

Parties will seek to increase and strengthen the participation and leadership of women at all levels in decision-making and local implementation of the UNCCD, including in drought management and sand and dust storms and LDN interventions, and aim to reach gender parity by 2030;<sup>20</sup>

**Integrating women's economic empowerment in UNCCD implementation activities in order to eradicate their extreme poverty.** Nearly 40 per cent of land degradation is found in areas of high poverty,<sup>21</sup> often due to a history of structural constraints, limited incomes and the lack of social safety nets, putting formidable pressure on the land to meet the population's daily livelihood needs.<sup>22</sup> Women's extreme poverty is linked to multiple factors which include insecure land rights, lack of access to finance and technology, poor market conditions, and social practices<sup>23</sup> such as underpaid or unpaid labour. Parties will aim to promote women's economic empowerment<sup>24</sup> by breaking down gender-related barriers and creating quality income-earning opportunities for rural women involved in implementation activities;

**Strengthening women's land rights and access to resources.** Women in developing country regions that are affected by Desertification Land degradation and Drought are estimated to produce up to 60–80 per cent of the food in developing countries.<sup>25</sup> But a majority of the women in Africa and the Middle East lack critical land rights:<sup>26</sup> (i) they are allocated the less fertile family land; (ii) they are not the main decision makers regarding the land they use; and (iii) they do not own the land they use.<sup>27</sup> To manage land and achieve LDN and household needs sustainably, women's land ownership is important, but security of tenure is critical.<sup>28</sup> Parties will aim to increase women's land rights by 2030 through diverse and innovative approaches;<sup>29</sup>

**Enhancing women's access to improved knowledge and technologies that relate to effective UNCCD implementation.** Indigenous and rural women hold valuable knowledge which is needed in order to increase food production, yet far fewer women than men benefit from the technologies developed from this knowledge. Studies show that woman-to-woman training can boost subsistence food production, and women's use of extension services increased by 600 per cent through targeted delivery.<sup>30</sup> Parties will seek to build the knowledge capacities of female land-users in the areas targeted for sustainable land management to deliver appropriate technological resources,<sup>31</sup> including information technologies, sustainable land management,<sup>32</sup> training, extension services and the education of girls.

- Are there other priorities that are highly relevant for your region (ie, Africa, Asia, Latin America and Caribbean, Central and Eastern Europe, Northern Mediterranean and the Western European and Others Group)
- What priority actions - above or others - are essential for women and girls to manage drought and sand and dust storms effectively
- What challenges did you face when gathering gender disaggregated data?

## Mechanisms for implementation

### WORKING WITH AND THROUGH WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

Women's organizations (associations, cooperatives, self-help groups and so on) are powerful mechanisms for correcting gender inequalities. They are sustainable. They benefit women directly. Membership often includes men who are allies for change.<sup>33</sup> Parties will seek to work with and build the capacities of local women's organizations in the implementation of the Convention.

### DEVELOPING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS TO SUPPORT IMPLEMENTATION

Interventions to benefit local populations are mostly channelled through regional governments and CSOs, and partnerships with them are vital for mobilizing women at ground level. Partnerships with national and regional governments that develop and design policies are also important. Parties will seek partnerships with experts, development partners, and relevant government and private sector agents which can enable women and girls to obtain resources for woman involved in combating desertification, land degradation and mitigating the effects of drought.

### MOBILIZE FINANCIAL RESOURCES NEEDED TO ADDRESS GENDER INEQUALITY IN UNCCD IMPLEMENTATION, INCLUDING NATIONAL ACTION PROGRAMMES AND LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY

Governments agreed to increase transparency and equal participation in the budgeting process, and to promote gender-responsive budgeting, by tracking and reporting resource allocations to gender equality and women's empowerment.<sup>34</sup> UNCCD Parties that have deliberately financed women's involvement or activities in implementation have reported high returns from their investment.<sup>35</sup> Parties will seek to allocate resources to support gender-related initiatives and to ensure that budget expenditures promote gender equality and/or women's empowerment in their interventions.<sup>36</sup>

### MONITORING AND REPORTING

Regular reporting on the interventions of the Parties in order to assess progress, gaps and challenges as well as to capture lessons learned would ensure that interventions deliver meaningful results for women effectively in accordance with their needs and priorities, contribute to sustainable land management, and do not exacerbate gender inequalities or overburden women.<sup>37</sup> In submitting their national reports, Parties will include the efforts to address gender equality and women's empowerment in UNCCD implementation and the lessons learned.

- What national legal mechanisms were particularly supportive for your work?
- Which partners were the most effective in helping you to promote and achieve gender equality
- If you had only one recommendation to make this gender action plan more effective, what would it be?

## Endnotes

1. A detailed report on gender mainstreaming during this period is contained in document ICCD/COP(13)/CRP.1.
2. See various declarations at Conferences of the Parties by Parliamentarians, CSOs and Ministers.
3. See document UNEP/CBD/COP/12/17.
4. Nelson, V., L. Forsythe and J. Morton, Thematic Papers 1, 2 and 3 and Synthesis, in the series Women's empowerment in drylands (Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich, Chatham, UK, 2015). Atieno Samandari, Working Paper on Gender-Responsive Land Degradation Neutrality (2016).
5. UN Women, The Global GEF Gender Partnership and the UNDP Global Policy Centre for Ecosystem Resilience.
6. Orr, B.J., et al. Scientific Conceptual Framework for Land Degradation Neutrality (2017), p. 52.
7. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, State of Food and Agriculture. Women in Agriculture: Closing the gender gap for development (2011).
8. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Gender and Land Statistics: Recent Developments in FAO's Gender and Land Rights Database (2015).
9. Atieno Samandari (2016), cited. V. Nelson, L. Forsythe and J. Morton, University of Greenwich, Chatham (2015), cited.
10. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, State of Food and Agriculture. Women in Agriculture: Closing the gender gap for development (2011), p. 5.
11. International Organization for Migration, Barriers to Women's Land and Property Access and Ownership in Nepal (2016). <www.iom.int/sites/default/files/our\_work/DOE/LPR/Barriers-to-Womens-Land-Property-Access-Ownership-in-Nepal.pdf>, accessed 21 December 2016.
12. United Nations, Secretary-General's Report. The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges (2012), cited p. 9.
13. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Agricultural Support System (undated). <www.fao.org/docrep/005/y3969e/y3969e05.htm>.
14. Nelson, V., L. Forsythe and J. Morton, Achieving Dryland Women's Empowerment: Environmental resilience and social transformation imperatives (2015).
15. Orr, B.J., et al. Scientific Conceptual Framework for Land Degradation Neutrality (2017). <www2.unccd.int/sites/default/files/documents/LDN%20Scientific%20Conceptual%20Framework\_FINAL.pdf>.
16. United Nations, Addis Ababa Agenda Action, p. 6–7 (2014).
17. McKinsey and Company, The Power of Parity: How Advancing Women's Equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth (2015).
18. Includes the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (A/RES/69/313) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (A/RES/70/1).
19. United Nations Secretary-General's Report, Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, p. 85 (2015).

20. SDG Target 5.5: Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. South Africa, for instance, has a Bill aiming for 50 per cent representation. One Party has suggested participation to be at 40 per cent. Some countries, for example Uganda, now require participation at 50 per cent for all NAP-related interventions (personal conversations).
21. Undated briefing note. Issues Brief on Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought. <www.fao.org/fileadmin/user\_upload/GSP/docs/ITPS/Annex2.pdf>, accessed 21 December 2016.
22. Nelson, V., L. Forsythe and J. Morton, Empowering Dryland Women, cited (2015).
23. McKinsey and Company, The Power of Parity (2015), p. 10.
24. SDG Target 1.1: By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.25 a day.
25. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, ESA Working Paper No. 11-02, March 2011. The Role of Women in Agriculture (2011), p. 11.
26. World Bank, Women, Business and the Law (2015).
27. International Food Policy Research Institute, Gender Inequalities in Land Ownership and Control of Land in Africa. Myths versus reality, IFPRI Discussion Paper 01308 (2013).
28. United Nations Secretary-General's Report, Review and appraisal of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, cited, p. 83 (2015). Referenced hereafter as Report of Beijing +20. <www.un.org/ga/search/view\_doc.asp?symbol=E/CN.6/2015/3>.
29. SDG Target 5.a: Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.
30. United Nations Secretary-General's Report, cited, p. 10 (2012).
31. SDG Target 4.7: By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development.
32. SDG Target 5.b: Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.
33. World Bank, Gender and Economic Growth in Kenya. Unleashing the power of women (2007).
34. United Nations, Addis Ababa Action Agenda, p. 14. <www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/AAAA\_Outcome.pdf> (2015).
35. Case studies of Morocco and India. See UNCCD and World Bank, Land for Life: Create Wealth, Transform Life (2016).
36. SDG target 10.4: Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality.
37. United Nations Secretary-General's Report on Beijing + 20, cited, p. 66. At least 105 countries monitor and collect national gender statistics, 60 of which are making efforts to use 52 gender indicators (2015).



# GENDER ACTION PLAN



United Nations  
Convention to Combat  
Desertification



## Welcome Message

In 2015, we achieved universal agreement on 17 global goals that can set our future on the path to sustainability by 2030. Access to food, clean water and sanitation, a healthy environment and the access to education by both boys and girls are all part of this new deal. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification is one of the international mechanisms governments are depending on to move us towards that goal. We are committed to ensuring disadvantaged woman and girls benefit in this process.



Over a billion poor people live on degrading land and/or drought-prone areas. The Convention is mandated to address land degradation and to empower women to do so, given the important roles they play in the regions affected by land degradation. Extreme poverty, which is considered both a cause and consequence of land degradation, is prevalent among women. Some governments that are party to the Convention have made efforts to empower women, in spite of the challenges faced when promoting gender equality at the domestic and international arenas. Some worked with civil society organizations to reach women. Others promoted women's participation in their activities. In 2011, the Parties agreed on a policy framework for gender advocacy, and asked the secretariat to mainstream gender in all the Convention's work, and at all levels.

The adoption, in September 2017, of a Gender Action Plan to accompany implementation of the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework enhances the implementation of the Convention, making it a more powerful and strategic instrument for transforming the livelihoods of millions of families. Today, 113 of the 169 countries affected by land degradation and/or drought have joined the movement to restore degrading land. They include the world's poorest countries, where a substantial percentage of the extremely land-dependent poor are women.

During the next two years, the countries and stakeholders affected by desertification and drought and those providing financial support will test the effectiveness of the Gender Action Plan presented in this booklet. From the lessons learned, the governments will review and revise the action plan in 2019 to ensure it can support the desired change through 2030. We invite and encourage you to join in this exercise and to share with us your experience and recommendations.

Affected countries are setting voluntary national targets to restore degraded land. But ensuring women effectively contribute to and benefit from the recovery of degrading land will take more than that. It requires focused and consistent support from the development partners. It demands the unwavering commitment and collaboration among intergovernmental, international and civil society organizations. It requires private foundations, companies and investors to adopt a long-range vision. And it demands our solidarity and support of households, families, communities and local and regional governments and authorities.

A rising tide lifts all boats. By empowering women and girls who depend on the land to support their livelihoods and families, we can transform millions of households, and make our communities and societies stronger and more stable.

Monique Barbut, UNCCD Executive Secretary

# Gender action plan

## CONTEXT

The Convention recognizes the importance of women in the implementation of the Convention, and identifies critical areas for their engagement: (i) awareness-raising, and participation in the design and implementation of programmes; (ii) decision-making processes that men and women adopt at the local level in the governance of development, implementation and review of regional and national action programmes (RAPs and NAPs); and (iii) capacity-building, education and public awareness, particularly at local level through the support of local organizations.

Since 1998, UNCCD Parties and stakeholders have taken action on gender. Parties have regularly called for an improved gender balance within the roster of independent experts and in civil society organization (CSO) participation. The advocacy policy framework of 2013 focused primarily on the policy process. Parties focused mostly on activities with women on the ground, as reflected in 80 of the 335 reports that covered gender.<sup>1</sup> But calls to mainstream gender and empower women in the implementation of the Convention persist.<sup>2</sup>

## Preamble

More than two billion people in developing countries are affected by food insecurity, poverty, water scarcity, conflict and forced migration because of land degradation. Increasingly, the cumulative effects of overgrazing, over-cultivation, deforestation, and poor irrigation combine with extreme weather events to have serious implications for poverty eradication, stability and sustainable development.



Canada is committed to improving the living conditions of the world's most vulnerable people and to addressing the serious implications of desertification and land degradation. That is why Canada recently re-joined the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). In 2015, we pledged to help build local capacity and climate resilience, as well as promote climate-smart agriculture, as part of a \$2.65 billion commitment in climate finance, with the goal of helping developing countries become more climate-resilient.

If we want to end poverty and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we must work together to address land and water issues, and we can only do that with the equal participation of women. They represent 43 percent of the agricultural labour force in developing countries and they produce half the world's food. Like poverty, desertification affects women and girls disproportionately.

Twice as many women and girls suffer from malnutrition, compared to men and boys. And they spend an enormous amount of time providing their families with water—40 million hours every day in sub-Saharan Africa alone. When conflict breaks out, they are also more affected by violence. Yet only 10-20 percent of landholders are women, and they have less access than men to farm inputs, resources, technology, education, and financial services.

The UNCCD has made significant progress with its Gender Action Plan, which outlines the key steps that need to be taken to address these challenges. I am very pleased to see that the priorities are consistent with those of Canada's new Feminist International Assistance Policy, and align with the 2030 Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development.

Canada's policy explicitly recognizes that we cannot hope to accomplish this ambitious agenda if half the world's population is not included in decisions and have access to economic opportunities. Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy considers gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as the most effective way to reduce poverty and build a more inclusive, peaceful and prosperous world. It is to everyone's advantage to amplify the voices of women and girls, because we know that when they can choose their own futures and contribute fully to their communities, everyone benefits.

Canada congratulates the UNCCD on the Gender Action Plan and we look forward to its implementation.

The Honourable Marie-Claude Bibeau, P.C., M.P., Minister of International Development and La Francophonie

The development of the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework to implement the Convention is an opportunity to address the weaknesses of the gender advocacy policy framework. An action plan with a focused agenda for women's empowerment to complement the gender advocacy policy framework by mainstreaming gender, in order to address the gender inequalities that disproportionately undermine women's effectiveness as agents of change in the implementation of the Convention, would enhance the achievement of land degradation neutrality (LDN) targets.<sup>3</sup>

The proposals are drawn from: (i) lessons learned from the activities undertaken by affected Parties; (ii) a review of relevant literature;<sup>4</sup> (iii) lessons learned when developing the gender plans of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and ongoing development of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); and (iv) consultations with gender experts.<sup>5</sup> The proposed gender action plan benefitted from substantive feedback received from seven Parties, three international organizations and two CSOs.

## RATIONALE

Women are strategic agents of change<sup>6</sup> and play a central role in the use and care of land resources, in particular in land-dependent communities. Women rely on land resources to provide the household needs for food, water and energy, which makes them more dependent on natural resources than men; yet most women neither own nor have control over these resources. Less than 20 per cent of land holders worldwide are women<sup>7</sup> and only 13 per cent of the land users who make the major decisions on agricultural land are women.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, women are a significant labour force and are guardians of valuable traditional and indigenous knowledge on land use.<sup>9</sup> But these advantages do not benefit them. Globally, women make up 43 per cent of the agricultural labour force.<sup>10</sup> In many poor countries, more than 95 per cent of all economically active women work in agriculture.<sup>11</sup> In sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, women hold 10 per cent of the credit available to smallholder agriculture.<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, female farmers receive only 5 per cent of agricultural extension officers are women.<sup>13</sup>

Structural inequalities embedded in the social, political, economic and cultural institutions, norms and practices limit women's agency, undermining effective implementation of the Convention. A focused and systematic approach to bridge the gender inequalities linked to women's land use and management can improve the livelihoods of women and girls and their families and the conditions of the ecosystems that supply these needs, and enhance their resilience to drought. Their increasing exposure to extreme weather events – drought, unpredictable rainfall – accentuates their vulnerability, and compels them to take ever-greater risks to meet their needs. Women in land-dependent communities affected by the impacts of land degradation and desertification require special attention in order to access the resources they need to provide for their households and make communities resilient and stable.<sup>14</sup>

The Scientific Conceptual Framework for Land Degradation Neutrality states that the drivers of land degradation are not gender neutral. It stresses that poverty is both a root cause and a consequence of land degradation, with gender inequality playing a significant role in the process, worsening the impacts on women. The UNCCD Science Policy Interface (SPI) recommends integrating gender considerations into implementation of the UNCCD, including through LDN planning and implementation, decision making, stakeholder engagement and the preliminary assessments for LDN. In particular, SPI argues that excluding gender from the analysis of preliminary assessment data for LDN activities will lead to incomplete or misleading findings.<sup>15</sup>

Evidence shows that gender equality, women's empowerment and women's full and equal participation and leadership in the economy are vital in achieving sustainable development, and significantly enhance economic growth and productivity.<sup>16</sup> Closing the gender gap could, for instance, create 240 million jobs by 2025 and add US\$28 trillion (26 per cent) to annual global growth (GDP).<sup>17</sup> The global agenda for 2030<sup>18</sup> has reignited political momentum towards the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The Parties to the Convention have committed to achieve these goals and have a responsibility to uphold and support their achievement, as recognized in decision 3/COP.12, and thus need to identify and agree on policies and actions to reduce gender inequalities, and enhance efficiency and effectiveness in the implementation of the Convention. As gender becomes a core target of development finance, including in major public environmental and climate change financing mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and Global Environment Facility (GEF), a clear action plan offers the means to properly assess gender responsiveness in actions to implement the Convention.

- What other principles would you recommend? Why?
- What other goals and/or objectives did you pursue in this work?
- Are there gender inequalities relating to men and boys that you encountered that should be addressed under this gender action plan.

## Potential intervention measures

### GOAL

The purpose of the gender action plan is to make the implementation of the Convention and the UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework gender-responsive and transformative, and thus more effective, efficient and successful, by providing guidance to Parties and other actors on policies and measures to mainstream gender and achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

### OBJECTIVES

The objectives are:

- To enhance women's role as agents of change by addressing the gender inequalities they face;
- To build the capacities of women and girls to access the resources they need to improve their livelihoods, manage land sustainably and become resilient to drought;
- To build the technical capacities of UNCCD stakeholders at all levels to design and implement gender-responsive plans and programmes, including in LDN interventions;
- To develop a baseline on gender-related issues in land degradation and desertification, and monitor, report and regularly review progress in the implementation and achievement of objectives;
- To mobilize adequate resources to achieve these objectives.

### PRINCIPLES

Key principles needed to guide action on the ground:

- Interventions do not increase women's burden. They decrease it.
- Women not only contribute to, but also benefit from, the interventions.

### PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

Some of the key obstacles associated with Desertification Land degradation and Drought are common to women and girls in the affected developing countries and offer a point of convergence for focused action. Whereas priority actions may vary across countries and regions, the expected outcomes need to be consistent. The priority thematic areas to close the gender gap are:

**Participation in decisions taken during the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of initiatives to implement the UNCCD.** Women have a strong influence on most land-based livelihood systems. Their participation in local institutions for governing natural resources is critical for sustainable land, water and forest management.<sup>19</sup>