



Gender within the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

Provisional version - November 2024

This note was prepared by CARI as part of the GTD and the PASS-LCD Project.¹

In the run-up to COP16, CARI is offering a decoding note based on a reading and analysis of the official documents of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), available at: <https://www.unccd.int/convention/official-documents>

Introduction

Gender mainstreaming in efforts to combat desertification has become a growing issue within the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The secretariat and the Global Mechanism are actively working to ensure that women can play a leading role in sustainable land management, while ensuring equal access to resources and opportunities for all. These actions aim not only to improve the situation of women in communities affected by desertification, but also to enhance the effectiveness of land restoration efforts.

Gender mainstreaming in the UNCCD

The issue of gender equality is not specifically addressed in the strategic framework (2018-2030) of the Convention². However, it became a cross-cutting issue at COP13, with a decision recognising the importance of women in the implementation of the Convention³. In addition, it is specified that when implementing its strategic framework, all UNCCD stakeholders and partners must take account of gender equality, ensure the effective participation of men and women in planning, decision-making and implementation at all levels, and strengthen the empowerment of women and young people in affected areas⁴.

Also, at COP13 in 2017, the Gender Action Plan (GAP) was adopted by the States Parties⁵. The purpose of this action plan is to support the importance of gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the Convention's strategic framework. In particular, it provides guidance to States Parties and other actors to integrate the gender dimension into policies and

¹ PASS-LCD: Structured action programme for actors in the fight against desertification (2023-2026) implemented by CARI, ENDA Pronat and ReSaD. Co-financed by AFD.

² UNCCD Strategic Framework (2018-2030): https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2018-08/cop21add1_SF_FR.pdf

³ Decision 7 COP13 - ICCD/COP(13)/21/Add.1, p. 17:
https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2019-08/7COP13_0.pdf

⁴ Decision 7 COP13 - ICCD/COP(13)/21/Add.1, p. 18:
https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2019-08/7COP13_0.pdf

⁵ Decision 30 COP13 - ICCD/COP(13)/21/Add.1: Gender equality and empowerment of women for enhanced and effective implementation of the Convention.

measures (e.g. key principles, objectives, priorities for action and implementation mechanisms)⁶. To speed up the implementation of the GAP, a roadmap drawn up by the Convention secretariat, listing the activities and concrete measures to be put in place on gender issues at different levels (global, regional, national), was adopted at COP15 in 2022.⁷

NB: It is in strategic objective 2 of the UNCCD's strategic framework (2018-2030) that gender is considered most explicitly, in particular in expected effect 2.3 "*local populations, in particular women and young people, are empowered and participate in decision-making processes in the fight against [Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought]*".

1. The UNCCD's gender mainstreaming actions

To support the States Parties in implementing the Convention, the secretariat and the Global Mechanism are carrying out a range of activities to build capacity, advocate, raise awareness, facilitate women's participation in the Convention's intergovernmental meetings, develop tools and integrate gender equality into projects and publications. Partnerships with other international organisations, as well as with the secretariats of the other 2 Rio Conventions, have been set up to support the States Parties in implementing the Gender Action Plan (GAP). In particular, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has shared its data and approaches on gender issues with the UNCCD.

a. The activities of the Secretariat for Gender Mainstreaming

Ensuring gender parity within the UNCCD

The Convention has set up activities to promote gender parity within its subsidiary bodies and institutions. In particular, the Secretariat of the Convention has carried out a study to analyse the situation regarding gender parity within the UNCCD. The results of this analysis are available in reference document *ICCD/COP(16)/17, paragraph 7 p.4*: <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2024-09/2414867F.pdf>

Facilitating women's participation in international meetings

To facilitate the participation of women in international meetings relating to the UNCCD, the secretariat, in partnership with the UNFCCC, conducted an online consultation workshop in April 2024 with the various stakeholders in the Convention, to define possible financial support arrangements to ensure the effective participation of women. The Women Delegates Fund set up under the UNFCCC is an example of a financial mechanism that could inspire a possible decision by the COP.

⁶ UNCCD Gender Action Plan: <https://www.unccd.int/resources/publications/gender-action-plan>

⁷ Decision 24/COP15: https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-10/24_cop15.pdf

Gender Caucuses

Time specifically devoted to gender issues is set aside for the organisation of Caucuses⁸ during meetings organised by the UNCCD. A COP15 decision⁹ stipulates that the secretariat must ensure that gender caucuses are organised annually. At the 21st session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC21) in November 2023, two Gender Caucuses were held, during which the Convention secretariat, Landesa, FAO and the WeCAN network made presentations on the implementation of the Gender Action Plan roadmap, recommendations on terminology used in gender policies for consideration by the CRIC and Women's empowerment in drought resilient drylands.¹⁰

➔ At least two Gender Caucuses are planned for COP16.¹¹

b. Support from the Global Mechanism on technical aspects and mobilisation of financing

The Global Mechanism is a body that aims to facilitate the mobilisation of the financial resources needed to implement the objectives of the UNCCD. It provides advisory services and works with developing countries, the private sector and donors to mobilise resources.

The Global Mechanism also provides guidance and advice to interested country Parties in developing and implementing national action plans related to land and its sustainable management.

In order to make progress on issues relating to gender mainstreaming in the fight against desertification, land degradation and drought, and in view of the low level of resources allocated to gender analysis and the GAP, the Global Mechanism has set up activities to build capacity in the design and implementation of projects and national programmes that integrate gender issues.

In particular, the focus is on gender mainstreaming in national plans for achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) and combating drought.

➔ For more information, see paragraphs 23 to 26 of document ICCD/COP(16)/17: <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2024-09/2414867F.pdf>

⁸ The first gender caucus was held in 2019 at COP14.

⁹ Decision 24/COP15, paragraph 8: https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2022-10/24_cop15.pdf

¹⁰ Find the summary report of the Gender Caucus sessions held at CRIC21 here: https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2024-01/Gender%20caucus%20report_cric%2021%20designed.pdf

¹¹ ICCD/COP(16)/17 paragraph 29 p.9: <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2024-09/2414867F.pdf>

2. Supporting the implementation of the Gender Action Plan (GAP)

In order to support the implementation of the **Gender Action Plan**¹², which is the main instrument for promoting and ensuring the effective integration of gender issues in the implementation of the Convention, the secretariat has carried out a number of significant activities:

- An awareness-raising campaign entitled "Women: their land, their rights" was launched in 2023 by the secretariat to highlight the issue of women's land rights. To mark the occasion, a policy brief was produced on the relevance of gender-sensitive approaches to land rights issues.¹³
- In July 2023, the UNCCD Secretariat, in collaboration with Töpfer, Müller, Gaßner (TMG) and the Robert Bosch Foundation, held a workshop on women's land rights and possible synergies between the Rio Conventions. This workshop brought together the secretariats of the 3 Conventions and their respective partners to collectively develop strategies and capacity-building activities to be implemented in order to advance the consideration of gender issues in the field of land governance.
- At the beginning of 2024, the secretariat launched a study on women-led initiatives in the field of drought resilience, with a view to demonstrating the predominant role played by women in drought management. The results of this study will be presented at COP16.
- With the aim of producing data on gender and women's empowerment, the secretariat is cooperating with WOCAT¹⁴. The production of scientific data and knowledge on women's participation in achieving Land Degradation Neutrality is an important issue for the UNCCD. The results of the progress made in terms of scientific production and training on gender issues will be presented at a Gender Caucus to be held at COP16.
- In collaboration with a number of international organisations and civil society organisations, the UNCCD secretariat has carried out capacity-building activities with the Convention's various stakeholders (National Focal Points, States Parties, Convention staff, CSOs, etc.) on topics such as gender analysis; prevention of sexual harassment; gender and climate action; support for women farmers' associations and women environmentalists.

3. Monitoring and evaluation of progress in gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the Convention

In the national performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS4), which monitors progress in implementing the Convention's strategic framework (2018-2030), the States Parties have been invited to include data on gender and women's empowerment in their national reports on progress towards strategic objective 2 "*Improve the living conditions of affected populations*". The secretariat has developed an indicator to measure changes in the population's exposure to land degradation, disaggregating the data by gender, and has

¹² https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/documents/2018-01/GAP%20FRE%20%20low%20res_0.pdf

¹³ https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2023-06/20230605-Gender-PolicyBrief_online-HQ.pdf

¹⁴ WOCAT is a global network on sustainable land management that promotes the documentation, sharing and use of knowledge to support SLM adaptation, innovation and decision-making.

included a series of questions to enable States Parties to report on any elements that can advance gender issues in the implementation of the Convention and the GAP.

In order to report on the progress of the GAP and the Empowerment of Women in the implementation of the Convention, the Secretariat must analyse and synthesise the gender-related information contained in the national reports produced by the States Parties as part of the PRAIS4.

- ➔ Of the 117 national reports received, the PRAIS4 reports 107 national reports containing gender-related data and information.

The Parties have also taken the gender dimension into account in their national strategies and programmes to combat desertification, including in the National Action Plans (NAPs) and in the development of environmental and agricultural policies.

Several evaluation reports are available on the progress and results achieved in implementing the Convention's GAP:

- ➔ Paragraphs 16 to 22 of the Valuation Office's report can be found here: <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2024-10/2416733F.pdf>
- ➔ Consult paragraphs 34 to 39 of the report of the Intergovernmental Working Group on the follow-up to the mid-term evaluation of the Convention's strategic framework (2018-2030) here: <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2024-09/2413193F.pdf>

Gender negotiations at COP16¹⁵

The negotiations on gender between the States Parties to the Convention will focus on the follow-up to be given to guaranteeing women's land rights and their access to land and other natural resources in order to achieve the main Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)¹⁶, and to implement the Convention's strategic action plan (2018-2030).

In addition, discussions will be held to encourage the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism to continue their activities to promote gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the Convention.

¹⁵ Draft decision for consideration at the sixteenth Conference of the Parties: <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2024-10/2417283F.pdf>

¹⁶ Mainly in the areas of poverty (SDG 1: "No poverty"), women's empowerment (SDG 5: "Gender equality") and food security (SDG 2: "Zero hunger").

To find out more:

Reference publications on gender issues within the framework of the UNCCD:

- ✓ [Study on "The different impacts of desertification, land degradation and drought on women and men"](#)
- ✓ ["Women-led solutions for drought resilience"](#)



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