevant sectors is not only a matter of equal rights, but can also influence the knowledge and values that inform how those landscapes are governed.

[8] Agarwal, B. (2010). *Gender and Green Governance: The Political Economy of Women's Presence Within and Beyond Community Forestry*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

Shortall, S., Budge, H. and Adesugba, M. (2022). *Women Entrepreneurs in Farm Businesses and Their Role in Sustainable Agriculture*. Report for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). Newcastle: Newcastle University. Available at:

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EXPECTED OUTCOME 2: BIODIVERSITY POLICY, PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING DECISIONS ADDRESS EQUALLY THE PERSPECTIVES, INTERESTS, NEEDS AND HUMAN RIGHTS OF ALL PEOPLE, IN PARTICULAR OF ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS

OBJECTIVE 2.1: INCREASE OPPORTUNITIES AND STRENGTHEN THE MEANINGFUL AND EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION AND LEADERSHIP OF WOMEN AT ALL LEVELS OF ACTION, ENGAGEMENT AND DECISION-MAKING RELATED TO THE THREE OBJECTIVES OF THE CONVENTION

Multiple countries are experimenting with specifically designed participatory spaces for women — particularly Indigenous and rural women — to contribute to biodiversity planning on their own terms. The approaches differ in both form and philosophy, and together highlight the gap between numerical representation and meaningful participation.

One approach to strengthening participation is mandating gender quotas in biodiversity governance. India's decentralisation reforms in the 1990s introduced reservations for women in Panchayati Raj institutions, normalising women's presence in local decision-making and subsequently shaping the design of Biodiversity Management Committees and forest governance bodies under the Forest Rights Act 2006. Constitutional quotas have resulted in the election of an estimated 1.45 million women representatives, or 46.6% of all Panchayati Raj representatives as of 2024. What India's experience reveals, however, is the limits of representation as a metric. Increased numerical presence does not automatically translate into substantive participation, with social norms, meeting procedures and unequal access to information all functioning as barriers. In response, the Indian government launched the "Sashakt Panchayat-Netri Abhiyan" initiative in 2025 to build the leadership and decision-making capabilities of women elected representatives, while states such as Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh have established women-only village assemblies (Mahila Gram Sabhas) where women can deliberate collectively before broader Gram Sabha discussions.

Where India's reforms show the limits of mandated representation, other countries have started from a different premise entirely: that the quality of participation matters as much as the numbers. Costa Rica held its first-ever dedicated safe space for Indigenous women to contribute to the updated National Biodiversity Strategy in mid-July 2026. Previous national consultation processes with Indigenous Peoples had been mixed-gender; this was the first time Indigenous women were given a separate space to articulate their own perspectives and commitments. Mixed-gender consultations can leave Indigenous women's specific knowledge, priorities and concerns underrepresented, since men tend to remain at the centre of leadership and formal decision-making structures even within indigenous-led spaces. Alongside this dedicated space, the actions at national level supported by the NBSAP Accelerator Programme also facilitated multi-actor workshops with women's rights groups, Indigenous Peoples' organisations, local communities, youth, academia and civil society as part of the gender-biodiversity solutions co-design process. Costa Rica's approach prioritises the quality of participation, by creating conditions under which women can speak on their own terms, rather than focusing on how many women are present.

OBJECTIVE 2.3: INTEGRATE HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY CONSIDERATIONS INTO NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS (NBSAPS)

The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) is the primary vehicle through which countries translate commitments under the CBD into national policy. Across the countries studied, governments are taking different pathways to integrate gender equality into their biodiversity policy architecture.

The first approach is to embed gender as a cross-cutting consideration throughout the biodiversity strategy. Mexico's National Biodiversity Strategy (ENBioMex, 2016–2030) integrated a gender perspective as a cross-cutting principle across its six strategic axes, building on gender-biodiversity work that predates the KM-GBF. The ENBioMex 2.0 update is intended to further operationalise this approach across the country's 47 targets aligned with the KM-GBF. Costa Rica is moving towards a more systematic mainstreaming approach through its current NBSAP update: while its 2016–2025 NBSAP identifies women and youth as priority interest groups, it does not contain a dedicated gender-mainstreaming architecture, a gap that the current update process seeks to address.

A second pathway is to give gender greater visibility through a dedicated national target and implementation framework. Tajikistan's updated strategy includes a standalone national gender target (Target 26), accompanied by a National Gender and Biodiversity Roadmap intended to support its implementation. As in Costa Rica and Mexico, gender-related policy and biodiversity action existed before the adoption of the KM-GBF; Target 23 has provided a framework through which previously parallel areas of work can be more explicitly connected.

A third approach is to use existing national gender and sectoral frameworks as the basis for integrating gender into biodiversity planning. The Dominican Republic is incorporating gender considerations into its ongoing NBSAP update (ENBPA-RD) by drawing on existing national instruments, including the National Plan for Gender Equality and Equity (PLANEG III, 2020–2030), the National Policy for Gender Equality in the Agricultural Sector (2024), and the Gender and Climate Change Action Plan (PAGCC-RD, 2018). This approach illustrates how NBSAP processes can build connections across existing policy frameworks rather than requiring the creation of a separate gender-biodiversity policy.

Canada offers a contrasting model. Rather than embedding gender in the NBSAP itself, Canada's Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) tool requires every individual funded programme (i.e. 'Species at Risk,' 'Indigenous Partnerships for Species at Risk') to conduct its own gender analysis as a condition of Treasury Board approval. Gender considerations are therefore embedded at programme level rather than strategy level, where we often see commitments less systematically carried through into implementation. This approach has a trade-off, however: because the analysis shapes programmes from the outset, changes made to programme design as a result are often not documented, making it difficult to demonstrate what gender integration has achieved. Mandatory gender analysis is therefore most useful when its results are also recorded and reported.

Taken together, the cases show that these approaches are not mutually exclusive. A country can embed gender as a cross-cutting principle throughout its NBSAP or/and have a dedicated gender target, and can draw on existing national gender frameworks to do both. Canada's experience adds a further dimension: that gender analysis does not need to be anchored in the strategy document itself, but can be built into the funding conditions for every individual programme. What the cases share, however, is a common dynamic: in most countries, Target 23 has not resulted in governments starting gender-biodiversity work from scratch, but has provided a framework through which existing national gender efforts can be more explicitly connected to biodiversity policy, formalised and strengthened.

EXPECTED OUTCOME 3: ENABLING CONDITIONS ARE CREATED TO ENSURE GENDER RESPONSIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE KUNMING-MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK

OBJECTIVE 3.1 DEVELOP NATIONAL CAPACITY TO PRODUCE AND USE GENDER AND BIODIVERSITY DATA, INCLUDING RELEVANT DATA DISAGGREGATION (E.G. SEX, AGE, ETHNICITY AND OTHER DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS)

A significant development observed in multiple countries is the effort to develop gender-specific indicators for monitoring biodiversity implementation — moving beyond simple headcounts of women's participation towards measuring the quality and conditions of that participation. A shared challenge, however, is that monitoring systems are often fragmented, domestically underfunded, and activated primarily in response to international reporting cycles rather than as ongoing governance tools.

Mexico has already reported gender indicators in its 7th National Report to the CBD, including: the percentage of women in ejido governing bodies (rising from 12.6% in 2016 to 31.5% in 2024); women's share of certified agrarian land rights (rising from 29% in 2016 to 38.4% in 2024); and the proportion of Programme for Conservation and Sustainable Development (PROCODES) funds directed at equitable women's participation (above 60% between 2019 and 2025, reaching over 75% in the most recent years). Mexico is also developing an internal digital reporting platform for tracking these indicators across institutions.

Costa Rica is currently developing a dedicated set of gender indicators for all 23 Global Biodiversity Framework targets, involving 18 government institutions. These indicators are designed not only to count women's participation but to assess the conditions under which women contribute to conservation, restoration, genetic resources and beyond. They are expected to be incorporated into Costa Rica's updated National Biodiversity Strategy.

Tajikistan is also developing a digital monitoring platform to address the fact that it had no centralised system for gender and biodiversity data. National reporting had at times relied on World Bank figures in the absence of domestic sources, and data was scattered across institutions with no mechanism for central collection or public access. The digital platform, which will be the first tool of its kind in Central Asia, will provide a centralised map of indicators tracking progress against the Gender Plan of Action, with mandatory data submission by partner institutions built into its design. In practice, state authorities report through a regional and district chain, supplemented by informal information-sharing with NGOs and donor-funded projects. There is no described mechanism for the platform to collect data directly from grassroots or community-level sources, which risks reproducing the same institutional, top-down reporting gaps it is designed to solve.

These cases illustrate emerging directions towards more institutionalised gender monitoring, but they are at different stages and not all three yet demonstrate systems that are simultaneously multi-institutional, digitally integrated and continuous. The extent to which this can be sustained beyond international project cycles, and whether it can be domestically financed, remains the critical open question.

OBJECTIVE 3.2: STRENGTHEN THE EVIDENCE BASE, UNDERSTANDING AND ANALYSIS OF THE GENDER-RELATED IMPACTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE KUNMING-MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN AND GIRLS AS AGENTS OF CHANGE IN ACHIEVING ITS GOALS AND TARGETS, INCLUDING INSIGHTS FROM TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE OF ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS FROM INDIGENOUS PEOPLES AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

An important challenge concerns how governments create conditions for women and communities to maintain, transmit and exercise control over their traditional ecological knowledge. Women hold knowledge which is critical to biodiversity, from seeds and local crop varieties to medicinal plants, food systems and fisheries. Yet this knowledge is often overlooked or made invisible, undermining women's contributions to biodiversity, the quality of conservation policy and the knowledge that communities already hold and exercise as a matter of right. Objective 3.2 asks Parties not only to build evidence on the gender-related impacts of the GBF, but to recognise women, including Indigenous and local women, as producers of that evidence. The case studies in this report are themselves intended as a contribution to this objective. The cases show three ways of bringing women's knowledge into the evidence base, but across the countries studied, the approaches observed differ substantially in form. They share, however, a recognition of the role of the state in supporting women and communities as knowledge-holders and rights-holders.

The first case documents women's knowledge in national information systems. Mexico's national open-data information system, SIAGroBD, collects, integrates and publishes biological, geographic, agronomic, nutritional and qualitative data about species used in traditional Mexican food system (maize, beans, chiles, quelites, agaves, etc.) drawing on community field collection projects and focus groups with farmers. This living national database of agrobiodiversity knowledge was designed with an explicit recognition that women are not just users of agrobiodiversity but active custodians and generators of knowledge about it, evidenced by dedicated resources including video testimonies and the publication of a book that highlights the profound connection between Chiapanecan women and maize. The approach treats documentation as a tool communities can use to make their knowledge visible and durable on their own terms.

The second supports women to conserve knowledge in practice. Tajikistan has responded to an urgent and localised need: the loss of traditional seed varieties as communities shifted towards imported alternatives, with women identified as important — and in some cases the last — custodians of knowledge about those local varieties. To address this, Tajikistan has supported the establishment of community gene banks where women preserve local seed varieties and maintain the knowledge associated with them across generations. Women constitute approximately 45–50% of the rural agricultural workforce in Tajikistan, and local varieties are recognised as more adaptive to climate change and local conditions, making these community-controlled spaces significant for both cultural continuity and ecological resilience. This work is supported through the GEF project on Conservation of Agrobiodiversity and Sustainable Use of Agricultural Genetic Resources, implemented by FAO. The limitation of this model is its dependence on project funding. Unlike Mexico's SIAGroBD, the work has not yet been embedded in permanent national infrastructure, a gap that Tajikistan's Gender and Biodiversity Digital Platform, currently being developed, may begin to address.

The third case changes the rules about which kinds of evidence count. Malawi's approach is distinct in that it does not create a separate system for women's knowledge like Mexico, but instead changes the evidentiary standards of national biodiversity assessment itself. The National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA) [9] adopted a Multiple Evidence Base (MEB) framework, treating Indigenous and local knowledge as complementary to, rather than secondary to, scientific data. Because this was designed into the assessment from inception rather than added retrospectively, it shaped the findings that fed into Malawi's revised National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, approved in May 2026. The significance of this model is that it challenges conventional ideas about what knowledge counts at the policy level: rather than women and communities adapting their knowledge to fit formal systems, the formal system adapted to recognise theirs.

Community-controlled gene banks, national open-data systems and reform of assessment methodology each carry different implications for who holds and controls knowledge, what is preserved, and how durable the support proves to be. Community-led initiatives keep knowledge close to the women who hold it but, as in Tajikistan, often depend on project funding. National systems are more durable but raise questions about who controls knowledge once it is documented. Reforming assessment methods changes whose knowledge counts in policy, though its impact depends on recommendations being acted on. The cases therefore suggest the value of combining approaches.

[9] [Malawi National Ecosystem Assessment](https://www.besnet.world/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Malawi-Scoping-Report_Approved_20240228.pdf) (2024). Malawi National Ecosystem Assessment Scoping Report. BES-Net. Available at: https://www.besnet.world/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Malawi-Scoping-Report_Approved_20240228.pdf

OBJECTIVE 3.4: ENSURE COHERENT GENDER RESPONSIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE KUNMING-MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK, THROUGH IDENTIFYING SYNERGIES AND DRAWING ON RELEVANT EXPERIENCE FROM RELATED UNITED NATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL PROCESSES

Gender and biodiversity expertise typically sit in different parts of government, with few incentives to coordinate. This structural separation risks producing two parallel tracks of work rather than one integrated approach: efforts get duplicated, information is not shared, and gender commitments in biodiversity policy can remain rhetorical because no single body is responsible for turning them into practice. Several countries studied have attempted to solve this problem through formal inter-institutional coordination mechanisms, but the degree of institutionalisation varies from case to case.

Mexico's Gender Committee of the Environmental Sector (COMGESA) brings together representatives from across the environment and gender architecture of the federal government: the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, the National Biodiversity Commission, the Ministry of Women, the National Commission for Protected Areas, the National Forestry Commission, the National Water Commission, the National Institute of Ecology and Climate Change, the National Institute of Indigenous Languages, and the National Agrarian Registry, among others. This committee is critical to prevent duplication of effort and to develop a common framework for monitoring and reporting. The fact that it spans both the environment and gender sides of government, means the committee functions as a structural bridge rather than an add-on to either portfolio.

Costa Rica is at an earlier stage of developing a similar architecture. A collaboration is developing between its five core biodiversity and gender institutions: the National System of Conservation Areas, the National Commission for Biodiversity Management, the National Forest Finance Fund, the General Directorate for Environmental Quality, and the National Institute of Women. However, as of mid-2026 this rested on goodwill rather than formal mandate. Formalisation is the next step planned following the close of the NBSAP Accelerator Programme.

These cases suggest that inter-institutional coordination mechanisms represent much more than administrative convenience; they are a structural precondition for gender mainstreaming to move from policy commitment to practice.

OBJECTIVE 3.6: ALLOCATE ADEQUATE HUMAN AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO SUPPORT RIGHTS-BASED GENDER-RESPONSIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE KUNMING-MONTREAL GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK, INCLUDING BY TRACKING AND REPORTING RESOURCE ALLOCATIONS FOR GENDER INITIATIVES, AND APPLYING GENDER-RESPONSIVE BUDGETING.

The cases show that governments are at different stages in integrating gender considerations into biodiversity-related budgeting and resource allocation.

Mexico and Indonesia provide the clearest examples of gender-responsive budgeting mechanisms. In Mexico, Annex 13 of the federal budget specifically tags expenditure related to gender equality across sectors, including biodiversity, conservation and restoration. This is complemented by programme-level allocation mechanisms: PROCODES has directed more than 60% of its resources towards equitable gender participation, rising above 75% in recent reporting years, while other environmental programmes include gender-responsive provisions in the allocation of support. In Indonesia, the Directorate General of Social Forestry has established a Gender Action Plan and Gender Budget Statements, with 43.67% of its 2021 budget allocated to gender-responsive outputs, embedding gender considerations directly into the budgeting architecture of social forestry implementation.

Canada offers a different model, in which gender budgeting is established in law across the whole of government. The Canadian Gender Budgeting Act (2018) embeds gender-responsive budgeting in federal financial processes [10], and budget proposals must be accompanied by a GBA+ assessment using a standard template [11]. Biodiversity programmes are therefore subject to the same requirements as all other federal spending, although, as with its programme-level gender analysis, the evidence reviewed does not show how gender considerations are reflected in biodiversity expenditure specifically.

Other cases illustrate more partial forms of resource allocation attached to relevant policies or programmes without a dedicated gender-budgeting architecture. In the Dominican Republic, the NBSAP update is financed through the national budget of the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, alongside support from the GEF, UNDP and the CBD Secretariat, while the national gender, agricultural and climate policies informing the update each have separate funding through their respective ministries. This shows that resources are being assigned to relevant policy implementation, although the evidence reviewed does not indicate a dedicated gender-responsive budgeting mechanism within biodiversity expenditure itself.

The cases also highlight the importance of institutionalising these allocations within domestic budgets. In Costa Rica continued dependence on international cooperation remains a challenge and sustainability will require gender-biodiversity work to be incorporated into national budget lines once Accelerator Programme funding ends. Similarly, in Mexico there is a need to integrate gender-biodiversity programmes into core national budget lines rather than rely on project-based or international financing.

Overall, the stronger examples show that financing gender-responsive biodiversity action is not only about whether resources are available, but whether gender equality is explicitly reflected in how public resources are planned, allocated and monitored. Budget tagging within environmental sectors makes this most visible, whereas government-wide requirements can ensure consistency but make it harder to see what is spent on gender-responsiveness within biodiversity policies specifically. At the same time, continued reliance on external or time-bound project funding in several cases points to domestic budget institutionalisation as an important challenge for sustaining Target 23 implementation over time.

[10] Government of Canada (2018). Canadian Gender Budgeting Act, SC 2018, c 27, s 314. Available at: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-17.2/FullText.html>

[11] Department of Finance Canada (2023). Budget/Off-Cycle Proposal – Annex 2: GBA Plus Departmental Summary. Ottawa: Government of Canada. Last modified 29 September 2023. Available at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/services/publications/federal-budget/proposals/gba.html> [Accessed 28 September 2026].

PART

2

Country Profiles



Each country profile provides a focused overview of the policy context, approach, implementation, monitoring, outcomes, and key lessons on implementing gender responsive and biodiversity. Profiles are intended to be read as standalone entries and cross-referenced with Part One for thematic comparisons.

Page	Country	Policy Focus	GPA Objective
23	Canada	Gender-Analysis Plus: a whole-of-government approach	2.3, 3.4, 3.6
29	Costa Rica	NBSAP Accelerator, Gender Indicators and Gender Equality Awards	1.1, 2.1, 2.3, 3.1, 3.4, 3.6
34	Dominican Republic	Integrating Gender Equality into Biodiversity Planning Through Existing National Policy Instruments	2.3, 3.6
38	India	Women's participation in biodiversity governance and forest land rights	1.1, 2.1
43	Indonesia	Social Forestry and Community Participation in Biodiversity Governance	1.1, 3.6
48	Kenya	Women's Land Rights through Tenure Reform	1.1, 1.2
53	Malawi	Recognising Women as Knowledge Holders in the National Ecosystem Assessment	3.2
57	Mexico	Building a Multi-agency Institutional Architecture for Gender-Responsive Biodiversity Governance	1.1, 2.3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.6
62	Sweden	Gender equality in the forestry industry	1.4
67	Tajikistan	Rural Women as Custodians of Agrobiodiversity: from project support to lasting institutional change	2.3, 3.1, 3.2

Canada

Gender-Based Analysis Plus: a whole-of-government approach

01

Primary policy focus

2030 Nature Strategy as Canada's national response to the GBF, with gender mainstreaming delivered through the mandatory Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) tool applied across all federal biodiversity programmes

02

Lead institution

Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) — Sustainable Development Office; Canadian Wildlife Service; Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE) — GBA+ guidance body

03

GBF Targets

All 23 targets of the GBF

POLITICAL, LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Canada is a federal state with a population of approximately 40 million, one of the world's largest countries by territory, with high levels of biodiversity including in boreal forests, Arctic tundra, freshwater systems, marine coastlines and grasslands. Constitutional responsibility for the environment is shared between federal, provincial and territorial governments, creating a governance landscape in which horizontal coordination is both essential and structurally complex.

Gender equality is a constitutional right enshrined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982) [12] and is operationalised across all federal government programmes through Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+), a mandatory analytical tool that has been applied in Canadian federal policy-making for almost 30 years and now mandatory across all federal programmes [13]. The Canadian Gender Budgeting Act further embeds gender-responsive budgeting in federal financial processes [14]. GBA+ is administered centrally by Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE), which provides guidance and support to all federal departments and agencies. All proposals to Cabinet must include a GBA+ using a standard template [15], but how the analysis is carried out and followed through within individual programmes rests with each department.

Canada's primary instrument for translating its GBF commitments into national action is the 2030 Nature Strategy, which was tabled in June 2024 which reflects all 23 GBF targets. The Federal Sustainable Development Strategy (FSDS), which runs on a three-year cycle, is a broader whole-of-government sustainability coordination instrument that incorporates some biodiversity targets and aligns with the Nature Strategy where possible.

An important feature of Canada's approach is that gender analysis is embedded inside each individual funded programme — the inverse of the pattern seen in many countries, where gender commitments are prominent in strategy documents such as the NBSAP but less systematically carried through into programme-level implementation. Both the 2030 Nature Strategy and the FSDS set the overall goals and targets, but the GBA+ is applied separately to every individual programme that delivers on those goals. Every such programme is required by federal directive to complete a GBA+ as a condition of Treasury Board funding. The result is that gender considerations are embedded throughout Canada's biodiversity work. However, because it is applied programme by programme — across Environment and Climate Change Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Indigenous Services Canada, and other departments — the gender-biodiversity intersection is embedded but not visible in published strategy documents.

[12] [Government of Canada](#) (1982). Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Part I of the Constitution Act, 1982, being Schedule B to the Canada Act 1982 (UK), 1982, c 11.

[13] [Women and Gender Equality Canada](#) (2021). Introduction to GBA Plus. Government of Canada. Available at: <https://women-gender-equality.canada.ca/en/gender-based-analysis-plus/introduction-gender-based-analysis-plus.html>

[14] [Government of Canada](#) (2018). Canadian Gender Budgeting Act, SC 2018, c 27, s 314. Available at: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-17.2/FullText.html>

[15] [Department of Finance Canada](#) (2023). Budget/Off-Cycle Proposal – Annex 2: GBA Plus Departmental Summary. Ottawa: Government of Canada. Last modified 29 September 2023. Available at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/services/publications/federal-budget/proposals/gba.html> [Accessed 28 September 2026].

HOW THE POLICY APPROACH CAME ABOUT

GBA+ became a federal requirement in the 1990s and has been progressively strengthened since. It was not designed for biodiversity policy specifically; it is a cross-cutting analytical tool applied to all federal programmes and initiatives regardless of subject area.

Canada’s 2030 Nature Strategy was developed as Canada’s national response to the GBF adopted in December 2022. GBF Target 23 is explicitly reflected in the national strategy’s Target 23 section and shapes the commitment to an intersectional and gender-responsive approach to implementation. The strategy also reflects Target 22, with a specific focus on the voices of Indigenous women, Indigenous girls and Indigenous 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals in biodiversity decision-making.

The current FSDS (2022–2026) was tabled before the GBF was formally adopted, so it reflects Canada’s pre-existing biodiversity commitments. When the 2030 Nature Strategy was subsequently developed in 2024, ECCC’s Sustainable Development Office worked to

ensure the two instruments were explicitly cross-referenced and future FSDS cycles will continue to work to align with the Nature Strategy in each of its three-year cycles running to 2030, with each one likely to incorporate the relevant GBF-aligned targets.

While the previous government framed its environmental work around three crises — climate change, biodiversity, and pollution— the current government frames the environment primarily as an economic issue — around innovation, clean technology and economic opportunity. However, officials noted that the core programmes (species at risk, conservation, marine ecosystems, invasive species) continue regardless of framing changes, and biodiversity should always remain in the FSDS. The next FSDS (2026–2029) increases the balance of the three dimensions of sustainable development—environmental, social, and economic—incorporating a greater focus on keeping women free from harm, while including less explicit emphasis on women in the environmental and clean technology workforce than the previous strategy.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of gender-responsive biodiversity governance in Canada operates through two interconnected mechanisms: the application of GBA+ at programme level across all federal biodiversity programmes, and the explicit commitments in the 2030 Nature Strategy under Targets 22 and 23.

As every federal programme contributing to the FSDS or the Nature Strategy is required to complete a GBA+ this means that all biodiversity programmes including Species at Risk, Marine Conservation Targets, the 30x30 protected areas commitment, the Indigenous Partnerships for Species at Risk programme have

undergone gender analysis. As one government official described it: “GBA Plus asks program or policy leads to consider the primary target group(s) of their initiative and how different demographic groups would directly or indirectly benefit from it, be negatively impacted by it, or face barriers to participation.” Officials are also required to consider how results will be monitored, including whether disaggregated data will be collected.

Under Target 23, the Nature Strategy commits to implementing GBA+ across all biodiversity-related programmes and policies, applying an intersectional approach that recognises the unique experiences of

Indigenous women and gender-diverse people. Under Target 22, it commits to ensuring diverse perspectives — including those of Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals — are present at international biodiversity fora, including CBD COP meetings. Several other federal tools support implementation, including the Feminist International Assistance Policy (committing 15% of bilateral international development assistance to gender equality and 80% to integrating gender equality objectives), the Gender Results Framework, the Quality of Life Framework, and the 2SLGBTQIA+ Action Plan [16].

The 2022-2026 FSDS contains two explicit gender-specific targets under Goal 5 (Gender Equality): the percentage of women in the environmental clean technology workforce, and self-reported rates of intimate partner violence. These are not biodiversity-specific but contribute to the enabling environment for gender-responsive environmental governance. The FSDS also applies a gender lens throughout the entire strategy document, alongside an Indigenous lens and a sustainable development lens.

The federal organisations designated under the Federal Sustainable Development Act (FSDA) are required to contribute to the FSDS, report on progress annually, and produce Departmental Sustainable Development Strategies. Each organisation applies GBA+ independently to its own programmes. WAGE provides guidance across government but does not directly manage any specific biodiversity programme.

[16] *Environment and Climate Change Canada* (2024). *Canada's 2030 Nature Strategy: Halting and Reversing Biodiversity Loss in Canada*. Ottawa: Government of Canada. Cat. No.: En4-539/1-2024E-PDF. ISBN: 978-0-660-72244-3. Available at: https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2024/eccc/En4-539-1-2024-eng.pdf

MONITORING AND PROGRESS

Monitoring of gender-responsive implementation operates at two levels: the FSDS progress reporting cycle and the Domestic Biodiversity Monitoring Framework under the Nature Strategy.

The FSDA requires reporting on FSDS targets at least once during each cycle. ECCC officials described the FSDS progress report as unusually candid in acknowledging where targets are off track. Of the two gender-specific targets in 2025: the women-in-environmental-clean-tech target showed limited progress and will not appear in the next FSDS, though the theme continues through implementation strategies; the intimate partner violence target remains nonassessable due to only one data point, with a proxy indicator (police-reported rates) being used in the interim.

The Nature Strategy's Domestic Biodiversity Monitoring Framework incorporates all 26 KMGBF headline indicators. For Target 23, the only indicator is the global binary indicator (23.b) and there are no current plans to develop a complementary domestic-level indicator specific to gender and biodiversity.

Although there are broader efforts to track gender-related advances across the federal government, such as the Gender Results Framework and the Sustainable Development Goals, there are none that apply specifically to biodiversity.

At programme level, monitoring of gender dimensions is the responsibility of individual programmes. Because GBA+ is embedded at inception rather than tracked as a visible ongoing process, it is difficult to demonstrate where and how gender analysis has shaped outcomes. As one ECCC official acknowledged: “GBA+ is meant to shape programs and policies from the very beginning. Because of that, early adjustments often go undocumented. The result is that it can be hard to point to specific changes that were made because GBA+ was applied.”

Collection of disaggregated identity-based data remains limited across biodiversity programmes. ECCC has stated it continues to build capacity to report on gender and diversity impacts, but this is identified as an ongoing gap rather than a resolved one.

INTENDED AND ACTUAL IMPACTS

The overarching aim is to ensure that all federal biodiversity programmes consider and mitigate differential impacts on women, Indigenous peoples, gender-diverse individuals and other marginalised groups — and that these groups can participate meaningfully in biodiversity decision-making at all levels.

Canada's constitutional and legal framework for gender equality is strong, and GBA+ is a legally mandated and genuinely implemented analytical tool. ECCC officials noted that in their experience with Indigenous knowledge sessions, women scientists are consistently the knowledge holders and presenters — an observation that suggests women's expertise in environmental and ecological knowledge is well-recognised within ECCC's own practice, even if this is not systematically documented.

The FSDS 2026–2029 consultation process generated 1,400 individual comments — the largest response in the strategy's history — from every province and territory, a wide range of organisations, and parliamentarians.

Women were represented in greater numbers than men among respondents, which officials described as encouraging. Specific outreach was sent to women's associations and organisations.

However, the overall impact on gender equality in biodiversity governance is difficult to assess from outside the system. The structural invisibility of programme-level GBA+ means that outcomes are embedded in programme design rather than reported as gender-specific achievements. There is no single person or team whose role is to oversee the gender dimension of biodiversity work across the federal government.

One area where impact is measurable is Indigenous partnerships: the Indigenous Partnerships Initiative's \$63 million investment has supported 185 projects and nearly 200 species, with Indigenous leadership central to design and implementation. While identity-disaggregated data is not available, this represents a significant investment in community-led conservation that is structured to support Indigenous governance including the roles of Indigenous women.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Canada's approach explicitly goes beyond a binary understanding of gender. GBA+ takes an intersectional approach that considers not only sex and gender but age, disability, education, ethnicity, economic status, geography (including rurality), language, race, religion, and sexual orientation. The “Plus” in GBA+ specifically denotes this intersectional dimension, added to the tool in 2011.

The most significant intersectional dimension in the Canadian biodiversity context is the intersection of gender and Indigenous identity. The 2030 Nature Strategy explicitly recognises that Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals hold specialised Indigenous Knowledge and have unique experiences with biodiversity. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's findings highlighted how colonialism contributes to the disempowerment of Indigenous women, and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2016–2019) documented the devaluation of Indigenous women's perspectives and high rates of violence against them. The Nature Strategy connects these findings to biodiversity through the IUCN's documentation of links between gender-based violence and environmental contexts — particularly access to and control of natural resources, environmental pressure, and environmental action to defend ecosystems.

ECCC officials identified team homogeneity as a practical intersectional challenge: the FSDS writing team is predominantly white and has no Indigenous members, which creates both practical and ethical challenges when developing policies intended to benefit very diverse populations. This has been partially mitigated through dedicated consultation with Indigenous colleagues, an Indigenous science research project, and the inclusion of a gender studies student in the GBA+ process. But officials were candid that representing diverse experiences from a position of structural privilege is an ongoing limitation.

Geographic intersectionality is also significant in Canada: the experiences of women in remote northern communities, particularly Indigenous women, are profoundly different from those of urban women in southern cities. The FSDS consultation explicitly considered these geographic differences, and multiple channels and time slots were offered to accommodate different communities' access constraints.



ENABLING FACTORS

- A legally mandated GBA+ requirement: every programme must complete a GBA+ as a condition of Treasury Board funding. This is the most powerful enabler treating gender analysis as a process that is not discretionary, or possible to bypass.
- A strong constitutional and legal framework: gender equality is constitutionally protected and embedded in multiple laws and budgeting requirements, providing a firm foundation that transcends individual government priorities.
- Whole-of-government coordination: the FSDS and the 2030 Nature Strategy both serve as horizontal instruments connecting biodiversity and gender commitments across federal organisations, reducing silos.
- WAGE as a central guidance body: Women and Gender Equality Canada provides GBA+ guidance across all departments, ensuring baseline consistency in how gender analysis is approached even without a universal template.
- Deliberate alignment between strategies: the ECCC Sustainable Development Office's active effort to ensure the FSDS is acknowledged within the Nature Strategy and that both share biodiversity targets creates a coherent enabling framework across the government's planning instruments.
- Research-first culture: the FSDS team spent an entire year on research before drafting began, significantly strengthening the baseline and reducing the burden on public consultation. Officials described this as essential given consultation fatigue among communities.
- Diverse writing teams: the FSDS team was predominantly women (four of six writers), which officials described as making it easier to write authentically about gender issues. A woman completing a gender studies co-op placement contributed specialist expertise the team would not otherwise have had.



KEY CHALLENGES

- Structural invisibility of gender-biodiversity work: because GBA+ is applied at programme level and is not flagged in published strategy documents, it is almost impossible to demonstrate where the gender-biodiversity intersection exists or what it has produced. "You're not going to see a programme say, 'and we did a GBA plus' — everybody knows they did a GBA plus because it has to be done," as one senior official explained. Yet, there are no concrete examples to date where GBA+ has led to a documented, tangible change in a biodiversity programme related to gender.
- Absence of a dedicated gender-biodiversity expert: there is no single person or team within the federal government responsible for overseeing the gender dimension of biodiversity work. Gender is subsumed into each programme, making it structurally invisible and difficult to communicate to external researchers or partners.
- Limited sex-disaggregated data: disaggregated identity-based data on participation and outcomes in biodiversity programmes remains limited. Without this data, it is difficult to assess whether gender analysis has actually improved outcomes for women and gender-diverse people, or whether it is primarily a process compliance exercise.
- GBA+ as a procedural tool: because GBA+ shapes programmes from the outset, the risk is that gender analysis becomes a procedural requirement rather than a substantive driver of change.
- Team homogeneity: the federal government workforce is predominantly white and middle-class, which limits the authenticity of gender analysis on issues affecting diverse communities, particularly Indigenous communities.
- Consultation fatigue: over-consulting already-stretched communities is counterproductive. The tension between thorough consultation and consultation fatigue is a growing challenge, particularly for Indigenous communities that are already heavily engaged in multiple processes across government.
- Government framing shifts: changes in government shift how environmental issues are framed — from "three crises" to an economic opportunity lens — which can affect the visibility and prioritisation of gender equality in environmental contexts, even if core programmes continue.



KEY LESSONS

- Mandatory gender analysis produces embedded but invisible results: this approach ensures that gender analysis is universally applied, but the trade-off is that outcomes are embedded in programme design rather than communicated as gender achievements. Other countries considering mandatory gender analysis tools should plan for how those results will be documented, reported and communicated publicly.
- Whole-of-government approaches require active coordination mechanisms to connect policies, programmes and departments. This can rely on the concerted effort by specific people to ensure policies reference each other. Without those connections strategies can run in parallel without reinforcing each other.
- Gender is not one issue — it is many intersecting issues: as one official put it, “All issues are women's issues.” A gender lens must be applied to every dimension of biodiversity work, not siloed into a dedicated gender section.
- Research before consultation: doing substantive research before going out for consultation allows consultations to refine and deepen a strong baseline rather than building it from scratch. This reduces the burden on already over-consulted communities and produces better-informed policy.
- Diverse and specialist teams support better analysis: gender diversity in writing and analysis teams is not sufficient and cultural, socioeconomic, disciplinary, and geographic diversity is important too. Bringing in specialist gender expertise alongside programme generalists significantly can improve the quality of analysis.
- The gap between legal frameworks and lived experience is real even in high-income countries: Canada has a strong constitutional and legal framework for gender equality, but senior officials acknowledged that structural barriers to women's participation — particularly for Indigenous women and low-income women — persist.
- Intersectionality must be built into tools, not added later: the “Plus” in GBA+ reflects Canada's experience that gender analysis which considers only biological sex or binary gender is insufficient. Systems for gender analysis in biodiversity governance should incorporate intersectionality and gender diversity from the outset.

Costa Rica

NBSAP Accelerator, Gender Indicators and Gender Equality Awards

01

Primary policy focus

NBSAP Accelerator Programme (October 2024 – July 2026); GIGUP — Gender Equality Award for Productive Units (ongoing, 5 years)

02

Lead institution

Ministry of Environment and Energy — Biodiversity Protection and Conservation Branch; National Commission for Biodiversity Management (CONAGEBIO)

03

GBF Targets

Costa Rica was a key champion of GBF Target 23 during the Kunming-Montreal negotiations; gender mainstreaming is a cross-cutting approach in the updated National Biodiversity Strategy

POLITICAL, LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Costa Rica is a small Central American republic of approximately 5 million people, internationally recognised as a global leader in biodiversity conservation and environmental policy. The country hosts approximately 5% of the world's known biodiversity despite covering less than 0.03% of its surface area. Conservation is constitutionally embedded, and the national system of protected areas covers over 25% of the national territory [17]. Responsibility for conservation is shared between the state and local communities, a model that shapes how gender mainstreaming is understood and implemented in practice.

Costa Rica has an established legal framework on gender equality. Gender is mainstreamed across multiple national policies, and gender-sensitive measures are proposed in the context of poverty reduction and sustainable development. The current National Biodiversity Strategy (ENB2, 2016–2025) was developed under a Human Rights and Gender Approach, reflects the Sustainable Development Goals, and identifies women and youth as a priority interest group alongside Indigenous peoples and local communities. Despite this legal framework, women's land ownership remains unequal. Nationally, only 15.6% of farm owners

are women, and they receive a disproportionately small share of agricultural support — from technical assistance and credit to environmental payments for land conservation [18]. While women contribute substantially to agricultural labour, 72.8% of women working on farms receive no pay for their work.

According to its Gender Focal Point for the CBD, Costa Rica was one of the most active parties pushing for gender to have a dedicated target in the KMGBF, working particularly alongside Guatemala within the Latin American and Caribbean Group during the Montreal negotiations. This political positioning shaped Costa Rica's subsequent engagement with the NBSAP Accelerator Programme.

[17] [Protected Planet](https://protectedplanet.net/country/CRI) (2026). Costa Rica. UNEP-WCMC and IUCN. Available at: protectedplanet.net/country/CRI [Accessed: 26 September 2026].

[18] [MINAIE and World Bank](#) (2019). Plan de Acción de Género de la Estrategia Nacional REDD+ de Costa Rica. San José: Ministerio de Ambiente y Energía.

HOW THE POLICY APPROACH CAME ABOUT

Costa Rica's work on gender and biodiversity predates the KMGBF. The country had already been developing gender approaches within the Ministry of Environment and Energy (MINAEC), primarily through a climate change lens. The NBSAP Accelerator Programme provided the entry point for extending and deepening this work specifically into biodiversity.

Participation in the Accelerator Programme has been valuable in integrating efforts that previously existed in different institutional silos, and in strengthening connections between institutions working on gender and biodiversity. For example, the Gender Equality Award for Productive Units (GIGUP) is an initiative already developed as part of the country's national REDD+ strategy and has been brought into dialogue with biodiversity governance. Costa Rica showcased GIGUP at the Programme to illustrate that existing instruments can be just as powerful as designing new interventions from scratch.

GIGUP is an official recognition awarded by the Government of Costa Rica, coordinated by MINAEC through National Forestry Financing Fund (FONAFIFO), to rural and Indigenous women who lead sustainable farms, projects, or ventures and protect the environment. Developed as part of the Gender Action Plan of the National REDD+ Strategy — with support from the REDD+ Results-Based Payment Project implemented by UNDP in Costa Rica and funded by the Green Climate Fund — it recognises and incentivises women-led productive units that promote sustainable environmental management, equitable land tenure, and gender equality within the household and community.

IMPLEMENTATION

NBSAP Accelerator Programme (October 2024 – July 2026)

Costa Rica's participation in the Accelerator Programme has centred on five interconnected activities:

- Capacity building and multi-actor workshops: workshops have been held with public institutions and local actors to demonstrate the connection between gender and biodiversity conservation — specifically targeting institutions where gender equality is acknowledged in principle but not yet reflected in how women's differentiated contributions to conservation are understood and valued.
- Gap analysis: consultations were conducted to inform the updated national biodiversity strategy and provide a gap analysis of women's needs across all 23 Global Biodiversity Framework targets. The process generated over 500 comments from participants across civil society, government, indigenous communities, and other actors.
- Development of gender-specific indicators: A team from 18 institutions connected to biodiversity is developing a set of gender indicators for all 23 GBF targets. These go beyond counting women's participation to examining the conditions under which women contribute — to conservation, restoration, genetic resources, and more — with the aim of improving those conditions. The indicators were expected to be finalised by the end of July 2026, followed by technical and then political review, with the aim of publication alongside the updated national biodiversity strategy, potentially in time for the COP in October 2026. Costa Rica is also exploring the Accelerator's matchmaking mechanism to find support for the implementation phase, as developing the indicators is only the beginning; their use in practice requires sustained resourcing.
- Protected area visitor survey: a one-month survey of tourists visiting protected areas was implemented and covered three themes — discrimination, accessibility, and fear of gender-based violence. While most responses were positive, a meaningful proportion indicated differential treatment (for example, men receiving more information than women), perceived fear of violence, and unequal accessibility. This is being used to make the case for replicating safe space models across protected areas, not only for female visitors but for women rangers, researchers, and volunteers. The Área de Conservación Marina Coco is the pilot site for this approach.
- First dedicated safe space for Indigenous women: the Accelerator Programme enabled the organization of a space specifically for indigenous women to contribute to the update of the national biodiversity strategy. Previous indigenous consultation processes had been mixed-gender but

this space allowed Indigenous women to articulate their own perspectives and commitments for the new strategy, and represents a concrete step towards intersectionally-responsive biodiversity governance.

- Formation of an inter-institutional alliance: A broader outcome of Costa Rica's participation in the Accelerator Programme has been the formation of an informal alliance between five public institutions working on gender and biodiversity: MINAE, SINAC, FONAFIFO, the General Directorate for Environmental Quality, and INAMU. These institutions had previously been developing gender approaches in isolation but are now bringing them together under a shared agenda, with active effort to avoid duplication.

Gender Equality Award for Productive Units (GIGUP)

GIGUP is a nationally administered scoring and recognition system that has been operating since 2022. It targets productive units in socially disadvantaged districts near protected areas — using the term “productive units” deliberately, since women’s agricultural plots are typically under two hectares and

therefore excluded from policies designed for larger farms, which tend to be owned by men. Applications are reviewed annually by a Technical Committee comprising institutions including National Women’s Institute (INAMU), Rural Development Institute (INDER) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock (MAG). Units are assessed across six criteria: sustainable environmental management, equitable land tenure, participation in assets and resources, distribution of roles within the household, community participation, and the right to health and physical integrity. Within the equitable land tenure criterion, one indicator assesses whether girls are named alongside boys and other adults in inheritance documents recognising that securing girls’ future land rights is foundational to intergenerational equity in land access. A minimum score of 85 out of 100 is required to receive the award. The connection to biodiversity is direct: the programme aims to reduce illegal activities such as logging and illegal hunting near protected areas by strengthening the economic and social stability of women-led households within those landscapes. More than 250 productive units led by women have been recognised through GIGUP to date.

MONITORING AND PROGRESS

Gender-specific monitoring indicators for biodiversity are currently under development — this is the primary monitoring instrument and Costa Rica's most significant technical contribution to the Accelerator Programme. The indicators are designed to move beyond headcounts of women's participation to assess how women are participating and under what conditions, with the aim of providing institutional and political-level information that will influence how national policies and programmes become more gender-inclusive.

The gap analysis conducted as part of the Accelerator Programme identified where gender gaps are most acute across the 23 GBF targets. Target 3 on protected

areas was flagged as requiring particular attention, with inputs reflecting the need for capacity building for women to engage in its implementation. Access to genetic resources and science, technology, engineering and mathematics capacity were also identified as priority areas.

Once finalised, the indicators will go through technical and political review before being published alongside the updated National Biodiversity Strategy. Costa Rica is exploring the Accelerator matchmaking mechanism to secure support for the implementation phase.

INTENDED AND ACTUAL IMPACTS

The overarching aim is to achieve gender equality as an operational principle in biodiversity governance: for women's differentiated contributions to conservation to be recognised, measured, and supported at institutional and policy level across all relevant sectors.

Progress to date includes strengthening inter-institutional coordination and the dedicated safe space for indigenous women in the national strategy update process. Gender indicators in development across all 23 Global Biodiversity Framework targets is potentially the most institutionally significant output, as they will feed

directly into the updated national strategy and into how institutions plan, implement and report. One of GIGUP's aims is to build women's land tenure rights while simultaneously creating incentives to reduce illegal biodiversity-harming activities.

What has not yet been achieved: the engagement of productive sector institutions (fisheries, agriculture) in the gender-biodiversity framework; formal institutionalisation of the five-institution alliance; and domestic financing that does not depend on international cooperation.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Costa Rica is home to diverse Indigenous communities whose relationship to biodiversity is both deep and legally recognised. The ENB2 was developed with a specific participatory process for Indigenous peoples, and the updated strategy is being developed with a dedicated space for Indigenous women. The fact that this is the first time such a space has been created demonstrates that even in a country with strong gender mainstreaming commitments, the specific intersection of gender and Indigenous identity had not previously been addressed as a distinct governance category. Indigenous women face both gender and ethnic discrimination in accessing biodiversity-related resources, and generic Indigenous consultation processes, even when well-designed, may not surface their specific perspectives or commitments. This exclusion is particularly striking given that Indigenous women are more present as farm owners than the national average. In Costa Rica's 24 Indigenous territories, 32.7% of farms are owned by women, compared to 15.6% nationally. Yet despite this productive presence, Indigenous women face compounded barriers to formal land recognition and to environmental payment programmes, which in Indigenous territories flow through Territorial Development Associations predominantly governed by men. The UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples documented this exclusion in 2022, noting that Indigenous women in Costa Rica are systematically excluded from political and economic power and from access to land management [19]. This is particularly acute among the Bribri, whose matrilineal kinship system makes women the social and cultural axis of the community and the traditional inheritors of land, yet many still lack formal property documentation [20].

[19] Calí Tzay, J.F. (2022). Visit to Costa Rica: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples. UN Doc. A/HRC/51/28. Geneva: United Nations Human Rights Council.

[20] PNUD Costa Rica (2026). Mujeres indígenas de la tierra florecen con los bosques: Guía para procesos participativos con mujeres indígenas. San José: Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo.

ENABLING FACTORS



- Costa Rica's active role in the Kunming-Montreal negotiations for Target 23 created political ownership of the gender-biodiversity agenda, providing institutional legitimacy for the work that followed.
- An existing culture of shared conservation responsibility between the state and communities, which makes community-level women's participation a recognised part of biodiversity governance rather than an add-on.
- The NBSAP Accelerator Programme: providing technical tools, capacity building, expert support, and an international peer learning network — and specifically providing the gap analysis framework that has allowed Costa Rica to systematically identify where gender gaps are most acute across the GBF targets.
- Five committed public institutions willing to work collaboratively across institutional boundaries, even in the absence of a formal mandate to do so.

- Gender equality as a pre-existing policy commitment in Costa Rica, reflected in multiple national laws and strategies, which provides a normative foundation for biodiversity-specific action. Broader rural gender programmes, such as the National Forum on Rural Women (Foro Nacional de Mujeres Rurales), jointly supported by INAMU, INDER, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, and UNDP, have built institutional infrastructure that complements Costa Rica's biodiversity gender agenda. Its 2023–2026 strategy includes concrete mechanisms for women's land rights advocacy, rural credit access, green economy training, and market linkages.

KEY CHALLENGES



- Institutional understanding: getting institutions to genuinely understand gender equality as a positive, whole-of-society obligation and translating that understanding into public instruments (strategies, programmes, projects) remains the primary challenge.
- Expanding the institutional alliance: bringing productive sector institutions (fisheries, agriculture) into the gender-biodiversity framework is identified as the next critical step, but has not yet been achieved.
- Domestic financing: international cooperation is becoming scarcer, and the sustainability of gender-biodiversity work depends on its integration into national budget lines. The current work is heavily dependent on the Accelerator Programme funding, which ended in July 2026.
- Formalising inter-institutional collaboration: the five-institution alliance currently rests on goodwill and without formal institutionalisation, it is vulnerable to changes in government or personnel.
- Community and civil society engagement: strengthening communities' and civil society's role in feeding into gender-responsive instruments and providing data for gender indicators remains a challenge.

KEY LESSONS



- Monitoring gender mainstreaming requires moving beyond counting women's participation to understanding how they participate and under what conditions. Developing indicators that measure conditions, not just numbers, is a technically demanding but essential step.
- Gender work that exists in institutional silos, even when substantive, is not the same as gender mainstreaming. Costa Rica's experience shows that a deliberate integrating framework (in this case, the Accelerator Programme and Target 23) is needed to connect efforts that might otherwise remain disconnected.
- Linking women's economic empowerment and sustainable land management to productive unit incentives (as in GIGUP) can be an effective model for embedding gender equity within biodiversity conservation outcomes in a single instrument. Replicating this approach requires enabling institutional conditions, including inter-agency coordination and sustained financing mechanisms, that cannot be assumed across different country contexts.
- Dedicated participatory spaces for Indigenous women, separate from general Indigenous consultation processes, are necessary to surface their specific perspectives. Generic processes, even well-designed ones, are insufficient.
- International peer learning within the Accelerator Programme has produced concrete insights: Costa Rica learned from Tajikistan's structured approach to access and benefit-sharing for genetic resources; and while Eswatini was impressed by GIGUP's approach to equitable land tenure, partners acknowledged they could not implement a similar initiative without first reforming the national legal framework. Eswatini law currently caps women's participation in decision-making at a maximum of 30%, illustrating that enabling legal conditions for gender equality must be addressed before biodiversity conservation interventions can be replicated.

Dominican Republic

Integrating Gender Equality into Biodiversity Planning Through Existing National Policy Instruments

01

Primary policy focus

National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (ENBPA-RD)

02

Lead institution

Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, supported by the National Biodiversity Committee

03

GBF Targets

Target 23 — acted as a catalyst for more explicit gender integration in the ENBPA-RD update, building on pre-existing national gender instruments.

POLITICAL, LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The Dominican Republic shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti and has a population of approximately 11.6 million people. It sits within the Caribbean Islands biodiversity hotspot [21] — one of the world's 36 recognised hotspots — and carries a high concentration of endemic species for its size: around 34% of its roughly 6,000 recorded vascular plant species are found nowhere else, and 36.9% of the more than 8,000 arthropod species recorded on Hispaniola are endemic to the island, alongside a vertebrate fauna dominated by reptiles and amphibians with very few native mammals [22]. Much of this biodiversity exists alongside a largely rural, agriculture-dependent population that is regularly exposed to hurricanes, drought and other climate hazards.

Biodiversity policy in the Dominican Republic is led by the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, supported by the National Biodiversity Committee — an open group that brings in government bodies, universities and civil society organisations as needed.

The country's core biodiversity policy document is the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (ENBPA-RD), first published in 2011 and currently being updated. There is no separate gender action plan for biodiversity; instead, gender is being channeled directly into this ENBPA-RD update, drawing on three existing national policies as reference points:

1. the National Plan for Gender Equality and Equity (PLANEG III, 2020–2030), led by the Ministry of Women;
2. the National Policy for Gender Equality in the Agricultural Sector (2024), led by the Ministry of Agriculture; and
3. the Gender and Climate Change Action Plan (PAGCC-RD, 2018), coordinated by the National Council for Climate Change

More broadly, gender equality is a constitutional principle in the Dominican Republic [23] and is overseen nationally by the Ministry of Women, created in 1999. This gives the ENBPA-RD update a legal and institutional foundation to draw on, even though neither the Constitution nor the Ministry of Women is biodiversity-specific [24]. Yet, this institutional architecture sits against a challenging baseline: the PAGCC-RD cites the country's 101st-of-187 ranking on UNDP's 2015 gender-related Human Development Index measures, and identifies the Dominican Republic as the fourth most gender-unequal country in the region.

[21] Myers, N. et al. (2000). 'Biodiversity hotspots for conservation priorities'. *Nature*, 403, pp. 853–858. — the foundational paper establishing the Caribbean hotspot designation.

[22] Ministerio de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (2011). *Estrategia Nacional de Conservación y Uso Sostenible de la Biodiversidad: Plan de Acción 2011–2020* (National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, ENBPA-RD).

[23] Dominican Republic (2010). *Constitution of the Dominican Republic*, Article 39.

[24] Scalise, E. & Bledsoe, D. (2022). Possibilities for Gender Equity in Land and Forest Tenure in REDD+ Programming: Dominican Republic. Resource Equity, for the World Bank Forest Carbon Partnership Facility.

HOW THE POLICY APPROACH CAME ABOUT

The push to bring a gender lens into biodiversity policy began as an effort to connect two strands that had been developing on separate tracks: the country's international commitments under the CBD, and the domestic equality agenda that the Ministry of Women had already been leading for years. That connection became concrete when the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources began updating the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (ENBPA-RD), an update still underway. As part of that update, the team drew on three existing national policies as reference points: the National Plan for Gender Equality and Equity (PLANEG III, 2020–2030), the National Policy for Gender Equality in the Agricultural Sector (2024), and the Gender and Climate Change Action Plan (PAGCC-RD, 2018).

Target 23 was a catalyst rather than an originating cause: the country already had national gender-equality instruments in place, but adoption of the GBF prompted

the more explicit incorporation of actions to guarantee women's and girls' full, equitable and effective participation in biodiversity conservation, particularly within the ENBPA-RD update.

This relationship also worked the other way round: the Dominican Republic helped shape Target 23 before applying it at home. In the lead-up to the Kunming-Montreal negotiations, the Dominican Republic was among the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC) and Small Island Developing States members that publicly backed Costa Rica's proposal for a stand-alone gender target, after concluding that the previous Aichi Target 14 had "failed" on gender mainstreaming because it was too broad and general to be actionable or reportable [25].

[25] *Women4Biodiversity* (2022). A Stand-Alone Gender Equality Target in the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework Will Address Previous Framework's Gaps – Dominican Republic and Tanzania. <https://women4biodiversity.org/a-stand-alone-gender-equality-target-in-the-post-2020-global-biodiversity-framework-will-address-previous-frameworks-gaps-dominican-republic-and-tanzania/>

IMPLEMENTATION

The ENBPA-RD update is funded through the national budget allocated to the Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, with additional support from the GEF, UNDP and the CBD Secretariat. PLANEG III, the Agricultural Gender Policy and PAGCC-RD each have their own separate funding through their own lead ministries.

Each of the three reference policies feeds a different element into the ENBPA-RD update: PLANEG III provides

the overall gender-mainstreaming framework that other sectors, including environment, draw on; the National Policy for Gender Equality in the Agricultural Sector focuses on closing gender gaps in access to land, credit and training; and PAGCC-RD focuses on women's participation in responding to climate change. All three are being brought together within the ENBPA-RD update.

MONITORING AND PROGRESS

Progress is tracked through the mechanisms already established for ENBPA-RD implementation and through monitoring of national biodiversity targets, incorporating indicators on participation, capacity-building and governance. The Ministry's Annual Operating Plan (POA) is also described as incorporating a gender lens across national level activities.

The Gender and Biodiversity Focal Point identified a specific limitation: a shortage of sex-disaggregated data to inform decision-making, and a lack of consolidated indicators specific to gender and biodiversity. This gap is

visible in the wider evidence base: the strongest sex-disaggregated dataset available for the rural sector is a 2018 study by the National Statistics Office's (ONE) and FAO looking at women's contribution to agricultural activity. It found that 25% of surveyed landholders were women, though few were the principal decision-makers on their land [26]. That study, however, concerns agriculture rather than biodiversity or conservation specifically, underlining how underdeveloped sex-disaggregated monitoring is for the biodiversity sector.

[26] *Oficina Nacional de Estadística – ONE, with FAO* (2019). Medición del Aporte de la Mujer en las Actividades Agropecuarias en República Dominicana, Diciembre 2018.

INTENDED AND ACTUAL IMPACTS

- The ENBPA-RD and related policy frameworks aim to strengthen women's participation in biodiversity conservation, improve integration of gender across environmental management, and foster closer coordination between environmental and gender institutions.
- Achievements so far include building gender into the ENBPA-RD update, improving coordination between the relevant institutions, and developing new sectoral policies that recognise women's role in agriculture, natural resource management and climate action, including the National Policy for Gender Equality in the Agricultural Sector (2024).
- Progress on women's access to land and natural resources is partial. While policy has made women's role in natural resource management more visible, and participatory processes have started to bring women's knowledge and organisations into environmental governance, actions to secure equitable access to resources are still being developed.
- Overall, gender equality is now treated as necessary for meeting conservation goals, and this has helped shift institutions and decision-making, but the GBFP was clear that structural barriers, such as the underlying division of labour and unequal access to resources, have not been resolved.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Gender inequality overlaps with poverty, rural life, age and climate vulnerability. Dominican Republic also has a complex racial landscape shaped by its shared island history with Haiti, with significant Afro-Dominican and Haitian-descended communities who face compounded discrimination [27]. Women from these communities are among the most excluded from land rights and environmental governance. Following the 2013 Constitutional Court ruling that stripped citizenship from Dominicans of Haitian descent, a significant population of women became effectively stateless [28], making engagement with formal conservation or land-rights processes legally inaccessible to them. Since stateless and undocumented Afro-Dominican and Haitian-descended women are systematically pushed out of urban economies and legal employment, they are disproportionately concentrated in rural, ecologically precarious zones or near hazardous agricultural zones (like sugarcane plantations) [29]. This negatively affects women's health while further locking them into precarious rural spaces that prevent their eventual integration into formal economies. Women's statelessness also limits their ability to institutionalise their ecological knowledge or pass it on through formal community, educational, or cooperative structures.

Moreover, grassroots Dominican-Haitian women are often at the forefront of opposing large-scale agricultural and extractive industries [30]. However, their lack of state recognition and structural persecution severely curtails their ability to formally interface with the state to protect their local territories and environmental health. Lack of legal documentation also excludes the women most vulnerable to climate and environmental degradation from participating in formal conservation projects as they tend to rely on legal identity.

While policy is said to prioritise rural women, women farmers, young people and other groups who are often excluded, lack of data means it is difficult to assess the effect ENBPA-RD has had on different groups of women.

[27] Sagás, E. (2000). *Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida.

[28] Childers, T.B. (2020). *In Someone Else's Country: Anti-Haitian Racism and Citizenship in the Dominican Republic*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.

[29] Petrozziello, Allison et al. (2014). *Gender and the Risk of Statelessness for People of Haitian Descent in the Bateyes of the Dominican Republic*. OBMICA. Editora Buho: Santo Domingo.

[29] Déry, J.R. and Molinero-Gerbeau, Y. (2025) "'We work in the light but get paid in the dark': Structural violence and Haitian labor in Dominican sugarcane production', *Critical Sociology*, pp. 1–25. DOI: 10.1177/08969205251392775.

[30] Zelic, H. and Moreno, T. (2021) 'Black women harvesting: Agroecology and autonomy in the Caribbean', *Capire*, 25 July. Available at: <https://capiremov.org/en/interview/black-women-harvesting-agroecology-and-autonomy-in-the-caribbean/>

[30] Zelic, H. and Scátola, A. (2022) 'Peasants, both men and women, are fundamental in a country', interview by Danica, *Capire*, 23 May. Available at: <https://capiremov.org/en/interview/elsa-sanchez-peasants-both-men-and-women-are-fundamental-in-a-country/>



ENABLING FACTORS

- International commitments as a driver: The government's ratification of and commitment to the CBD and the KMGBF has created political impetus and accountability for gender-responsive biodiversity action.
- An existing national gender framework: PLANEG III (2020–2030) provided a ready-made national architecture to build on, reducing the need to establish gender equality principles from scratch within biodiversity policy processes.
- Cross-departmental coordination: Active coordination across directorates within the Ministry of Environment has helped align environmental and gender priorities, avoiding the siloing that often limits implementation.
- International technical and financial support: Backing from the GEF, UNDP and the CBD Secretariat has provided both the resources and the technical expertise needed to move from policy commitments to concrete action.
- Civil society, academic and community engagement: Active involvement from civil society organisations, universities and local communities has strengthened the legitimacy and reach of gender-biodiversity initiatives beyond central government.
- A flexible national coordination structure: The National Biodiversity Committee's open membership model, allowing whichever government, civil society or community actors are relevant to a given workstream to participate, enables adaptive, inclusive governance rather than a rigid institutional hierarchy.



KEY CHALLENGES

- Data gaps on land and participation: No reliable national data exists on whether women hold land titles, and women remain largely absent from decision-making bodies in programmes such as REDD+ [31]. This makes it difficult to assess whether visible gains in participation are translating into real control over resources.
- Lack of gender-biodiversity indicators: Without dedicated indicators linking gender equality to biodiversity outcomes, progress is hard to measure and harder to hold institutions accountable for.
- Uneven participation in practice: Ensuring women participate meaningfully at every level of environmental governance and not just on paper remains an ongoing challenge, particularly at local and community levels.
- Insufficient and fragmented funding: Resources for gender-responsive biodiversity work remain limited, and funding tends to be project-based rather than embedded in core institutional budgets.
- Institutional awareness: Building consistent understanding across government institutions of why gender equality matters for biodiversity outcomes requires sustained investment in capacity and communication.



KEY LESSONS

- It is not always necessary to write a new policy to bring gender into biodiversity work. Connecting existing policies on gender equality, agriculture and climate under the NBSAP update can be just as effective, and makes use of institutions and commitments already in place.
- International commitments can act as a catalyst. Target 23 did not create the Dominican Republic's gender agenda, but it prompted more explicit integration of gender into biodiversity planning. This was reinforced by the country's own role in advocating for a gender target in the KM-GBF.
- Coordination is what turns separate policies into a coherent approach. Working across the Ministry of Environment, the Ministry of Women, the Ministry of Agriculture and the climate change council has allowed each policy to contribute distinct elements to the NBSAP update.
- Integration needs to be matched by evidence. Without sex-disaggregated data and dedicated gender-biodiversity indicators, it is difficult to show whether gender integration is changing outcomes for women.

[31] Scalise, E. & Bledsoe, D. (2022). Possibilities for Gender Equity in Land and Forest Tenure in REDD+ Programming: Dominican Republic. Resource Equity, for the World Bank Forest Carbon Partnership Facility.

[31] Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (2021). Dominican Republic Finalizes REDD+ Gender Analysis and Action Plan.

India

Women's Participation in Biodiversity Governance and Forest Land Rights

01

Primary policy focus

Gender quotas in local governance institutions; The Forest Rights Act (2006); The Biological Diversity Act (2002); Community-Conserved Areas

02

Lead institution

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC); National Biodiversity Authority (NBA); Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) for implementation of the Forest Rights Act; Panchayati Raj Institutions and Gram Sabhas at local level.

03

GBF Targets

India's national target 23 on 'gender equality in decision-making and implementation' aligns with the KM-GBF Target.

POLITICAL, LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

India is a federal democracy with a highly decentralised system of local governance. It is recognised as one of the world's megadiverse countries, containing parts of four global biodiversity hotspots, alongside a large and culturally diverse rural population that depends directly on natural resources for livelihoods. The Constitution (73rd and 74th amendments, 1992) mandates at least one-third representation of women in local decision-making bodies (Panchayati Raj and Municipal institutions), making India one of the largest experiments in gender quotas globally. Some states (such as Maharashtra) have increased this quota to 50%. Depending on the state, Panchayats may be involved in decisions with relevance to the environment such as over water, restoration, tree planting and social forestry. The Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA) extended self-governance provisions to predominantly tribal areas and strengthened the role of Gram Sabhas in governing natural resources. Further, the Biological Diversity Act (2002) established a decentralised governance structure relating to biodiversity, including Biodiversity Management Committees at local-government level which under section 41(1) should include at least two women out of the seven members. These committees are responsible for documenting locally held biodiversity knowledge by preparing 'People's Biodiversity Registers', managing benefit sharing from biological resources, and organising conservation activities.

However, it is the Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers Recognition of Forest Rights Act (FRA, 2006) which was viewed by interviewees as the most progressive biodiversity-related legislation from a gender perspective. By recognising women as equal stakeholders in tenure arrangements, it moves beyond participation to giving women substantive rights. The legislation provides a route for gender equity through i) joint titling of individual land titles (to homestead and cultivated land) where women are named as equal rights holders rather than dependents; ii) recognition of single women, widows and female headed households as eligible land rights holders; iii) community forest rights that enshrine customary rights and can enable communities to govern forests at the most local level of the village assembly (Gram Sabha) level and through which communities are required to incorporate principles of sustainability into management plans. Forest Rights Committees which are an elected committee of the Gram Sabha must have at least one-third women members alongside two-thirds Scheduled Tribes. Land under this Act is heritable but inalienable meaning it cannot be sold, providing further security for communities and women.

Together, the Constitutional Amendments, PESA, the Forest Rights Act and the Biological Diversity Act have created overlapping decentralised governance structures with implications for both biodiversity conservation and women's participation.

At the same time, a strong civil society movement in India has been important in enacting policy in practice as well as shaping policy upwards. Community-conserved areas have emerged as forms of self-governance, especially in parts of India where Indigenous tenure rights are uncertain in the context of extractive development pressures and protected area expansion, and there are now 1118 documented across India [32]. Although there is no legal recognition of these areas in India, international recognition via the

ICCA Registry provides legitimacy and they strengthen and demonstrate Indigenous self-governance through the use of by-laws, in some cases providing opportunities for women to participate in decision-making and benefit from sustainable use and conservation.

[32] **Community Conserved Areas** (no date) Community Conserved Areas [Online database]. Available at: <https://communityconservedareas.org/> (Accessed: 24 September 2026).

HOW THE POLICY APPROACH CAME ABOUT

Women's constitutional, legal, economic, social and political position in India was first examined systematically by the government of India with its Committee on the Status of Women and subsequent report published in 1974 [33]. The idea of gender quotas in local government institutions in India was further pushed with democratic decentralisation reforms made to improve accountability, participatory development and rural service delivery in the 1990s [34]. The amendments emerged alongside efforts to improve representation of historically excluded groups including Scheduled Castes and Tribes. At the same time the Indian feminist movement had paved the way for political change by highlighting women's exclusion from political decision-making. These reforms subsequently shaped the design of Biodiversity Management Committees and forest governance institutions. The FRA then extended this from representation towards recognition of women belonging to scheduled tribes and other traditional forest dwelling communities as rights-holders and decision-makers.

The FRA itself emerged from a long struggle against exclusion of scheduled tribes and forest-dwelling communities from forest governance and dispossessions rooted in systems from British colonial rule [35]. It also responded to growing criticism of exclusionary conservation models and instead explicitly links rights recognition with conservation and biodiversity objectives. It was designed as an attempt to correct historical injustices, rather than primarily a gender policy but the tenure focus brought questions about whose names should be on titles and who should participate in the recognition process, opening up space for women's property rights, an issue that the feminist movement had been campaigning on for decades.

[33] **Committee on the Status of Women in India** (1974). Towards Equality: Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India. New Delhi: Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Government of India. Available at: <https://feministlawarchives.pldindia.org/category/towards-equality/towards-equality-towards-equality/>

[34] Kumar, S., & Ghosh, A. K. (2024). *The State of Women's Representation in Urban Local Self-Government in India: A Review*. Observer Research Foundation.

[35] Kothari, A., Pathak, N., & Bose, A. (2011). Forests, Rights and Conservation: FRA Act 2006, India. In H. Scheyvens (Ed.), *Critical Review of Selected Forest-related Regulatory Initiatives: Applying a rights perspective* (pp. 19–50). Institute for Global Environmental Strategies. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep00846.7>

IMPLEMENTATION

Numerical representation alone does not lead to meaningful participation due to systemic barriers and proxy representation. The Indian Government is attempting to overcome these issues by launching in 2025 the “Sashakt Panchayat-Netri Abhiyan”, a capacity-building initiative aimed at strengthening women elected representatives focused on leadership skills and decision-making capabilities to strengthen their roles in governance. They have also launched ‘Model Women-Friendly Gram Panchayats Initiative’ with the aim to establish at least one Model Gram Panchayat in each District in the country (initially 770) that is women and girl friendly.

In addition, several states have developed women-only village assemblies (Mahila Gram Sabhas) where women can discuss their priorities at an accessible time to generate collective positions. This is legally mandated in the state Panchayat Acts of Maharashtra and Himachal Pradesh whereas government resolutions to conduct such meetings have been passed in Karnataka, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat and Rajasthan. These assemblies can increase women's voices on issues of concern to them especially in highly patriarchal contexts and particularly where their recommendations are systematically incorporated into the broader Gram Sabha discussions. However, social norms remain a challenge alongside limited legal awareness [36].

Implementation of gender-responsive legal frameworks is highly dependent on the federal government and the extent to which communities are demanding their rights. The implementation of the FRA has been particularly slow, especially with regards to community rights [37]. More progress has been made in certain states such as Odisha which in 2023 launched an initiative to expand FRA coverage with dedicated funds including for trained community mobilisers and support for community society organisations. This has helped to provide legal legitimacy to long-standing customary systems such as the thengapalli system where women are responsible for patrolling and rule enforcement in forests they use for food, fuel and medicine [38].

One example of a community-conserved areas (CCA) is Elopa Etugu Community Eco-Cultural Preserve (EECEP) in Arunachal Pradesh which represents an alternative model of governance driven by community mobilisation and customary institutions. After consultations involving elders and youth during 2021, the Gram Sabha formally adopted the governance framework in 2022.

Governance is led by the four Idu Mishmi clans through a Management Committee, with the Gram Sabha serving as the highest decision-making body. The by-laws regulate hunting, fishing, tourism and resource use, while community rangers undertake patrolling, monitoring and enforcement. Implementation has been supported by community-generated income from ecotourism, guided treks and research partnerships, alongside technical support from conservation organisations, but decision-making remains entirely community-led. The initiative has strengthened women's participation through representation on the Management Committee and their active roles in conservation, tourism and knowledge transmission.

[36] Sharma, R. & Verma, N. (2018). The Impact of Mahila Gram Sabhas on Women's Political Participation in Rural India. *Journal of Rural Governance*, 33(2), 214-229.

[37] CFR-LA (2016). Promise and Performance: Ten Years of the Forest Rights Act in India. Citizens' Report on Promise and Performance of The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, after 10 years of its Enactment. December 2016. Produced as part of Community Forest Rights-Learning and Advocacy Process (CFR-LA), India, 2016.

[37] Ballal, A., Guha, A., Tambe, S., Patnaik, S. and Joe, E.T. (2023). 'Community forest legislation in India: Rights-based polycentrism or responsabilization?' *World Development Perspectives*, 31, Article 100525.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wdp.2023.100525>

[38] Vyawahare, M. (2023). The Forest Rights Act sees outcome in a women-led forest stewardship scheme in Odisha. Mongabay.

<https://india.mongabay.com/2023/11/the-forest-rights-act-sees-outcome-in-a-women-led-forest-stewardship-scheme-in-odisha/>

MONITORING AND PROGRESS

There is considerably more information available on women's political representation and forest rights implementation than on biodiversity-specific gender outcomes. For example India has constituted 2,76,653 Biodiversity Management Committees at the grassroots level but monitoring on women's influence within these institutions and biodiversity outcomes resulting from their participation is lacking. However, evidence from other governance institutions in India suggests the importance of gender equality in participation. Constituencies represented by women legislators showed significantly greater forest cover growth than those represented by men, particularly in constituencies

reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes [39]. India's 7th National Report to the CBD indicates a growing commitment to monitoring gender-responsive biodiversity governance, supported by indicators on women's representation, training for women in BMCs, biodiversity-related livelihoods, and gender-responsive budgeting. However, the report also notes that sex-disaggregated biodiversity data remain only partially available and a planned Gender Plan of Action is intending to include indicators and data on reporting progress on Target 23.

[39] Bandyopadhyay, S., Dutta, P.P., Hari, N. and Maity, B. (2026). Female legislators and forest conservation in India. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 241, p.107375. [10.1016/j.jebo.2025.107375](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2025.107375)

INTENDED AND ACTUAL IMPACTS

India's revised NBSAP includes a specific national target on 'Gender Equality in Decision Making and Implementation' directly reflecting Target 23. Although much of the policy relating to gender-responsive biodiversity action pre-dates the KM-GBF, Target 23 provides a framework that serves to connect existing elements into a more coherent agenda in India that now links women's participation and rights, community tenure security and conservation. Intended gender related impacts of the policies outlined here are to increase women's participation, recognition of women as rights holders, improved biodiversity outcomes through inclusion of local knowledge. Actual impacts include:

- Participation: Constitutional quotas in local government have resulted in the election of an estimated 1.45 million women representatives to Panchayati Raj Institutions³⁵ or 46.6% of all representatives in 2024 according to the 7th National Report, but again the level of substantive power that women hold is less clear. One study in Kerala showed that only 37% of Biodiversity Management Committees had women actively participating in them [40].

- Rights: The FRA has introduced a significant innovation with joint and women held titles, but implementation data is not disaggregated by gender [41].
- Conservation: Evidence from Community Forest Resource areas and community conserved areas in India suggests that devolved governance can support forest protection and biodiversity conservation. In the EECEP Community Conserved Area, former hunters have been transformed into conservation stewards while women play an important role in protecting and sharing ecological knowledge such as on medicinal plants and wild foods.

[40] Chithra, S., Jiji, R.S., Senthilkumar, R., George, A. and Radhika, G. (2022). 'Study on personal profile of members in biodiversity management committees of Kerala.' *Journal of Veterinary and Animal Sciences*, 53(2), pp. 170–177. <https://doi.org/10.51966/jvas.2022.53.2.170-177>

[41] Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2024). Status Report on Implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, for the period ending 30 September 2024. Government of India.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Gender intersects strongly with indigeneity, marital status, and livelihood in India. The FRA is particularly important for Indigenous (Adivasi) women and female-headed households because it provides opportunities for individual and joint tenure recognition. Strengthening women's roles through recognition of community-conserved areas may also have particular benefits for resource dependent, Indigenous women.

However, interviewees highlighted that these women may face additional barriers where customary inheritance systems favour men or where tribal identity and land rights become difficult to maintain following marriage outside a tribal community. Pastoralist women represent another group whose experiences are often overlooked because their livelihoods depend on livestock mobility rather than on individual land ownership, making conventional land-rights approaches less applicable.

ENABLING FACTORS



- The variation seen across India's states suggest the importance of political history and active civil society organisations. For example, in Odisha political commitment has been driven by the high proportion of tribal groups (62) whose rights are legally protected whilst grassroots organization has supported stronger implementation. In Maharashtra, decades of environmental and social movements, and a history of women's empowerment and reform have fostered more inclusive governance.
- Constitutional reservations for women in local government created a foundation for women's participation that later influenced biodiversity governance institutions.
- Decentralised governance structures provide local platforms through which women can influence natural resource decision-making.



KEY CHALLENGES

- Research on formal gender inclusion provisions in India has long shown that increased numerical representation has not always translated into women actively shaping decisions due to social norms, meeting procedures, and unequal access to information [42]. Studies on Panchayati Raj institutions continue to document cases in which elected women are represented in practice by husbands or other male relatives, a practice commonly termed 'sarpanch pati' [43]. However, evidence also shows that women tend to gain confidence and authority over time while sustained exposure to women leaders can produce positive shifts in attitudes and participation.
- Political inertia and bureaucratic burdens have led to slow implementation of the FRA with civil society organisations estimating that 90% of villages across India that are eligible for community forest rights still lack them [44], meaning that women do not have a say in the management or marketing of forest products.
- Institutional and legal complexity where there are overlaps and tensions between legislation such as the Biological Diversity Act, Forest Rights Act, Wildlife Protection Act and Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas provisions mean that state officials can struggle to interpret laws, creating uncertainty and resistance to devolving authority to communities and ensuring women's participation.
- Although there are strengths to the Forest Rights Act, rights in other systems such as pastoral areas are not included and women's security may come from livestock ownership rather than land rights whilst mobility makes recognition by the state needed to access services and participate in governance much more difficult.
- Allowing communities autonomy through the FRA and community-conserved areas can allow communities to create space for women on their own terms but gender equity is not automatic in these customary systems where there may be inheritance rules or social norms that disadvantage women.



KEY LESSONS

- Meaningful gender-responsive biodiversity governance depends not simply on numerical representation, but on women's rights to land, resources, and decision-making authority.
- Legal frameworks create important opportunities, and give formal and protected recognition to de facto systems, but grassroots mobilisation is often what turns rights into practice and drives innovation.
- Legal literacy for women, communities as well as in government is vital in translating statutory rights into practice
- Community rights do not necessarily translate into women's rights. Governments and civil society actors must face the challenge of supporting Indigenous self-determination while also advancing women's equal rights and opportunities.
- The process of applying for community titles needs to include women from the outset to ensure, for example, that territory mapping processes include women's knowledge and the extent of their forest use for water, forage and non-timber forest products.
- Women-only forums such as Mahila Gram Sabhas can complement rather than replace mixed governance institutions, especially where there are formal channels to influence decision-making, by providing an alternative and inclusive space for women to build power.
- Support and capacity building for local government actors is needed as they often understand community realities and interact directly with communities forming a bridge between central authorities and implementation.

[42] Agarwal, B. (2001). Participatory exclusions, community forestry, and gender: An analysis for South Asia and a conceptual framework. *World development*, 29(10), 1623-1648.

[43] Buch, N. (2000). *From Oppression to Assertion: A Study of Panchayats and Women in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh*.

[43] Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India (2025). Report of the Advisory Committee on Transforming Women's Representation and Role in Panchayati Raj Institutions: Efforts to Eliminate Proxy Participation. Volume I. Advisory Committee on Women Pradhans. New Delhi: Ministry of Panchayati Raj. February 2025.

[44] CFR-LA (2016). *Promise and Performance: Ten Years of the Forest Rights Act in India*. Citizens' Report on Promise and Performance of The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, after 10 years of its Enactment. December 2016. Produced as part of Community Forest Rights-Learning and Advocacy Process (CFR-LA), India, 2016.

[44] Ballal, A., Guha, A., Tambe, S., Patnaik, S. and Joe, E.T. (2023). 'Community forest legislation in India: Rights-based polycentrism or responsabilization?' *World Development Perspectives*, 31, Article 100525. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wdp.2023.100525>

Indonesia

Social Forestry and Community Participation in Biodiversity Governance

01

Primary policy focus

Ministerial Regulation P.9/2021 on Social Forestry Management; Presidential Instruction No. 9/2000 on Gender Mainstreaming; Indonesia Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (IBSAP) 2025–2045, National Target 17

02

Lead institution

Ministry of Forestry — Directorate General of Social Forestry; Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection

03

GBF Targets

National Target 17 (IBSAP 2025–2045) aligns with GBF Targets 22 and 23 — inclusive, gender-responsive participation of communities, women, youth and persons with disabilities in biodiversity governance

POLITICAL, LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Indonesia is the world's largest archipelago nation, with a population of approximately 280 million people across more than 17,000 islands. It is one of the world's 17 megadiverse countries, hosting an extraordinary range of ecosystems, from tropical rainforests and coral reefs to peatlands and mangroves, alongside cultural diversity, with over 1,300 recognised ethnic groups. The national legal system gives recognition to customary law (hukum adat), and the values and norms of Islamic law. This complexity shapes how gender-responsive biodiversity policy works in Indonesia.

Gender equality is grounded in Presidential Instruction No. 9/2000 on Gender Mainstreaming, which mandates the integration of gender across all public policy. Indonesia does not have a standalone gender plan of action for biodiversity, but the IBSAP 2025–2045 identifies gender mainstreaming in the socio-cultural sector, including environmental management, as a key policy priority, with the participation of customary and local communities, women, youth and persons with disabilities in biodiversity management as a central objective. The 7th National Report commits to all 38 provinces having established gender mainstreaming policy documents by 2045.

The Ministry of Forestry holds the national focal point role for the CBD and leads on gender mainstreaming in the biodiversity sector through its key programs, including Social Forestry. The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection provides technical guidance on gender mainstreaming across sectors. Indonesia's approach to gender and biodiversity has been one of alignment and translation of the global mandate to the national and then local levels.

Social Forestry policy in the form of a legal framework that recognises communities' rights to manage forest resources, is the primary national instrument through which gender-responsive community participation in forest and biodiversity governance operates in practice. The policy redistributes forest management rights to local communities across five schemes: Village Forest (Hutan Desa), Community Forest (Hutan Kemasyarakatan), Community Plantation Forest (Hutan Tanaman Rakyat), Customary Forest (Hutan Adat), and Forestry Partnerships. By April 2021, over 4.9 million hectares had been distributed to approximately 1,049,215 families, with a national target of 12.7 million hectares.

HOW THE POLICY APPROACH CAME ABOUT

Indonesia has not adopted GBF Target 23 as a standalone national target. Instead, gender and participation commitments are integrated into National Target 17 of the IBSAP 2025–2045, which aligns with both GBF Target 22 (on inclusive participation of Indigenous peoples and local communities) and GBF Target 23 (on gender equality). National Target 17 aims for the full, equitable and inclusive participation of local and customary communities, women, youth and persons with disabilities in biodiversity action and management.

This is a deliberate approach: Indonesia's governance complexity — its scale, diversity, and co-existence of multiple legal systems — means that a single national target modelled directly on the global framework cannot capture diverse needs across very different provincial, district and community contexts.

The founding philosophy of the Social Forestry Policy, as an interviewee described it, was to “offer a...policy dedicated to solving the problem of conflict among communities related to forests in Indonesia.” From this conflict-resolution foundation, three principles of inclusiveness were built in: access to land, access to management of land and forest resources, and access to benefits. These three principles map directly onto four identified elements of gender mainstreaming — access, participation, control and benefit.

Social Forestry is one of Indonesia's cross-cutting forestry programs and a strong biodiversity-related entry point for achieving GBF Target 23 because it has generated real opportunities for women's livelihoods and community engagement. However, as the evidence below shows, Indonesia is currently better at promoting women's participation in forest-based enterprises than in forest governance [45].

The most significant regulatory development for gender-responsive social forestry in recent years is Ministerial Regulation P.9/2021 on Social Forestry Management, which came into force on 1 April 2021. This regulation substantially strengthened the gender framework for social forestry, increasing the number of gender-specific articles from two (in the previous Regulation No. 83 of 2016) to seven.

[45] Elmhirst, R. (2011). 'Migrant pathways to resource access in Lampung's political forest: Gender, citizenship and creative conjugality.' *Geoforum*, 42(2), pp. 173–183. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2010.12.004>

IMPLEMENTATION

The seven gender provisions in P.9/2021 cover the entire lifecycle of social forestry management, from application to evaluation. Reforms include granting Village Forest beneficiaries and Community Forest group membership to a family representative rather than household head, with equal opportunities for women and men, integrating gender considerations into planning and evaluation processes, and including gender equality and women's representation among the criteria used to assess Social Forestry Work Plans.

The shift from household-head to family-representative is the most important of these provisions. Previous regulations, by requiring a household head (typically male), structurally excluded women from holding permits in their own right. The revision in P.9/2021 creates a legal basis for women to access and manage social forestry as individuals provided they receive the practical support to do so.

The drafting process for P.9/2021 was itself notably participatory: a hybrid public consultation in March 2021, attended by approximately 500 participants including women's social forestry activists, gathered inputs that directly shaped the regulation's gender content. Key concerns raised — that women were involved only at the end of processes (in business management) rather than from the start (planning and institutional management), and that the household-head requirement was inherently gender-biased — were directly addressed in the final text.

The Directorate General of Social Forestry, under the Ministry of Forestry has developed a supporting institutional architecture for implementing these provisions, including: a Gender Mainstreaming Working Group, a Gender Action Plan, Gender Budget Statements allocating 43.67% of its 2021 budget to gender-responsive outputs, and designated gender facilitators and champions across its regional centres.

Implementation, however, depends on a multi-level governance architecture and the provincial level is crucial in translating national regulation into local contexts, bridging ministerial policy and district implementation. The IBSAP's target that all 38 provinces have gender mainstreaming policy documents by 2045 is the formal expression of this. At district level, the Integrated Area Development principle requires that all social forestry implementation, including gender mainstreaming, be integrated, with district leaders as key actors. Civil society organisations are equally essential: in Sintang, West Kalimantan, NGO support from PUPUK increased women's representation in a village forest management body from one member to twelve over four years — a transformation that did not occur at comparable sites without such support.

However, because Indonesia's decentralisation means that district governments have significant autonomy to make their own regulations (Peraturan Daerah or Perda) on cultural, social and natural resource matters within their territory, there can be tensions between levels. The Customary Forest (Hutan Adat) scheme, for example, is designed to formalise the rights of Indigenous

communities over their ancestral forests. Using that scheme, the Dayak Meratus sought recognition of their customary forest rights and devised Local Regulation No. 4 (2016). The regulation formally protects and legitimises the Aruh Adat (Grand Harvest Ceremony) of the Dayak Meratus Indigenous community — within which women hold the highest functional role, managing seed diversity, ensuring food availability, governing harvest distribution, and controlling economic transactions arising from it. The regulation provides a “green shield” for the Meratus forest: Hulu Sungai Tengah is the only area in the region without coal mines or palm oil plantations. From within the Dayak Meratus worldview, the regulation protecting the Aruh ceremony inherently protects the women who sustain it as the ceremony cannot function without the sacred roles women play. However, the regulation does not explicitly mention women or protect them against shifting socioeconomic pressures outside the ritual sphere, such as land conversion, modern administrative marginalisation, or exclusion from village governance bodies. Explicit legal recognition would be necessary to guarantee women a formal voice in modern decision-making structures.

MONITORING AND PROGRESS

Monitoring is the weakest dimension of Indonesia's gender-biodiversity governance. Both interviewees identified it as a priority that remains far from resolved. At national level data may exist across different institutions and at local level, but it has not been compiled into a system that can generate reliable evidence. The ambition is to move from having participation numbers to having evidence of access, control and benefit in practice.. This requires qualitative evidence as well as quantitative data. The next development planning cycle (2025–2029) will require demonstrating how much income is generated for women, not just whether women are counted as participants.

The IBSAP 2025–2045 provides a monitoring architecture for National Target 17, using the percentage of provincial governments that have implemented gender mainstreaming policies in the social and cultural sectors as a headline indicator. This is a process indicator rather than an outcomes indicator, measuring whether provinces have policy documents, not whether women are substantively benefiting.

The Directorate General of Social Forestry has developed some gender-disaggregated data within its own systems, including permit holder data, award recipient data and business group composition data. The 2021 Kalpataru environmental award, for example, showed 10% female recipients; the Social Forestry Leaders recognition showed 12% women; and the Wana Lestari award showed 34% women. These data points provide a baseline but do not yet constitute a comprehensive monitoring system.

At community level, monitoring of customary practices such as the Aruh Adat in Hulu Sungai Tengah is conducted through community-led mechanisms: women's groups monitor rice availability, seed diversity and food distribution; community elders oversee ceremony implementation; and the Department of Education and Culture monitors the sustainability of cultural practices under Article 14 of Local Regulation No. 4. The customary fine (TAHIL) system, where violations are sanctioned at IDR 1,200,000 per unit, provides a community-led enforcement mechanism. But these local systems are not connected to any national data infrastructure.

INTENDED AND ACTUAL IMPACTS

Implementation data reveal both real progress and persistent gaps that go to the heart of what gender-responsive governance means.

- Between 2018 and 2025, 10,351 female-headed households received Social Forestry management approvals, representing increased legal access for women to forest resources.
- In 2021, following the introduction of P.9/2021, 2,259 of 6,942 Community Forest decree recipients (32.5%) were women, a significant increase from the 13.18% share recorded across all schemes earlier that year.
- The Bang PeSoNa programme for women's economic empowerment within social forestry involved 580 women's groups in 2024.
- Women represent approximately 46% of participants in Village Forest Business Groups (KUPS), demonstrating active economic engagement with social forestry products and enterprises.

But persistent gaps in governance representation undermine these gains:

- A 2024 analysis of 400 social forestry permit documents found women averaged only 19.5% of members in Village Forest management groups and just 13.9% in Community Forest management groups [46].
- In some groups, women held no formal management positions at all.

This disparity between economic participation (where women are relatively well represented) and governance participation (where they remain marginalised) is a central challenge. The evidence suggests that legal access to permits has improved, but decision-making authority and control over resources have not kept pace.

Two positive case studies from the Directorate General of Social Forestry demonstrate what gender-responsive implementation can look like in practice:

- Katimpun Village, Central Kalimantan: the Dare Jawet Katimpun social forestry business group is an all-female rattan weaving cooperative. Members (married women and widows) weave traditional Dayak Ngaju rattan crafts that are exported to Bali and Japan. The group both conserves the forest (rattan requires trees to grow) and generates income for women independently. Their traditional knowledge of motifs and weaving techniques is intergenerationally transmitted
- Damaran Village, Aceh: the village forest management institution which covers 251 hectares of protected forest is 100% managed by women, under the leadership of a female community leader who also established a Women Rangers patrol team. The institution has reduced illegal logging, improved flood resilience, and developed ecotourism, creating dual biodiversity and livelihood outcomes.

More recently, in May 2026, the Ministry of Forestry issued six social forestry decrees in East Nusa Tenggara where women's groups account for 93% of the 335 beneficiaries — a significant exception to the national average of approximately 7% female access holders, and a model the Ministry aims to replicate [47].

[46] Toubourou, T., Rawluk, A., Aji, G.B., Auwalin, I., Mulyani, L., Rumayya, A. and Yl Sari. (2024) Indonesian social forestry often excludes women from decisions, risking greater inequality. The Conversation. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/indonesian-social-forestry-often-excludes-women-from-decisions-risking-greater-inequality-238904>

[47] Antara News (2026). 'Indonesian govt grants social forestry access to women in NTT.' 7 May 2026. Available at: <https://en.antaranews.com/news/414956/indonesian-govt-grants-social-forestry-access-to-women-in-ntt> [Accessed 31 August 2026].

INTERSECTIONALITY

Indonesia's governance complexity creates intersectional dynamics that operate differently at different levels of the system. At national level, there is a risk that social forestry programmes benefit the most connected or economically advantaged women rather than the most marginalised [48]. The social forestry programme has socioeconomic assessment requirements for group eligibility, but evidence of equitable outcomes for the most marginalised women is not yet systematically available. The 2024 study finding that women with connections to customary leaders or village officials were disproportionately selected for management roles confirms this as a live concern. At community level, gender parity must synchronise with Indigenous identity and customary governance models, rather than be imposed through a development model adopted from the West. For some Indigenous communities, the challenge is to uphold a pre-existing gender balance from external erosion, not to introduce new gender equity frameworks from outside.

[48] Agarwal, B. (2001). Participatory exclusions, community forestry, and gender: An analysis for South Asia and a conceptual framework. *World development*, 29(10), 1623-1648.

[48] Toubourou, T.D., Dunphy, M.B., Mulyani, L., Auwalin, I., Rumayya, Hartoto, A.S., Aji, G.B., Utomo, M.M.B., Amin, N.A., Yaman, Y., Fakhrani, F.A., Yasmin, P.A., Afriyani, A.A., Masri, Arisanti, D., Tjauwakra, D., Friedman, R.S. and Rawluk, A. (2025). 'Social forestry for a good life? The uneven well-being benefits of Indonesia's social forestry scheme.' *People and Nature*, 7, pp. 1443-1463. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pan3.70042>

[48] Yulianti, Y., Cahyono, E. D., Maulana, R., & Arissaryadin. (2024). Gender exclusion in Indonesia's community-based forest management extension program. *Gender, Technology and Development*, 28(1), 153-177. <https://doi-org.libproxy.ucl.ac.uk/10.1080/09718524.2023.2260654>



ENABLING FACTORS

- Ministerial Regulation P.9/2021 is the most significant enabling instrument — by shifting from household-head to family-representative eligibility and embedding gender in planning, management and evaluation requirements, it creates a legal foundation that did not previously exist.
- The Social Forestry Policy's inclusiveness principles: access, participation, control and benefit are structurally aligned with the four elements of gender mainstreaming, creating a natural entry point for gender-responsive implementation.
- A participatory regulatory drafting process: the 2021 public consultation for P.9/2021, in which women's activists directly shaped the regulation's gender content, demonstrates what meaningful participation in policy design looks like in practice.
- Civil society organisations are essential translation partners between policy and practice, particularly in supporting women to navigate administrative processes and take up leadership roles in management bodies.
- The IBSAP's province-level target: requiring all 38 provinces to have gender mainstreaming policy documents by 2045 creates a sub-national accountability mechanism, though it is a process indicator rather than an outcomes target.



KEY CHALLENGES

- The gap between governance participation and economic participation: women are relatively well represented in forest-based business groups but substantially underrepresented in management bodies. Legal access to permits has improved but decision-making authority has not kept pace.
- Gender-disaggregated data: Without reliable data disaggregated by gender, socioeconomic status and ethnicity, it is impossible to know whether women are genuinely benefiting or merely numerically counted.
- Governance complexity at scale: significant variation in political will, institutional capacity and cultural context across Indonesia's provinces means that national policy commitments translate very unevenly into local outcomes.
- Capacity at provincial and district level: gender mainstreaming requires understanding and commitment at every level of government. Without sustained capacity building, gender considerations are easily sidelined in complex multi-ministry, multi-level processes.
- Intergenerational knowledge transfer: at the community level (illustrated by Hulu Sungai Tengah), many young people do not want to become farmers. If the next generation does not carry the traditional knowledge that women currently hold, policy protections for that knowledge become ineffective over time.



KEY LESSONS

- Legal reform is necessary but insufficient: P.9/2021 represents a genuine advance by shifting from household-head to family-representative eligibility, and embedding gender in planning, management and evaluation, but legal change does not automatically translate into governance change without civil society support, capacity building, and accountability at sub-national level.
- The distinction between economic participation and governance participation is important: counting women in forest-based business groups is not the same as women having decision-making authority over how forests are managed.
- Customary law recognition does not automatically mean women's rights recognition: explicit gender provisions, or at minimum, specific attention to how customary practice treats gender, are needed alongside community recognition. Where they are absent, culturally protective instruments may successfully safeguard women's ritual authority while leaving them exposed to marginalisation in modern administrative and governance spheres; future amendments to existing local regulations offer an opportunity to address this gap.
- Civil society and supporting organisations can be a structural necessity that support women's representation in decision-making bodies. This supports the case for institutionalising civil society partnership rather than treating it as project-dependent.
- The provincial level is a critical governance layer bridging national policy and community practice. Investing in provincial and district gender mainstreaming capacity in the environment sector may have higher returns than focusing exclusively on national regulation or community-level intervention.
- Women must not be treated as passive objects of policy but as agents who help create, implement and monitor policy: At national level, the consultation process for P.9/2021 (where women's activists directly shaped the regulation) demonstrates this in practice.
- Protecting existing gender balance is different from creating gender equity: in some Indigenous governance contexts, the policy challenge is to recognise and protect pre-existing gender roles that modernisation has eroded, not to introduce new gender frameworks from outside.

Kenya

Women's Land Rights through Tenure Reform

01

Primary policy focus

Implementing the gender-related provisions of the Community Land Act (CLA), No. 27 of 2016 — chiefly its two-thirds gender rule for community land governance committees — as communities formalise collective land tenure.

02

Lead institution

Ministry of Lands, Physical Planning and Housing (national level). County governments and county-level Community Land Registrars are responsible for local support and for overseeing committee elections.

03

GBF Targets

Kenya is currently updating its NBSAP and the CLA was enacted in 2016, before the KM-GBF was adopted

POLITICAL, LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Kenya holds vast stretches of community-owned rangelands that pastoralist communities have managed collectively for generations. Much of this land overlaps with important wildlife corridors and conservancies, so who governs it, and how, has a direct bearing on conservation outcomes as well as on livelihoods. For decades this land was governed through group ranches and trusts (through the Trust Lands Act and the Land (Group Representatives) Act), a system that gave legal title to a small group of (mostly male) representatives rather than to the community as a whole. The Community Land Act (CLA) [49], 2016 replaced that system when Kenya ratified its Constitution in 2010, and its rules for who sits on the committees that now govern this land are the focus of this case study.

The CLA implements Article 63(1) of Kenya's 2010 Constitution, which states that community land is to be held by communities identified by ethnicity, culture or similar interest, and it followed six years of consultation and five successive drafts [50]. The Act repealed the Land (Group Representatives) Act, under which land had been legally issued to “group ranches” — a small number of elected representatives holding title on behalf of the wider group, as well as the Trust Lands Act which held land in trust by county governments on behalf of the local communities who traditionally lived on or used it.

Kenya's Community Land Act offers a powerful legal framework to address land injustices. After decades of colonial laws favouring private tenure and persistent challenges in managing communally owned land under the Trust Lands and the Land (Group Representatives) Acts, the CLA was enacted to recognise and formalise customary land holdings, highlighting the distinctiveness of African commons and the valuable socio-economic contributions of pastoral land uses [51]. This legislation reflects a shift towards accepting collective tenure as a legitimate form of land ownership within Kenya's legal framework.

[49] Republic of Kenya (2016, revised 2022). The Community Land Act, Cap. 287. Nairobi: National Council for Law Reporting. Legislation as at 31 December 2022. Available at: <https://www.kenyalaw.org>

[50] Namati Kenya (2018). Community Land Act 2016: Discussion Brief. Nairobi: Namati Kenya. 24 June 2018.

[51] Santini, G. (2025). The Community Land Act and the subdivision of Kenya's Maasailand's remaining commons: implications for community conservation. *Pastoralism*, 15:14918. <https://doi.org/10.3389/past.2025.14918>

HOW THE POLICY APPROACH CAME ABOUT

The CLA's origins lie in a long history of land injustice rather than in international biodiversity policy. In 2003, the Kenyan government led an inquiry into land allocation, known as the Ndung'u Report, which exposed how public land, forests, and road reserves were stolen or given away illegally by past governments. After decades of corruption and mismanagement, the government's decentralisation in 2010 and the rewriting of the new Constitution created an opportunity to write a new land policy, guided by principles of equitable access, security of land rights, sustainable and productive land management, transparent and cost-effective administration, and the elimination of gender discrimination in laws, customs, and practices related to land and property. The CLA was enacted to put these provisions into practice.

While communities were already managing land collectively before the CLA, the new law now anchors those existing rights in legislation and sets out clearer, fairer structures for managing them, replacing a patriarchal system subject to abuse. The group ranch model it replaced was male-dominated in practice: a review of group ranch committees found women's representation ranging from 0% to 14% in roughly 90% of communities studied, and several ranches had no women on their committee at all [52].

IMPLEMENTATION

Registering as community land under the CLA involves two broad steps: first, the community registers as a legal entity and receives a certificate of registration; second, it elects a CLMC, compiles a full membership register, and drafts by-laws, which must not contradict Kenyan law but can otherwise reflect the community's own customs. Registering is also a choice, not a default, and many communities decline it. When offered the option, some communities chose to subdivide into private individual titles instead of registering as community land, largely because mismanagement under the group ranch system had eroded trust in any form of collective, committee-based management. In addition, poor sensitisation about the CLA has led some communities there to subdivide, out of a mistaken belief that the government was trying to take their land.

Paralegal organisations like Namati and GROOTS support communities in registering, drafting their by-laws, and selecting community-based paralegals. The idea is that paralegals embedded in communities build more trust and understanding of local context.

The CLA explicitly mandates gender equality. It protects women from discrimination in customary land ownership and ensures their representation on Community Land Management Committees (CLMCs), which govern local land use, natural resources, and benefit-sharing. The CLA sets up two levels of governance for each registered community: 1) a Community Assembly, made up of all adult members of the registered community, which approves major decisions and elects the second body, and 2) a Community Land Management Committee (CLMC) of 7 to 15 members, which handles day-to-day management. Under Article 27(8) of the Constitution, applied here to the CLMC, not more than two-thirds of its members may be of one gender — in practice, providing a quota of around one-third for the less-represented gender.

The two-thirds gender rule that CLMCs must now follow comes from Kenya's 2010 Constitution rather than from the CLA itself or from any international biodiversity commitment. Target 23 did not inform that act; the CLA was passed in 2016, six years before the Global Biodiversity Framework was adopted in 2022.

[52] [National Land Commission and Namati Kenya](#) (2022). *Getting it Right: Monitoring the Transition of Undissolved Group Ranches to Community Land in Kenya*. Nairobi: National Land Commission and Namati Kenya.

Musul, in Laikipia County, was the first to receive title to its land [53] and illustrates what this can look like in practice. Its CLMC has 15 members — 8 men, 5 women (one-third), one youth representative and one member with a disability — a marked change from its group ranch committee, which had no women at all. Its by-laws, which include rules such as a ban on cutting green trees for charcoal and a Ksh 5,000 fine for grazing trespass, were developed with broad community input: 320 people took part in drafting the first version and 100 in the second. Progress elsewhere has been more uneven: in one community, Korr Ngurunit, a CLMC was elected with 11 men and 4 women - short of the one-third quota and without the county registrar following up to require a repeat election.

[53] [Wakesho, E.](#) (2020). *Group Ranches and the Community Land Act: Will We Correct the Mistakes of the Past or Repeat Them?* Policy Brief. Washington, DC: Namati.

MONITORING AND PROGRESS

No government body formally tracks gender outcomes under the CLA nationally. What monitoring exists comes mainly from two independent studies: a joint National Land Commission and Namati assessment of communities transitioning from group ranches, and a 2024 Namati outcome assessment covering seven communities in Laikipia, Isiolo and Samburu counties. Ten years after the CLA was enacted, only 64 communities nationally have registered and received title to their land, out of potentially hundreds or thousands that could be eligible — the clearest available indicator of how slowly implementation has moved overall.

INTENDED AND ACTUAL IMPACTS

Under the group ranch system, collective title was held by the Group Ranch Committee, a predominantly male body. Registered members were almost always men; on the rare occasions a woman was included, it was typically as the wife or widow of a local leader. This left women vulnerable to losing access to and control over land, and they often did not receive their own parcels when group ranches were subdivided. Under the CLA, membership registers name all adult members individually, women included. This is meant to give women a genuine role in decision-making. Women's involvement in land governance can lead to improved management of natural resources: because women in pastoral communities typically manage small livestock and water day to day, while men move with the larger herds, they pay closer attention to grazing patterns and water use around the homestead, and are well placed to make informed decisions about how these resources are managed. Women are also increasingly able to advise on financial decisions that benefit the household — a shift that is likely, in time, to have positive knock-on effects for biodiversity too.

At Musul, for example, it was women who proposed a 2021 investment in tourist cottages intended to boost their own incomes, and the idea won unanimous backing from the wider community. Women also hold the CLMC's treasurer role and chair its water committee. There is another case, Sarara Community, where a woman elected as the CLMC's treasurer overhauled the bursary scheme from revenues generated by conservancy land, leading to a large increase in the number of students being enrolled for school fees support. As payments for ecosystem services (PES), such as conservancy land leases and carbon credits, become more common, it is increasingly crucial for women to

Community Land Registrars are meant to check that CLMCs meet the two-thirds gender rule at the point of election and to call a repeat election if they don't, but there is no clear national guidance on how consistently this is enforced in practice.

have a say in how community land is used. Because investors must now work with CLMCs for any project on community land, more inclusive management gives women a voice in these decisions, and the ability to weigh them against what will benefit their household.

A comparative study GROOTS Kenya carried out with ILC Africa and IIED, contrasting registered community land in Laikipia with unregistered community land in Baringo, found a similar pattern at a larger scale: registered communities reported markedly less conflict over resources and less risk of land being taken by outside investors or carbon-credit developers, and captured more direct benefit from investment, while unregistered communities experienced displacement and, in some cases, violent conflict [54].

While it is still too early to measure the effects women's participation has had on biodiversity, these cases show what is possible. When land registration is supported, inclusive and gender-responsive, it not only secures tenure, it also strengthens community cohesion and enhances resilience to climate stress.

[54] *How securing land rights is building women's resilience in Kenya*. Available at: <https://www.iied.org/how-securing-land-rights-building-womens-resilience-kenya>

INTERSECTIONALITY

Section 30 of the CLA groups gender together with several other categories, requiring equal treatment in community land dealings for “women, men, youth, minority, persons with disabilities and marginalised groups” collectively, not gender in isolation. Evidence from Munichoi community’s CLMC reflects the sustained efforts needed for women and marginalized groups to participate. There are now more women than men on the CLMC — 8 women and 7 men. This was possible after three consecutive elections, starting from 5 women and 10 men, demonstrating the potential long-term impacts of the CLA.



ENABLING FACTORS

- Constitutional floor: The Constitution’s two-thirds gender rule provides a hard floor that communities must meet regardless of local custom.
- Community-embedded paralegals: Namati’s paralegal model which uses community-embedded paralegals rather than external lawyers appears to build more trust and better follow-through.
- Empowering new leaders: Supporting new women leaders and decision-makers to participate in community meetings when patriarchal norms still dominate is important. Namati, for instance, runs twice-yearly “Women Bootcamps”: safe spaces where women CLMC members hear from women leaders, take part in role-play exercises, and build the confidence to speak up in committee. GROOTS helps finance women campaigns for CLMC membership as well as chairperson, treasurer and secretary roles.
- Pre-existing women’s groups: These groups gave some women an independent base of organisation and visible economic success that helped build community support for their leadership.
- Demonstration effect: Seeing women leaders adding value to the community and not disrupting community life can make other people more receptive to women’s participation over time. KWCA have taken this further to support community-led reflective dialogues involving men and women to discuss gender norms and practices preventing women’s participation.
- Zonal elections: Namati has encouraged communities to hold zonal elections, where each zone elects its own representative, rather than leaving the elected chairperson to nominate the rest, a change linked to more genuinely representative committees such as Munichoi.



KEY CHALLENGES

- Slow implementation: Only 64 communities have registered in ten years, which interviewees attributed to limited government investment and possible hesitancy — either because officials don’t see the value, or because registered, titled community land becomes harder for the state to acquire.
- Inconsistent enforcement: The CLA does not set out a detailed election procedure of its own, and registrars do not always follow up when committees fall short of the two-thirds rule, as in Korr Ngurunit.
- Resistance from state officials: Gender bias among state officials themselves has been reported, with some male officers reluctant to engage with, or take direction from, their female counterparts.

- A quota does not equate to voice: One Namati representative said: “CLMC meetings are still dominated by men, with women tending to sit at the back and defer to what the men say — though in some cases women do stand up and challenge decisions, and that this is what Namati’s training tries to encourage.” Namati’s 2024 outcome assessment found that, in several communities, only one or two women CLMC members contribute actively, with the rest largely deferring to decisions men have already made; in one observed assembly meeting in Shulmai, only a single woman spoke up, with no deliberate effort from CLMC leadership to encourage others to contribute. The same assessment also found lingering negative perceptions among men about women holding the CLMC’s top position of chairperson, seen by some as a role women are “not up to.”
- Everyday barriers to participation: A disproportionate burden of care and domestic work, lower literacy rates, by-laws and the Act itself being written in English, and long travel distances to Assembly meetings in more remote areas.
- Ambiguous spousal membership rule: Section 30(5) appears to let a widow keep her membership until she remarries, but does not clarify what happens to her, or to women who remarry outside the community more generally, afterwards, potentially leaving some women without membership in either community. Moreover, because the clause grants automatic membership to anyone married to a member, it could in principle let men from outside the community acquire land rights by marrying into a community, in tension with customary patrilineal inheritance.
- Real stakes when protections are not enforced: Research on Maasai communities that chose subdivision over CLA registration found that women were often left more vulnerable to losing land, since husbands in some cases sold family parcels without their wives’ consent⁵² — precisely the kind of risk the CLA’s membership and non-discrimination provisions are designed to guard against, when they are enforced.
- Conservancies bypassing the CLMC: Some conservancies that pre-date community land registration still have male-dominated boards, and often continue to make decisions in parallel with, rather than through, the CLMC.



KEY LESSONS

- A dual lever for gender equality and conservation: Inclusive land governance can advance both gender equality and better conservation outcomes, particularly in regions of Kenya where community lands span whole ecosystems.
- Titling alone is not enough: As the group ranch era showed, titling alone does not guarantee real inclusion or secure tenure. What makes the difference is the process around it — participatory by-law drafting, sustained paralegal support, and follow-through on elections — which the CLA and supporting organisations like Namati and GROOTS are working to achieve.
- Quotas need enforcement to translate into influence: Legal quotas in decision-making spaces need active enforcement and follow-up capacity-building, or they risk producing token seats rather than genuine influence.
- Community-defined boundaries reduce conflict: Letting communities define their own boundaries, for example registering by clan rather than an externally imposed administrative ward, appears to reduce the risk of manufactured conflict over natural resources between neighbouring groups.
- In short, the CLA can be a powerful tool to ensure gender equity in land and resource access, but without political will, investment and sustained support for communities, the Act risks being an unfulfilled promise. Kenya must move to real implementation and women must be supported to claim their rights and participate fully in the decisions that shape their futures.

Malawi

Recognising Women as Knowledge Holders in the National Ecosystem Assessment

01

Primary policy focus

Embedding gender equality and Indigenous and local knowledge (ILK) into the Malawi National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA), and using its findings to shape the revised National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP).

02

Lead institution

Environmental Affairs Department, Ministry of Natural Resources and Climate Change (government owner), with technical support from UNEP-WCMC and UNESCO, stakeholder engagement support from UNDP. Implementing Institution: Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources

03

GBF Targets

Gender is mainstreamed across biodiversity related instruments including in the NBSAP

POLITICAL, LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Malawi, one of Africa's smallest nations geographically, is largely dependent on biodiversity and ecosystem services for its economy and rural livelihoods, and women carry a disproportionate share of that dependence in everyday life. World Bank data found that 90% of Malawian women rely directly on natural resources for domestic needs such as firewood, water and wild food, compared with 24% of men, and that roughly a quarter of the country's households are headed by women [55].

There is no single national policy on gender and biodiversity in Malawi. Instead, gender considerations are mainstreamed, with varying degrees of depth, across a patchwork of instruments: the NBSAP, the National Gender Policy, the Environmental Management Act (2017), the Customary Land Act (2016), the National Parks and Wildlife Act, forestry policy, and fisheries co-management arrangements. Of these, the NBSAP is the most instrumental for gender-responsive biodiversity policy and its latest revision was shaped by the National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA) which provides the national baseline and status of biodiversity in Malawi. The NEA is not a policy in its own right, but the assessment took a gender-responsive approach and its findings on women's ecological knowledge and meaningful participation fed directly into that NBSAP revision.

Institutionally, the NEA report is owned by the government and coordinated by the Environmental Affairs Department (EAD) within the Ministry of Natural Resources and Climate Change, with Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) as the implementing partner. The National Biodiversity Steering Committee (NBSC) reviews and approves the assessment's outputs and provides a forum for policy dialogue on biodiversity priorities.

[55] World Bank (2015). The Cost of the Gender Gap in Agricultural Productivity in Malawi, Tanzania, and Uganda.

HOW THE POLICY APPROACH CAME ABOUT

The NEA grew out of Malawi's participation in the CBD rather than from a domestic gender policy debate. The origin of Malawi's National Ecosystem Assessment can be traced to a CBD COP14 in 2018 at which countries agreed to carry out national ecosystem assessments alongside the global assessments produced by IPBES, to feed into the global evidence base. Malawi volunteered to take part. The NEA initiative assessment was coordinated by the UN Environment Programme's World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC), which supported the use of an IPBES-derived methodology and framework, with UNESCO coordinating the Indigenous and local knowledge (ILK) component and UNDP supporting stakeholder engagement. Funding came from SwedBio, based at the Stockholm Resilience

Centre, and from Germany's International Climate Initiative (IKI). A deliberate design choice was that gender and ILK inclusion were built into the assessment from its inception. The scoping stage comprised the launch of the process, the establishment of technical working groups including one dedicated to ILK spanning all three ecosystem themes the NEA covers (aquatic, terrestrial and wetland), regional framing workshops held in Mzuzu, Salima and Blantyre, community dialogues, and a national validation workshop bringing together policymakers, scientists and ILK holders. The resulting scoping report was approved by the NBSC to guide the evaluation stage that followed.

IMPLEMENTATION

The NEA's core methodological approach used a Multiple Evidence Base (MEB) approach, adapted from IPBES guidance, which treats scientific and Indigenous/local knowledge as complementary streams of evidence rather than treating ILK as secondary to scientific data. In practice, this meant actively seeking out women's knowledge on and placing women in leadership positions within technical working groups. NEA fieldwork was adapted to local contexts. For example, in communities where women could speak freely alongside men, dialogues were held jointly; where social norms meant women would not speak in mixed groups, the team ran separate women-only dialogues instead.

The assessment's findings in terrestrial ecosystems identified women as primary holders of knowledge on medicinal plants and as custodians of sacred forests. Women in Malawi have long been the principal providers of home-based healthcare and the most familiar with the range and application of traditional medicinal plants [56]—knowledge the NEA's MEB methodology was designed to capture formally. In aquatic ecosystems, the NEA found women as holders of knowledge on fish-breeding cycles and seasonal weather patterns, and the main workforce in fish processing and marketing. Research on the governance of Lake Malawi's fisheries has found that women account for approximately 52% of the fish-processing workforce, though they remained largely excluded from formal governance bodies for fisheries management [57]. Women also emerged as key intergenerational knowledge-holders, given their daily interactions with children.

Women knowledge-holders were also brought onto national platforms alongside policymakers and academics: during dialogues and at the launch of the NEA's technical report, women from the ILK network were invited to present their own experience directly. Partly as a result of advocacy during the assessment, the government agreed to seat one female and one male community representative on the NBSC itself — a concrete institutional change the NEA's Project Manager pointed to as a direct outcome of the process.

The assessment was also explicitly framed through a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) to biodiversity conservation, which sought not only to increase women's participation but to recognise women and Indigenous and Local Communities (IPLCs) as rights-holders and co-producers of biodiversity knowledge. Participatory methods including community dialogues, walking workshops and community-led research were designed to strengthen local ownership of the assessment process and ensure that diverse knowledge systems informed decision-making. The resulting summary for policymakers flags specific gaps, including under-recognition of ILK, unaddressed impacts of human-wildlife conflict on women, and inconsistent application of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC).

[56] Fassil, H. (2004) Building on Women's Traditional Health and Medicinal Plant Knowledge in Malawi. GENFUND/MASAF Study Report. Washington, DC: World Bank.

[57] Nagoli, J., Binauli, L. and Chijere, N. (2019) 'Inclusive Ecosystems? Women's Participation in the Aquatic Ecosystem of Lake Malawi', *Environments*, 6(3), article 3. DOI: 10.3390/environments6010003.

MONITORING AND PROGRESS

Gender-disaggregated data collection was systematically integrated into NEA activities and is being used as a foundation for the development of gender-responsive indicators within national biodiversity monitoring systems. There are currently particular gaps in data on women's leadership, women's access to biodiversity benefits, and women's participation in decision-making,

including within protected area staffing itself. Malawi's NEA Coordinator described "100% adoption" of the NEA's recommendations by government, including a dedicated summary for policymakers, but distinguished this from implementation: uptake of those recommendations is still being pursued, and funding to support it is still being sought.

INTENDED AND ACTUAL IMPACTS

The clearest impact to date is upstream: NEA findings directly informed the revision of the NBSAP, approved in May 2026, and also fed into Malawi's seventh National Report to the CBD. Beyond policy documents, there has been an increase in diversity in decision-making: one female and one male community representative now sit on the NBSC, and women knowledge-holders have presented directly to national policy audiences through the NEA's dialogue platform. According to Malawi's mid-term review of implementation of the CBD Gender Plan of Action, women constituted 48% of technical contributors to the NEA and 53% of community-level participants [58]. Many played leading roles in documenting and analysing Indigenous and local knowledge, providing a more balanced evidence base for the assessment

There are also broader, if more incremental, shifts: more women taking part in natural resource management committees, increasing engagement in ecosystem restoration and forest management, and growing recognition of women's ecological knowledge in national conversations. Progress is uneven, however, and on protected area co-management specifically, A NEA coordinator put progress at "probably 60%," with leadership positions still disproportionately held by

men, and with attendance itself skewed by incentives: men tend to dominate meetings or trainings that come with a material benefit, while women are more likely to be the ones who attend when there is little to gain. Only around one in ten protected area staff are women, which was linked to weaker institutional understanding of women's needs.

A further institutional outcome has been the establishment of the Women in Biodiversity Action Network (WiBAN), a national platform linking women professionals, researchers, Indigenous and local women, youth representatives and community leaders working across biodiversity and climate governance. The network aims to strengthen women's visibility, leadership and influence in biodiversity decision-making while facilitating knowledge exchange, mentorship and collaboration between government, civil society and academia. By creating a dedicated coordination mechanism for women in biodiversity governance, WiBAN represents an important step towards institutionalising gender-responsive approaches beyond individual projects and assessments.

[58] Government of Malawi (2025). Submission on the implementation of the Gender Plan of Action 2023–2030, in response to CBD Notification 2025-103. Available at: [Accessed 28 September 2026].

INTERSECTIONALITY

While the NEA does not explicitly adopt an intersectional framework, it recognises that biodiversity loss and conservation interventions affect different social groups in distinct ways, highlighting the vulnerabilities of female-headed households, and the importance of Indigenous and Local Knowledge systems. It also documents barriers facing women in fisheries and community resource governance, showing how gender interacts with livelihood roles and local institutional arrangements to shape experiences. However, there is partial rather than comprehensive integration of intersectionality, and limited evidence that intersecting forms of disadvantage were assessed across age, disability, ethnicity or socioeconomic status.



ENABLING FACTORS

- Government ownership from the very start of the process is a central factor in why the NEA has translated into policy influence rather than sitting as a standalone technical exercise. The EAD and Ministry of Natural Resources and Climate Change were kept informed and involved at every stage, rather than being presented with a finished product.
- Designing gender and ILK inclusion into the assessment's inception phase, rather than adding it later, meant these considerations shaped the methodology itself rather than being retrofitted onto it.
- A multi-partner technical and financial architecture gave the process both credibility and resourcing beyond what the national government alone could have provided.
- Methodological flexibility: running separate women-only dialogues where mixed-gender discussion was not culturally workable, rather than applying one fixed consultation format everywhere, is what allowed some of the richest findings on women's ecological knowledge to surface at all.
- Deliberately placing women in leadership roles within the ILK technical working group, rather than leaving representation to chance, appears to have been a further contributing factor.



KEY CHALLENGES

- National gender-disaggregated biodiversity indicators are still limited, particularly on women's leadership, access to biodiversity benefits, and participation in decision-making. Even where the NEA itself generated strong evidence on women's ecological knowledge, this knowledge remains undervalued in formal policy processes more broadly.
- Caregiving responsibilities, and specifically the exclusion of pregnant women from labour-intensive activities without an adapted alternative, limits participation. Attendance is also skewed by incentives: men dominate meetings or trainings that carry a material benefit, while women's attendance rises mainly where there is little incentive for men to attend.
- Only around 10% of protected area staff are women, according to Malawi's NEA Coordinator's estimate, which she linked to weaker institutional responsiveness to women's needs.
- Where quotas for women's participation in natural resource governance exist (ranging from one-third to one-half of positions), actual participation rates are modest — around 25 to 30% — and vary by district [59]. Women on Lake Malawi are concentrated in fish processing — a structurally lower-value segment of the chain — facing barriers to both governance representation and meaningful decision-making [60]. Translating formal inclusion into substantive influence demands confronting structural inequalities, such as in asset ownership, market access and economic positioning, that precede and shape women's exclusion from governance.
- Human-wildlife conflict was described by Malawi's NEA Coordinator as a 'silent' issue, with no formal compensation mechanism for communities and women disproportionately affected, in contrast to the swift legal response when wildlife itself is harmed.
- Even under matrilineal inheritance systems, real influence over land decisions often still runs through a senior male relative.
- Funding to take up the NEA's own recommendations was still being sought rather than secured



KEY LESSONS

- Design inclusion from the start: Gender and ILK inclusion has to be designed in from the beginning of a process rather than added once it is under way.
- Meaningful participation is not the same as meeting a numeric quota: women need to be given opportunities and power to shape decision-making and outcomes
- Government ownership enables uptake: Government ownership from inception, rather than government being presented with a finished technical product, appears to be what allowed the NEA's findings to feed directly into the NBSAP revision and national CBD reporting.
- Methodological adaptability surfaces richer findings: Applying a single, rigid consultation format everywhere would have suppressed exactly the kind of input that produced some of the assessment's richest findings.
- Gender equity in biodiversity action requires women to be treated as partners, leaders and knowledge holders in their own right rather than as beneficiaries.

[59] Dulany, B., Clayton, A., Kosec, K. and Robinson, A. (2022). Gender, Deliberation, and Natural Resource Governance: Experimental Evidence from Malawi. Washington, DC: International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI).

[60] Nagoli, J., Binauli, L. and Chijere, N. (2019) 'Inclusive Ecosystems? Women's Participation in the Aquatic Ecosystem of Lake Malawi', *Environments*, 6(3), article 3. DOI: 10.3390/environments6010003.

Mexico

Building a Multi-agency Institutional Architecture for Gender-Responsive Biodiversity Governance

01

Primary policy focus

National Programme for Equality between Women and Men (PROIGUALDAD 2020–2024); Gender Committee of the Environmental Sector (COMGESA)

02

Lead institution

National Biodiversity Commission (CONABIO); Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources (SEMARNAT); Ministry of Women

03

GBF Targets

National Target 23.0 in the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (ENBioMex) 2016–2030 — adopted as a transversal target cutting across all 47 national GBF targets

POLITICAL, LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Mexico is a federal republic of 32 states with a population of approximately 130 million and exceptional biological diversity — one of the world's 17 megadiverse countries [61]. It has ratified the CBD and is an active party to the KMGBF.

Gender equality is embedded in Mexico's constitution and elaborated through a comprehensive legal framework including: the General Law on Gender Equality between Women and Men; the General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence; the General Law on Ecological Balance and Environmental Protection; the National Waters Law; and the Agrarian Law. All of these contain gender provisions, and several are currently under revision. Mexico created a dedicated Ministry of Women in the current administration, which oversees the transversal application of gender policy across government.

Despite this strong legal framework, structural inequalities persist. In rural communities, women's access to land, credit, and decision-making spaces remains constrained by cultural norms and institutional barriers. Gender-based violence affects women's ability to participate in environmental programmes in rural areas. The country's vast geography covering over 1.9 million km² creates significant implementation challenges and uneven reporting coverage.

[61] *Convention on Biological Diversity* (n.d.). Mexico — Country Profile. Available at: <https://www.cbd.int/countries/profile?country=mx> [Accessed August 2026].

HOW THE POLICY APPROACH CAME ABOUT

Mexico's gender-biodiversity work did not emerge from the KMGBF. Rather, it represents the convergence of multiple pre-existing policies, programmes and legal instruments that were already advancing — in relative isolation from each other — before the GBF was adopted.

The first national biodiversity strategy to incorporate a gender perspective was the ENBioMex (2016–2030) [62], which established gender equality as one of 14 transversal principles across six strategic axes. When Mexico adopted the GBF's 23 targets, it created its own National Target 23.0, explicitly framing gender not as a standalone silo but as a principle transversal to all other biodiversity targets. Mexico now reports on gender dimensions in relation to every one of its 47 national GBF targets.

The GBF, and Target 23 specifically, has functioned primarily as a unifying and reporting framework for efforts already underway, rather than as a catalyst for new policy. As CONABIO interviewees described it: “Target 23 is less charismatic than Targets 2 and 3 on restoration, but what is important is that gender is a transversal priority, reported in every single target of the GBF.”

[62] *Comisión Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad (CONABIO)* (2016). Estrategia Nacional sobre Biodiversidad de México y Plan de Acción 2016–2030 (ENBioMex). Ciudad de México: CONABIO. Available at: <https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/mx/mx-nbsap-v2-es.pdf>

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation operates through a layered, multi-institutional architecture:

- The Gender Committee of the Environmental Sector (COMGESA) coordinates across nearly all relevant federal ministries and commissions, convening regular meetings, designing joint plans, and aligning reporting. Members include the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Women, CONABIO, National Commission for Protected Areas, National Forestry Commission, National Water Commission, National Institute of Ecology and Climate Change, National Institute of Indigenous Languages, and the National Agrarian Registry.
- PROIGUALDAD 2020–2024 (National Programme for Equality between Women and Men) [63] provides the overarching gender policy framework, with Annex 13 of the federal budget specifically tagging expenditure related to gender equality across sectors — including biodiversity, conservation, and restoration.
- Sector-specific programmes carry gender mainstreaming into practice: PROCODES (conservation in and around protected areas) has directed more than 60% of its resources toward equitable gender participation, reaching over 75% in recent years. According to a CONABIO official, the National Forestry Commission has incorporated a ‘care economy’ provision allowing up to 20% of support payments to cover unpaid care tasks. Water sector programmes include gender-differentiated scoring in grant allocation and extended deadlines for women to demonstrate land access.

- The ‘Women in the Territory’ (Mujeres en el Territorio) initiative, supported by UNDP and GIZ, works to improve women's land tenure security through targeted outreach by the National Agrarian Registry and the Agrarian Attorney General's Office.
- Mexico has also been developing a participatory gender diagnostic tool to support evidence-based policy design.
- Financing comes from multiple sources: federal budget (including Annex 13), and international cooperation from UNDP, GIZ, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) via the GBF Early Action Support project and GEF-8 Umbrella, and French and UK development cooperation.

[63] *Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres (INMUJERES)* (2020). Programa Nacional para la Igualdad entre Mujeres y Hombres 2020–2024 (PROIGUALDAD). Diario Oficial de la Federación, 22 de diciembre de 2020. Ciudad de México: Gobierno de México. Available at: http://cedoc.inmujeres.gob.mx/documentos_download/Proigualdad%202020-2024%20Web.pdf

MONITORING AND PROGRESS

Mexico's monitoring of gender and biodiversity is among the most developed in this report. The Seventh National Report to the CBD [64] included the following gender indicators:

- Women as a share of subjects holding certified and non-certified agrarian rights: increased from 29.0% (2016) to 38.4% (2024)
- Women's representation in ejido and community governing bodies: increased from 12.6% (2016) to 31.5% (2024)
- PROCODES resources directed at equitable gender participation: above 60% from 2019–2025, above 75% in the most recent reporting years
- Women members of Community Environmental Surveillance Committees: 1,189 out of 3,575 total wardens (33.3%)
- National Forestry Commission support to women-led units: ranging from 28.7% to 39.7% of total support disbursed

Mexico is currently developing an internal digital reporting platform to systematise these indicators across institutions, moving towards a mechanism that does not depend solely on CONABIO and is not activated only during national report preparation cycles.

However, significant data gaps remain, particularly in spatially disaggregated data, ethnically disaggregated data, and indicators that measure not just women's numerical participation but their actual influence in decision-making. The next milestone for reporting is the Eighth National Report.

Note: CONABIO interviewees indicated that Mexico is editing its 7th National Report to produce a more accessible public version in response to growing interest from non-specialist audiences.

[64] Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales (SEMARNAT) / Comisión Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad (CONABIO) (2026). Séptimo Informe Nacional de México ante el Convenio sobre la Diversidad Biológica [Mexico's Seventh National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity]. Ciudad de México: Gobierno de México. Submitted February 2026. Available at: <https://ort.cbd.int/national-reports/nr7/4C15B2D9-8E10-B2D8-790F-0AB3B81E664D>

INTENDED AND ACTUAL IMPACTS

Mexico's National Target 23.0 aims to achieve, by 2030, the full, effective, equitable, meaningful and informed participation of women — in all their diversity — in decisions related to access, use and control of benefits derived from the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of natural resources.

Progress towards this ambition is real but partial:

- Women's decision-making participation and representation in agrarian systems has increased measurably over the past decade.
- Affirmative action measures in conservation, forestry and water programmes have improved women's access to resources and benefits.
- The institutional architecture for gender coordination (COMGESA, PROIGUALDAD, sectoral gender units) has been strengthened.
- Women in northern Mexico are increasingly recognised in policy as custodians of maize genetic diversity and other agrobiodiversity.

However, structural gender gaps in land titling, credit access, and decision-making power persist.

Implementation is uneven across Mexico's large and diverse territory, with rural areas — particularly in regions with high levels of gender-based violence — facing greater barriers. The transformational potential of current policies depends on their continuity across administrations, the strengthening of domestic financing, and the development of indicators that measure substantive rather than just numerical participation

INTERSECTIONALITY

Mexico's policy framework explicitly addresses intersectionality through recognition that women are not a homogeneous group and that gender inequality intersects with Indigenous and afro-Mexican identity, age, geographical location, rural or community status, socioeconomic position, land access, information access, security conditions, and care burdens.

This is reflected in National Target 23.0's reference to women “in all their diversity,” and is elaborated in complementary targets on traditional knowledge (Target 21.2) and public participation and access to information (Target 22.0). The PEGDHCC strategic plan uses an explicitly intersectional framework across its adaptation and mitigation strategies.

In practice, intersectional approaches include: dedicated encounters with Indigenous and afro-Mexican women; networks of women smallholders; workshops with women in forestry; multilingual and culturally adapted information; mechanisms for dialogue on the Escazú Agreement on access rights; and territorial projects incorporating youth, local communities and Indigenous peoples in conservation, restoration, fisheries, and community tourism. However, intersectional safeguards remain under development, and consistent data disaggregated by both gender and ethnicity is not yet available across programmes.



ENABLING FACTORS

- A deep and comprehensive legal framework on gender equality, predating the GBF, which provides an institutional and normative foundation for biodiversity-specific action.
- The existence of COMGESA as a multi-institutional coordination mechanism, preventing duplication and creating shared accountability.
- National Target 23.0 has provided a binding framework for the federal government to address gender within the biodiversity agenda — including creating reporting obligations that incentivise data collection.
- Technical and financial support from GEF, UNDP, and GIZ has provided capacity, analytical tools, and supplementary financing.
- The current administration's strong political commitment to gender equality, including the creation of a dedicated Ministry of Women.



KEY CHALLENGES

- Institutional inertia: ensuring that gender equality is understood as a substantive, positive obligation — not merely a procedural compliance exercise — across all agencies.
- Domestic financing: international cooperation is becoming scarcer, and the sustainability of gender-biodiversity programmes depends on their integration into core national budget lines rather than project-based funding.
- Data gaps: many local programmes do not report on gender, making it difficult to assess what is being achieved below the national level.
- Cultural and structural barriers: in rural areas, women's participation in environmental programmes can expose them to gender-based violence; social norms constrain participation where male permission is required; and care burdens remain inadequately addressed [65]. Structural barriers like land tenure, poverty, institutional complexity and limited access to information also impede participation in natural resource management programmes [66].
- Geographic scale: Mexico's size and diversity mean that national-level commitments do not automatically translate into even implementation across regions and states.



KEY LESSONS

- Gender mainstreaming works best when it is integrated from the design stage of policies, programmes and projects, not added retrospectively.
- Moving beyond headcounts: the most significant shift is from measuring whether women participate to understanding how they participate, under what conditions, and with what actual influence.
- A unified coordination mechanism (such as COMGESA) is essential for preventing duplication and building shared monitoring frameworks across multiple ministries.
- Intersectionality must be operationalised, not just named, requiring disaggregated data systems, culturally adapted processes, and attention to the specific situations of Indigenous, afro-descendant, rural, and young women.
- Affirmative action measures in conservation programmes work, but require continuity, evaluation, and domestic budget support to be sustainable beyond project cycles.
- Developing gender-sensitive policy tools is a multi-year process. Mexico has invested over two decades in building its current framework, and other countries should not expect to replicate it quickly — but they can draw on Mexico's experience to accelerate their own processes.

[65] [García-Romero, H. et al. \(2025\). 'To Care and to Produce: Community Participation and Care Economy Among Women in Mexico's Sembrando Vida Program.'](#) Social Sciences, 14(9), 518. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci14090518>

[66] [Reyes-Retana, G. et al. \(2023\). 'Using Behavioral Science to Increase Women's Participation in Natural Resource Management in Mexico.'](#) World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 10419. <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/39734>

Sweden

Gender equality in the forestry industry

01

Primary policy focus

Gender mainstreaming in the forestry industry through the Forest Sector Gender Equality Council; Regional gender equality forestry initiatives; use of gender-disaggregated data

02

Lead institution

Swedish Forest Agency; Forest Sector Gender Equality Council; County Administrative Board of Västernorrland

03

GBF Targets

No specific national target but gender mainstreaming is a strategy across all policy goals

POLITICAL, LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Sweden is widely regarded as one of the world's leading countries on gender equality, ranking sixth on the Global Gender Gap Index [67]. Sweden's national gender equality strategy guides gender equality efforts and the government's overarching objective is to ensure that women and men have the same power to shape the country and their own lives. Sweden has adopted a gender-mainstreaming approach, requiring all government ministries to integrate gender into all aspects of policy and decision-making, with the specialist Swedish Gender Equality Agency supporting government agencies in effective implementation [68]. Sweden applies this gender mainstreaming approach to biodiversity; rather than having a standalone gender target it connects KM-GBF Targets 22 and 23 to its existing gender-equality policy objective through the use of gender-responsive budgeting and gender analysis applied to planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting.

Forestry is one of the clearest examples of Sweden applying gender mainstreaming to a natural resource sector. Forests cover approximately 70% of Sweden's land area and are central to the country's economy, climate biodiversity conservation and rural development policies. Swedish forest policy is based on two equal objectives: a production goal and an environmental goal reflecting the expectation that forests should simultaneously contribute to economic development and environmental sustainability. The latter includes consideration of biodiversity through initiatives such as voluntary set asides in areas of conservation value. Around half of Sweden's forest area is owned by approximately 311,000 private forest owners, making private ownership an important arena for decisions relating to both timber production and conservation.

The Swedish Forest Agency (Skogsstyrelsen) has responsibility for gender mainstreaming within the forestry sector and states that women and men should have equal power and influence in all parts of the forest sector. The institutional architecture for gender equality in forestry has expanded over the last decade or so, with a sector-wide strategy published in 2011 and the establishment of the Forest Sector Gender Equality Council in 2022.

Sweden has mainstreamed gender into forestry not primarily because of biodiversity governance concerns, but rather as measures to strengthen development of a growing bioeconomy by increasing diversity, innovation capacity and skilled labour. The case study therefore shows how a long-standing national gender-mainstreaming agenda can influence a natural-resource sector that is central to biodiversity conservation. However, research suggests that female forest owners in Sweden tend to place greater emphasis on conservation of biodiversity and native forests and are more inclined to see alternative uses for forests than men such as for tourism and health [69]. Expanding women's power and participation in forestry therefore has implications for the diversity of perspectives and knowledge shaping decisions about forest landscapes and governance. In this way gender equality policies intersect with wider debates about the future direction of Swedish forestry, and relative emphasis placed on production and biodiversity conservation [70].

[67] World Economic Forum (2025). Global Gender Gap Report 2025. Geneva: World Economic Forum. Available at:

<https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2025/digest/>

[68] European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2026). Sweden. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/countries/sweden>

[69] Umaerus, P., Nordin, M. H., & Lidestav, G. (2019). Do female forest owners think and act "greener"? Forest policy and economics, 99, 52-58.

[70] Ville, A., Wong, G., Aceituno, A.J., Downing, A., Karambiri, M. and Brockhaus, M. (2023). 'What is the "problem" of gender inequality represented to be in the Swedish forest sector?'. Environmental Science & Policy, 140, pp. 46-55.

HOW THE POLICY APPROACH CAME ABOUT

In line with Sweden's national gender equality strategy and mainstreaming approach, Sweden's forestry sector adopted a sector-wide gender equality strategy in 2011 titled "Competitiveness Requires Gender Equality". The strategy framed gender equality not only as a matter of justice and equal rights, but also as essential for the sector's competitiveness, innovation, recruitment, and long-term sustainability. It stated that women and men must have equal conditions, rights and opportunities to work in the forestry sector and be active forest owners. Despite subsequent increases in women's participation in forestry education and some areas of employment, there was continuing gender segregation and underrepresentation in leadership. In response, the Government tasked the Swedish Forest Agency in 2018, within the framework of the National Forest Programme, with identifying further measures to achieve a more gender-equal forestry sector. The resulting 2019 report, *Measures for a Gender-Equal*

Forest Sector, made 17 recommendations for gender mainstreaming organised around three goals: making forestry education more attractive, making forestry workplaces more attractive, and supporting women as active forest owners. The report and other initiatives ultimately led to the establishment of the Forestry Gender Equality Council in 2022, which coordinates and supports gender equality efforts across the sector. The forestry sector's #MeToo campaign, #slutavverkat ('clear-felled'), emerged in 2017 exposing experiences of harassment and gender-based discrimination in both forestry education and employment. The movement heightened awareness of persistent cultural and organisational barriers facing women and added momentum to ongoing gender-equality initiatives within the sector.

IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation has focused on mainstreaming gender equality throughout the forestry sector rather than creating standalone women's initiatives. Following the 2019 report, implementation has been organised around three areas: (i) education - and creating an open and inclusive educational environment free from discrimination and abuse; (ii) working life - focused on recruitment and retention of women, addressing masculine workplace culture, and tackling sexual harassment; (iii) forest ownership - increasing women's participation and visibility as forest owners. Measures include gender sensitive recruitment practices, strengthened procedures for dealing with sexual harassment, gender equality training in educational settings, and support for women's forest-owner networks.

A key implementation mechanism is the Forest Sector Gender Equality Council, established in 2022. The Council brings together approximately 35 organisations including forestry companies, forest owner associations, trade unions, universities and forestry schools, student organisations, women's networks of forest owners, and large forest-owning organisations like the Church of Sweden. It acts as a collaborative platform rather than a regulatory body, providing a space for members to share experiences, progress, challenges and initiatives.

Recent implementation efforts have increasingly broadened from a narrow focus on recruiting women towards addressing organisational culture, workplace

norms and leadership practices. Organisations within the Council have tackled workplace culture through different strategies such as organisational culture change initiatives including leadership discussions about desired and undesirable workplace behaviours. Member organisations have developed organisation-specific "letters of intent" outlining why gender equality matters and how organisations intend to act on it. Some organisations have gone further to develop mandatory gender equality training, leadership training on handling harassment and discrimination and monitoring of employee perceptions [71].

One notable initiative at the local level that was conceived within the broader Forest Agency framework, was spearheaded by the County Administrative Board of Västernorrland, a heavily forested region in the north-east of Sweden between 2020 and 2023 and seeking to "dismantle the traditional gender norms that have long influenced the forestry sector" [72]. The project took a two-pronged strategy: i) gender mainstreaming across the sector involving developing shared definitions of gender equality and establishing measurable goals; ii) addressing norms around masculinity and how organisational cultures shape leadership, recruitment and workplace environments. The project delivered comprehensive training across the sector including on dealing with myths, resistance and backlashes around gender equality, gender-sensitive recruitment and workshops on understanding how masculine norms are affecting their own organisations.

[71] Södra (2023). Hållbara värden från familjeskogsbruken: Års- och hållbarhetsredovisning [Sustainable Value from Family-Owned Forests: Annual and Sustainability Report]. Växjö: Södra.

[72] European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2026). Sweden. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/countries/sweden>

MONITORING AND PROGRESS

The Swedish Forest Agency, collects and analyses gender-disaggregated data including on forest ownership, board representation in forest owning companies, management positions and participation in advisory services [73]. The data is used both for monitoring and, in some instances, for identifying policy barriers. For example, analysis suggested that more women take part in forestry education or information dissemination when it is delivered in digital format rather than in the forest. Indicators are also developed within the council related to its goals which are followed up annually, for example gender-disaggregated data on students and staff in forestry education. Individual organisations in the sector may also develop their own indicators of gender equality, for example one gathered gender-disaggregated data on accidents, finding in their analysis that the gender skew was related to masculine norms.

While quantitative monitoring is relatively well developed, there is no equivalent sector-wide system for monitoring qualitative experiences of inclusion, discrimination and workplace culture. Instead, evidence on these issues has mainly been generated through academic research, which has played an important role in identifying gender inequalities not visible through participation statistics alone.

[73] Skogsstyrelsen (2024). Gender Equality in the Forest. Swedish Forest Agency. Available at: <https://www.skogsstyrelsen.se/en/statistics/thematic-areas/jamstalldhet-i-skogen/>

INTENDED AND ACTUAL IMPACTS

Sweden has achieved greater progress in institutionalisation and representation than in transforming power relations, ownership structures and workplace culture.

Gender equality is now firmly embedded within forestry-sector governance through dedicated strategies, assigned responsibilities, monitoring systems. There has been positive progress in women's representation across several parts of the sector. Their share of forestry employment increased from below 10% before 2015 to 15% in 2024 [74]. Women's participation in forestry education has also increased, reaching around 40 per cent of entrants in some higher forestry programmes, although they are more likely to leave the sector than men. Women have gained representation in middle-management positions, particularly within forestry companies [75]. However, women tend to be concentrated in certain roles such as education, advisory and monitoring jobs rather than production and they remain underrepresented in executive leadership roles, a trend that is reflected in executive boards of forestry sector companies.

Although there is some promising movement on new ownership — 47% of newly registered individual forest owners were women in 2025 [76] — the overall

ownership distribution remains remarkably persistent with women representing 38% of owners in both 1999 and 2025. Women also tend to own smaller forest holdings, with an increasing number owning 5 hectares or less, a trend not reflected among men.

Research suggests that the sector culture has changed more slowly than representation. Despite increased numbers of women entering forestry, experiences of discrimination and harassment remain widespread. A national survey found that 36% of women reported experiencing gender-based discrimination (compared with 7% of men), while 40% of women reported harassment (compared with 8% of men), with around half describing it as sexual [77]. This suggests that increasing participation alone has not so far been sufficient to alter deeply rooted masculine norms and power relations within the sector. Similar experiences have been found in forestry education where research has found women students experience sexist behaviour, objectification and harassment that often takes place in informal spaces where it remains hidden and is protected by a culture of silence [78]. Here, harassment works as a form of male control to undermine women's professional legitimacy and reinforce forestry as a masculine domain [79].

Participants across 128 organisations in the Västernorrland initiative reported that it created more strategic and mainstreamed approaches with potential for learning across the sector. Gender-equality objectives were incorporated into organisational planning processes and equal-opportunity criteria were introduced into procurement and service contracts. The initiative has been highlighted as an example of how to move discussions from a focus on recruiting more women to tackling the deeper question of ‘how do leadership practices and organisational cultures need to change?’

- [74] Skogsstyrelsen (2025). Continued Low Proportion of Women Employed in Forestry. Swedish Forest Agency. Available at: <https://www.skogsstyrelsen.se/en/news/Continued-low-proportion-of-women-employed-in-forestry/>
- [75] Andersson, E. and Johansson, M. (2025). 'Revisiting the gendered division of labour in Swedish forestry: What has changed the last decade?'. *Forest Policy and Economics*, 174, 103477.
- [76] Skogsstyrelsen (2026). *Statistics on Properties and Owners*. Swedish Forest Agency. Available at: <https://www.skogsstyrelsen.se/statistik/fastighets--och--agarstruktur/>
- [77] Andersson, E. and Johansson, M. (2025). 'Revisiting the gendered division of labour in Swedish forestry: What has changed the last decade?'. *Forest Policy and Economics*, 174, 103477.
- [78] Grubbström, A. and Powell, S. (2020). 'Persistent norms and the #MeToo effect in Swedish forestry education.' *Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research*, 35(5–6), pp. 308–318.
- [79] Johansson, M., Johansson, K. and Andersson, E. (2018). '#MeToo in the Swedish forest sector: testimonies from harassed women on sexualised forms of male control.' *Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research*, 33(5), pp. 419–425.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Policy around gender and forestry is primarily framed around the male/female gender distinction and issues relating to ethnicity, class, Indigenous rights or rural marginalisation are not systematically integrated into gender equality initiatives with women treated as a relatively homogeneous category. Questions relating to Sámi rights are recognised within Swedish forest policy but conflicts are generally addressed through separate policy frameworks rather than through an intersectional lens that links gender, Indigenous rights and forest governance. Age is emerging as a relevant intersecting dimension. The forest-owner population is ageing, and younger generations, especially young women, often have different expectations regarding workplace culture, inclusion, and environmental values. Although this has not yet become a major focus of forestry gender-equality policy, increasing access to forest ownership and attracting younger people, including young women, is increasingly discussed as part of the sector's long-term renewal and recruitment challenges.

ENABLING FACTORS



- A strong national gender-mainstreaming framework and Sweden's wider and long-standing commitment to gender equality has benefited the forestry sector.
- The Forest Sector Gender Equality Council provides a sector-wide collaborative mechanism that enables shared learning and coordinated action across different types of organisation.
- Leadership commitment where senior leaders actively participated in discussions, training and implementation efforts has helped raise the status of gender-equality work and embedded it within organisational planning and decision-making. This has largely been in response to changing employee expectations, concerns about reputation and growing recognition that a diversity of perspectives improves competitiveness.
- Regular monitoring of ownership, employment, leadership and participation patterns provided visibility of inequalities and helped identify barriers that were not otherwise apparent.
- Regional experimentation has created opportunities to connect strategy to real-world challenges, test new context relevant approaches, and generate practical lessons to inform national efforts.
- Wider social and feminist movements, namely the forestry sector #MeToo campaign helped draw attention to persistent inequalities and gaps in policy implementation, generating momentum for reforms that may otherwise have progressed more slowly.



KEY CHALLENGES

- The persistence of traditional masculine norms and discriminatory workplace cultures within the forestry sector have created barriers to gender equality in the forestry sector that have yet to be overcome.
- There is a tendency to focus on representation, recruitment and quantitative indicators of change, while broader questions relating to power, organisational culture and masculine norms have proved more difficult to address.
- Continuing forest ownership inequalities are linked to broader economic inequalities over which the Gender Equality Council has limited ability to influence. For example, inheritance patterns continue to favour existing concentrations of wealth and land ownership.



KEY LESSONS

- Improvements in participation and recruitment do not automatically translate into equal power, influence or workplace experiences. Cultural and organisational change requires sustained attention alongside numerical targets.
- Cross-sector platforms that bring together government, industry, educational institutions, unions and civil society can create shared ownership of gender-equality objectives whilst supporting local responsibility and supporting collective learning in biodiversity related industries across companies that may be typically competing.
- Gender-disaggregated statistics are important for identifying inequalities and tracking progress, but qualitative evidence is also needed to understand workplace culture, discrimination and barriers to participation.
- Visible commitment from senior leaders is critical for embedding gender equality into organisational priorities and initiating a shared understanding of gender equality as a starting point for cultural change
- Regional initiatives can complement national policies, translating higher level commitments into practical actions that respond to sector specific contexts
- Gender equality has broader governance implications: Although Swedish forestry gender policies were not primarily motivated by biodiversity concerns, improving equity may broaden the values and knowledge that inform how Sweden's forests are managed for conservation and rural development in the future
- Gender equality requires moving beyond a concern with women's participation, and addressing masculinities, sector norms and power structures through deeper cultural and structural reforms.

Tajikistan

Rural Women as Custodians of Agrobiodiversity: from project support to lasting institutional change

01

Primary policy focus

NBSAP Accelerator Programme participation; National Strategy for Activating the Role of Women in the Republic of Tajikistan (2021-2030); FAO/GEF project on Conservation of Agrobiodiversity and Sustainable Use of Agricultural Genetic Resources

02

Lead institution

National Centre for Biodiversity and Biosafety (Committee for Environmental Protection); Committee on Women and Family Affairs

03

GBF Targets

National Target 26 (gender-specific standalone target in Tajikistan's updated NBSAP, derived from GBF Target 23)

POLITICAL, LEGAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

Tajikistan is a landlocked, mountainous Central Asian republic — 93% of its territory is mountains — with a population of approximately 10 million [80]. Its economy is heavily dependent on agriculture and remittances [81]. The country has been working on gender equality for over 30 years, with an initial focus on gender-based violence, and has developed a strong constitutional and legal framework for women's rights over this period. Gender equality is enshrined in the constitution, and women's rights are reflected in multiple laws and codes.

A distinctive feature of Tajikistan's rural labour market is that a significant proportion of men travel abroad for work, leaving women as the primary agricultural workforce. Women constitute approximately half of rural labour [82], and approximately 60% of women in Tajikistan participate in the agricultural sector [83]. This makes women's roles in land management, food production, and natural resource use especially critical for biodiversity conservation and food security, and provides a strong practical rationale for gender-responsive biodiversity policy.

Tajikistan is participating in the NBSAP Accelerator project, which has provided an important opportunity to strengthen the integration of gender considerations into national biodiversity planning and implementation.

[80] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan (n.d.). General Information. Available at: <https://mfa.tj/en/main/tajikistan/general-information> [Accessed September 2026].

[81] World Bank (2026). Tajikistan Overview. Washington, DC: World Bank. Available at: <https://www.worldbank.org/ext/en/country/tajikistan> [Accessed September 2026].

[82] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (2025). Leaving No One Behind: Greater Involvement and Empowerment of Rural Women in Türkiye and Central Asia (LNOB) — Tajikistan. Programme/Project Report. Ankara: FAO. Available at:

<https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/29a1147f-4875-40cc-8f92-66bc267de9e1>

[83] Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2024). 'Tajikistan's rural women and youth increase resiliency against gaps left by labour migration.' Available at: <https://www.fao.org/europe/news/detail/tajikistan-s-rural-women-and-youth-increase-resiliency-against-gaps-left-by-labour-migration/en>

HOW THE POLICY APPROACH CAME ABOUT

Tajikistan's gender-biodiversity work did not originate from a single policy document or from the CBD. Gender equality has been a national priority for three decades, primarily in the context of gender-based violence and women's economic empowerment. The National Strategy for Activating the Role of Women predates the GBF and was developed independently of it.

What changed with the KMGBF and Target 23 was the impetus to connect gender and biodiversity, two areas that had previously been developing in parallel without strong synergy. As Tajikistan's gender focal point said, "Target 23 has been one of the main factors that gave our work a clearer direction. It helped us focus not only on environmental results, but also on who takes part in decision making, who has access to natural resources, and how women can be fully involved in biodiversity conservation."

IMPLEMENTATION

Gender-responsive implementation operates across two interconnected streams: the NBSAP updated in alignment with the targets of the GBF and existing national programmes, particularly the National Strategy for Activating the Role of Women, with gender equality priorities increasingly integrated into biodiversity conservation and sustainable development objectives.

Through the NBSAP Accelerator Programme:

- A deep situational analysis was conducted covering social, economic, ecological, and institutional dimensions, providing a comprehensive baseline of gender-biodiversity gaps in Tajikistan.
- Consultations were held with government institutions, local communities, academia, civil society, and scientists to develop the National Gender and Biodiversity Roadmap — the primary tool for implementing Tajikistan's commitments under the Global Gender Plan of Action. The roadmap identifies what needs to be done, where, and by whom, and will be annexed to the updated National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.
- A Gender and Biodiversity Digital Platform is being developed — the first of its kind in Central Asia — to collect information on gender-sensitive biodiversity actions, track progress against the Global Gender Plan of Action, and facilitate knowledge sharing between stakeholders.
- Through the Accelerator's matchmaking mechanism, Tajikistan secured financial and technical support from the German government for a project on alien and invasive species — an area

Tajikistan joined the NBSAP Accelerator Programme. Given the strong national gender policy framework but the limited explicit integration of gender considerations into biodiversity-related policies and initiatives, this partnership represents a timely and relevant opportunity to bridge this gap.

Tajikistan has since formulated a standalone national target on gender (Target 26) in the update of its National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan — a concrete policy outcome of this process. The updated strategy will also annex the National Gender and Biodiversity Roadmap as a key implementation tool.

where the country previously had no dedicated monitoring or control programme. Gender-related activities within this project will be reflected on the digital platform.

- The Accelerator facilitated a conference that initiated a new memorandum of understanding between the CBD focal point and the Committee on Women and Family Affairs, formalising a cooperation that had previously been weak. Signing this memorandum is the next formal step.

Through the National Strategy for Activating the Role of Women:

- The Committee on Women and Family Affairs administers an annual grant programme for rural women to establish small and medium agribusinesses, currently reaching over 200 beneficiaries per year. Over the past two to three years, a biodiversity-friendly and sustainable agriculture criterion has been added to grant eligibility, meaning recipients must now demonstrate an ecologically sound business approach.
- Local representatives of the Committee at municipality and district level identify beneficiaries, conduct local needs assessments, and monitor the effectiveness of grant support.

The FAO/GEF project on Conservation of Agrobiodiversity and Sustainable Use of Agricultural Genetic Resources runs in parallel and complements these efforts. It has supported 100 women from local communities to develop eco-friendly agribusinesses, employs dedicated gender focal points in every project region, and has supported women in establishing community gene banks to preserve local seed varieties and genetic resources. The project team cross-referenced the Committee on Women's beneficiary lists to avoid duplication and build sustainability.

MONITORING AND PROGRESS

Monitoring is an acknowledged weakness and a current priority for improvement. Collecting gender-biodiversity-specific information and data, particularly for the CBD national reporting process, requires additional resources. Establishing a centralized database would significantly streamline and strengthen the efficiency of monitoring and reporting. The relevant data is currently fragmented across organisations and state agencies, with individual projects maintaining their own reports that are not always shared centrally or publicly.

The Gender and Biodiversity Digital Platform is designed to address this directly by providing a centralised map of indicators and facilitating systematic and regular data submission by partner institutions, helping to strengthen institutional reporting and data availability over time.

INTENDED AND ACTUAL IMPACTS

The overarching aim is equal rights, equal opportunities, and equal access to all resources — land, biodiversity, finance, and institutional support — for women and men. Documented outcomes include:

- Growing willingness of women to participate in consultations, surveys, and decision-making processes — described by Tajikistan's gender focal point as one of the most meaningful results of the work: women now know their input can influence future decisions.
- Over 200 women per year accessing agribusiness grants with biodiversity-friendly criteria integrated into selection.
- 100 women supported to establish eco-friendly agribusinesses under the FAO/GEF project, with some women maintaining community gene banks for local seed varieties.
- Strengthened institutional cooperation between biodiversity and gender state authorities, initiated through the Accelerator Programme.

To implement gender-biodiversity priorities Tajikistan is mobilizing diversified financing from national budgets, private-sector investment, and international partners, including GEF, World Bank, IFAD, GIZ, UNDP and FAO, with substantive support leveraged through the NBSAP Accelerator Partnership Matchmaking Mechanism.

At state level, monitoring of the National Strategy for Activating the Role of Women primarily captures quantitative indicators, including the number of beneficiaries and businesses supported. Project-level monitoring (particularly under the GEF portfolio) is more qualitative, with quality indicators tracking business sustainability and women's economic outcomes. A government quota requiring 30% women in management and leadership positions across all state authorities provides a concrete institutional indicator.

- A standalone national target on gender (Target 26) formulated in the updated National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan.
- New tools — the roadmap and digital platform — providing a framework for systematic implementation and monitoring for the first time.

However, structural gaps remain. There remains a need to expand practical approaches for women to access to land resources and ensure the necessary capacities. Many rural women lack access to microfinance and do not know how to access the support that is technically available to them. Urban women face different barriers, particularly around knowledge of their legal rights. Traditional cultural expectations about women's roles persist as a cross-cutting obstacle.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Intersectional analysis reveals distinct barriers at different levels of Tajikistani society. Rural women face acute challenges around access to microfinance and grants, geographic remoteness, and limited awareness of how to access available support — practical, navigational barriers that prevent women from exercising rights they technically hold. Urban women face a different set of barriers: greater access to institutions but insufficient knowledge of their legal rights and how to assert them. Cultural norms are identified as a cross-cutting structural barrier and the traditional expectation is that women's primary role is as wife and mother rather than active economic or political participant.



ENABLING FACTORS

- Political will at the highest level: the Government's support for women's rights over 30 years created the constitutional and legal foundation. As an analyst on the NBSAP update and the 7th National Report described it: "When you have this fundamental environment to move forward, you can really move forward."
- A strong existing legal framework: equal rights for women are enshrined in the constitution and reflected across multiple laws and codes, providing a basis for practical empowerment work.
- The NBSAP Accelerator Programme: provided the conceptual framework, technical tools, and international network to connect gender and biodiversity work that had previously been developing in isolation.
- Strong inter-institutional cooperation: between government, academia, international organisations, civil society, and the private sector.
- International financial and technical support: from GEF, World Bank, IFAD, GIZ, UNDP, UNEP, FAO and the Accelerator Partnership providing not only funding but practical tools, training, and cross-country learning.
- A gender-responsive process: embedding gender considerations throughout all stages — consultations, workshops, research, policy development — rather than adding them retrospectively.



KEY CHALLENGES

- Fragmented data and absence of a centralised monitoring system. Each organisation maintains its own data, which is often not shared publicly or submitted to central authorities. Producing national reports has required sourcing some data externally.
- Capacity and awareness: gender and biodiversity as a nexus is still a new area of work; many actors, including within government, do not fully understand why it matters or what their role is.
- The gap between legal rights and practical capacity: women in Tajikistan have strong formal rights but lack the practical knowledge, financial literacy, and institutional access to exercise them — particularly in rural areas.
- Sustainability beyond project cycles: a recurring concern. The digital platform, roadmap, and institutional cooperation are all at early stages, and their continuation depends on formalising partnerships and securing domestic budget support.
- Women's land rights: the Land Code formally guarantees equal rights, but in practice women access land primarily through male relatives, and no comprehensive data system tracks gendered land ownership.

Tajikistan's National Gender and Biodiversity Roadmap identifies three structural paradoxes that together characterise these challenges as systemic rather than isolated [84]:

- Legal framework without full outcomes: while supported by a robust framework of over 60 national laws, strategies, and guiding documents on gender equality — including the Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities (2005) and the Law on Equality and Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (2022) — Tajikistan ranks 112th in the 2024/2025 WEF Global Gender Gap Report. Gaps in sector-specific leadership have historically persisted: men constitute 92% of the forestry workforce. Recent developments do signal positive change, however — a woman has since been appointed Deputy Chair of the Committee on Environmental Protection, marking an important step forward for women's representation in senior environmental governance.
- Participation without institutionalisation: women engage actively in international project environments, but these achievements are not yet fully embedded into national governance structures.

KEY LESSONS



- Gender-responsive biodiversity policy cannot be developed by a single institution — it requires genuine, sustained cooperation across government, civil society, academia, and international partners.
- Strong gender policies and strong biodiversity policies can coexist without connecting: the Tajikistan case shows that deliberate effort is needed to build synergy between two areas that might otherwise develop in parallel without mutual reinforcement.
- The legal rights framework is a necessary but insufficient foundation: once formal rights are established, sustained investment is needed to build women's practical capacity to exercise those rights.
- Community gene banks and traditional seed conservation — where women are the primary knowledge holders — represent a direct and practical entry point for connecting women's empowerment with biodiversity conservation outcomes.
- Integrating biodiversity criteria into existing women's grant programmes is a low-cost, high-impact approach: rather than creating new instruments, adding ecological criteria to existing agribusiness grants creates a direct policy link between women's economic empowerment and sustainable biodiversity use.

Note: The interviewees expressed hope that Tajikistan's experience — particularly the roadmap and digital platform — will be useful for other countries in Central Asia and beyond.

[84] Committee on Environmental Protection of the Republic of Tajikistan (2025) National Gender and Biodiversity Roadmap [Unpublished document]. Dushanbe: Committee on Environmental Protection, NBSAP Accelerator Programme.

Policies in Practice draws on ten country case studies to show how governments and their partners are putting gender-responsive biodiversity policy into practice. Organised around the CBD Gender Plan of Action, it examines what has enabled progress, where gaps remain, and what lessons others can draw on as Parties work towards Target 23 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

Policies in Practice: Learning from National Experiences for Gender-Responsive Implementation of the Global Biodiversity Framework

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