



TRANSFORMATIVE ACTIONS. SOLUTIONS #53

MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN THE BIODIVERSITY PLAN – EXPERIENCES FROM THE POST-2020 BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK – EU SUPPORT PROJECT



© Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework- EU Support

Hugo Rivera-Mendoza
Team Leader, Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework - EU Support

Danaé Moyano-Rodriguez
Knowledge Management Officer, Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework - EU Support

Esther Camac
Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas

Simangele Msweli
African Wildlife Foundation

Masha Lekic
WWF International

Although the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework – EU Support project did not explicitly include gender in its objectives, it successfully promoted women’s participation and leadership in biodiversity-related actions, policies, and decision-making processes. This led to productive partnerships with organisations which are working to mainstream gender in The Biodiversity Plan and increase visibility for women involved in its implementation.

Gender was not explicitly integrated in the objectives of the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework – EU Support project. The project was therefore ranked with a **score of 0** in the OECD DAC **criteria for gender equality.**¹ However, the project promoted women’s participation and leadership at all levels of action, policy and decision-making related to biodiversity.

This resulted in fruitful collaborations with the CBD Women’s Caucus, representatives of the Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas – ECMIA, the African Wildlife Foundation and WWF International who are actively working on mainstreaming gender in The Biodiversity Plan, as well as visibility for numerous initiatives, organisations and women active in the implementation of the Plan.



“ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY REQUIRES MORE THAN WELL-MEANING POLICIES. IT REQUIRES POLITICAL WILL, ACCOUNTABILITY AND A WILLINGNESS TO CHALLENGE THE STATUS QUO FROM THE TOP. IT REQUIRES US TO LISTEN TO THE VOICES OF WOMEN AND GIRLS, ESPECIALLY THOSE FROM MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES, AND TO ACT ON THEIR DEMANDS. WE NEED CONCRETE ACTIONS AND POLICIES THAT DISMANTLE SYSTEMIC BARRIERS, PROMOTE INCLUSIVITY AND ENSURE THAT EFFORTS REACH ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS, REGARDLESS OF THEIR BACKGROUNDS.”

- Michelle Bachelet, former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Executive Director of UN Women and former president of Chile



© Daniel Murillo, Expertise France

1. APPLYING THE CONCEPT OF TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING

The Theory of Change: Applying the Concept of Human Contact

Only **human contact** is capable of creating **precedent experience** and helping others open up to **new perspectives**.²

By integrating not only women, but **women working on gender mainstreaming and biodiversity**, the project focused on confronting policymakers to a **higher ambition for environmental and equity issues**, seeing that **best practices** were not only already in place, but that there were also benefits directly arising from **concrete commitments** for the negotiation and implementation of The Biodiversity Plan.

To achieve a **transformative approach** in its day-to-day activities, the project developed a **strategy** based on the IPBES global assessment's pathways for transformative change³ and the EU-funded project EKLIPSE.⁴ This resulted in **binding rules** for the design and implementation of activities, of which the following were of special relevance for gender issues:

+ The project will integrate **gender-differentiated biodiversity practices, gender knowledge acquisition and use**, as well as **gender inequalities** in its activities. Special attention will be paid to **gender and geographical balance** across the project's activities.

+ **Human rights-based approaches** will be integrated throughout the project, including aspects such as: a) applying all human rights for all; b) **meaningful and inclusive participation and access to decision-making**; c) **non-discrimination and equality**; d) accountability and rule of law for all and e) transparency and access to information.

+ **Good governance** of biodiversity implies **integrated, inclusive, transparent, responsive and participatory policy-making**. It also involves effectiveness, accountability and respect for the rule of law. The Action will work to improve implementation and **push for renewed commitments** addressing those challenges and **actively engage and involve all stakeholders**, including, IPLCs, SNLGs, **Women** and Youth, among others.

+ The project will support and empower selected **stakeholder coalitions** via strategic consulting and visibility actions aimed at ensuring a fast-tracked implementation of the GBF, enhancing also **coordination of communications between stakeholders**.

In practice, this meant raising awareness within the project team and installing binding steps to integrate gender issues on a daily basis:

- + For each **event** organised by the project:
 - 50% of the panellists must be women.
 - At least one speaker must be a gender expert.
 - Diversity had to be respected by ensuring a geographical balance: there should always be speakers from the Global South.

+ The project established and kept contact with

the **CBD Women's Caucus**⁵ and gave visibility to its initiatives.

+ **Activities actively integrated women** in indigenous and local communities, active in youth organizations, working in the private sector or elected in their governments.

+ Women authored over 50% of the **knowledge products** produced within the project.

+ Gender was one of the **specific objectives of a grant**, financed by the project and implemented by **WWF International**, aimed at **mobilising non-state actors** for biodiversity.

+ The project respected and **valued gender diversity** in all its **communications** and awareness raising assets.

+ Indigenous women were actively invited as holders of **traditional knowledge** to reflect on transforming national policies.

This was in line with the CBD's concept of the **whole-of-society approach**, which served as a vehicle to **justify the integration of gender issues** into the project's activities.

BOX 1 – Diversity is also important when measuring gender mainstreaming

Two of the project's indicators are gender disaggregated (number of knowledge products, number of participants in an event). When participants were only given two options, **Male/Female**, some refused to answer, often in solidarity with colleagues not identifying with any of these two categories. This biased the results. To solve this issue, the survey was modified to include an "Other" category in the gender question.

2. GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN PRACTICE: ENGAGING CIVIL SOCIETY ACTORS

Women and the Nature Positive Initiative:

In December 2022 we celebrated a historical success as world governments adopted a landmark Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) that commits countries to implementing national plans that can halt and reverse the loss of biodiversity, enhance women's leadership in conservation, and promote human rights. This is an unmissable opportunity for governments to adopt and implement lasting measures that will positively impact nature and people (and especially women and girls) for decades to come.

In the lead-up to this monumental achievement, WWF's contributions through the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework – EU Support project since October 2022 included advocacy activities such as high-level exchanges among the global leaders of international NGOs, CBD Secretariat and Indigenous Peoples' networks; virtual round tables on Target 23 [Ensure Gender Equality and a Gender-Responsive Approach for Biodiversity Action]; and, the development of calls to action for a people-positive and nature-positive GBF

1. Development Assistance Committee's DAC criteria: Not Targeted (Score 0): The project/program has been screened against the marker but has not been found to target gender equality; Significant (Score 1): Gender equality is an important and deliberate objective, but not the principal reason for undertaking the project/program; Principal (Score 2): Gender equality is the main objective of the project/program and is fundamental in its design and expected results. For more information see: <https://www.oecd.org/development/gender-development/Minimum-recommended-criteria-for-DAC-gender-marker.pdf>

2. Zimbardo, Philip G. 2001. *Psychologie*. Springer. ISBN 10: 3540980660 / ISBN 13: 9783540980667

3. See chapter 5, p. 775 on <https://ipbes.net/global-assessment>

4. <https://eklipse.eu/>

5. <https://cbdwomencaucus.org/>

6. <https://www.un.org/ohrls/news/young-people%E2%80%99s-potential-key-africa%E2%80%99s-sustainable-development>

7. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL.FE.ZS?locations=ZG>



© Alexandra Eremina, Expertise France

signed by over 300 organisations including not only women’s networks but also development and humanitarian NGOs, business, city, and Indigenous peoples’ coalitions.

The loss and degradation of biodiversity affect people in different ways. Often, women and girls face greater disadvantages. In areas where livelihoods depend on nature, women play a key role in the use and management of natural resources. The loss of nature therefore threatens their livelihoods, and access to food, water, and energy. It also gives rise to rural poverty and deepens the social and gender divide. In addition, women and girls can be subject to harmful social and gender norms, institutional barriers, and rights denial. Ensuring land ownership and rights for women can enable them to have more substantive engagement in decision-making processes, and strengthen their capacity and incentive to invest in sustainable practices.

Effective and inclusive action on biodiversity requires all members of society to be fully engaged. This includes women and girls whose contributions, rights, and critical roles in biodiversity can be undervalued and not appropriately reflected in equal participation in policy- and decision-making related to biodiversity. Gender equality and women’s empowerment are central to effective environmental decision-making processes. While participation is a fundamental right on its own, growing evidence shows that increased involvement of women in local resource decision-making leads to better resource governance, management, and conservation outcomes. It also shows that the success rates of community-based natural resource management are positively impacted when more women participate in decision-making. Addressing gender inequality means addressing the structural factors that undermine environmental sustainability. **It is a conservation imperative.**

By Masha Lekic

Women in youth movements:

Since the adoption of The Biodiversity Plan, as Senior Manager of the Youth Leadership Program at the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), I have worked with youth networks in Africa to socialize and empower youth leaders to implement The Biodiversity Plan. This is crucial, as about 70% of the population in sub-Saharan Africa is under the age of 30.⁶ Equally notable, is that about 50% of the sub-Saharan population is female.⁷ Beyond their quantity, **the quality of engagement of youth, women and young women in conservation is evident.**

Alongside the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework – EU Support project, AWF supported the Africa Chapter of the Global Youth Biodiversity Network (GYBN Africa) to implement the 2nd African Youth Summit on Biodiversity and the IUCN Youth Conservation Forum for Africa. Beyond the project, AWF worked with GYBN Africa and the African CSOs Biodiversity Alliance (ACBA) to implement the “From Paper to Action: Youth Building Back Biodiversity” campaign which used webinars and infographics to unpack the relevance of select targets in Africa. We further supported the Catholic Youth Network for Environmental Sustainability in Africa (CYNESA) to host the 2nd Laudato Si Youth Assembly. We continued to implement the Charles R. Wall Youth

Leadership Program, which trains youth on international biodiversity governance (with a focus on the Convention on Biological Diversity) and on leadership and management skills that are key for the sector. In all these activities and those not mentioned, **young women were engaged not only as participants but equally as organisers.**

While significant progress has been made in engaging young women in conservation, young women in youth movements still report high levels of 4 of the 6 categories of gender related challenges as articulated by Jones and Solomon 2019.⁸ These are: a) **Informal exclusion**, b) **Harassment and inadequate response**, c) **Assumption of inadequacy** and d) **Assumption of wrongness.**

Institutions engaging women in conservation need to be familiar with challenges faced by women and create an enabling environment because quantity does not always equate to quality of engagement.

By Simangele Msweli

“WHILE WALKING AND SHARING I DRAW HOPE FROM MEETING PERSONS AND ORGANISATIONS WHO WANT TO CONTRIBUTE TO CHANGE. IT IS NOT ONLY MY STRUGGLE, OR OUR STRUGGLE AS INDIGENOUS WOMEN, THERE IS A COMMON STRUGGLE AND COMMON COMMITMENTS. THIS IS SOMETHING THAT NEEDS TO BE STRENGTHENED.”

- Esther Camac Ramirez, Continental Network of Indigenous Women of the Americas - ECMIA

3. ACHIEVING TARGET 23 AND PATHWAYS FOR ITS AMBITIOUS IMPLEMENTATION

During CBD COP15 in Montreal, parties adopted a new Gender Plan of Action and a historic Target 23 on gender equality. This is the first time that one of the Rio Conventions adopted a specific target on gender equality. Although this is a major achievement, transformative change is needed to ensure the effective implementation of both Target 23 and the Gender Plan of Action.

Target 23 of The Biodiversity Plan focuses on the need to “ensure gender equality in the implementation of the Framework through a gender-responsive approach, where all women and girls have equal opportunity and capacity to contribute to the three objectives of the Convention, including by recognizing their 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 decision-making related to biodiversity.”

8. <https://repository.oceanbestpractices.org/bitstream/handle/11329/2113/Conservat%20Sci%20and%20Prac%20-%202019%20-%20Jones%20-%20Challenges%20and%20supports%20for%20women%20conservation%20leaders.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>



© Daniel Murillo, Expertise France

BOX 2 – The CBD Women’s Caucus and the negotiations of Target 23

The CBD Women’s Caucus is the official women’s major group under the CBD. It is a self-organised global platform for all women and girls to advocate for their rights in biodiversity-related decision-making processes at all levels. It promotes gender justice and the empowerment of women and girls, in all their diversity, into the policy processes of the CBD.

The Women’s Caucus aims to ensure that biodiversity policies are founded on core principles of gender equality, justice, and the realization of women and girls’ rights. It advocates for the inclusion of gender-responsive measures that address the specific needs and experiences of women and girls in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Within the context of the negotiations that took place during CBD COP15, the Women’s Caucus published an informative guide to help negotiators identify if their proposal increases gender imbalances, or if it promotes gender justice and women’s empowerment: [“Is my policy gender-blind or gender-responsive?”](#)

Through 10 simple questions, the guide helps the reader identify the entry points to mainstream gender equality criteria into their policy recommendations. It also highlights three critical elements for the effective implementation of gender mainstreaming.

Source:
https://www.women4biodiversity.org/publication/cop15/Gender_responsive_or_gender_blind_ENG.pdf
<https://www.women4biodiversity.org/womens-policy-briefs-for-a-gender-responsive-biodiversity-framework/>

This has led us to develop a new narrative about the concept of natural resources. We now talk about nature’s goods. The narrative has to do with how we have inherited the territory from our ancestors and all the goods found in it, but we have also inherited knowledge that we must preserve to protect future generations. We learn to care for and share what Mother Earth gives us. The care of nature is and will be a priority for indigenous women. Guaranteeing the participation of women in decision-making is essential to fulfil the objectives of The Biodiversity Plan.

By Esther Camac

5. LEARNING BY DOING

It is important to identify the **co-benefits of integrating gender** in a project, policy, organisation or government. This can lead to gender mainstreaming becoming an **asset rather than a constraint**.

The project encountered some **hardships** when increasingly integrating women in its activities. For instance, if there are more women invited to a roundtable discussion, it means that there are men that will not be able to participate.

To smoothen this transition towards more gender-friendly activities, the project identified the following approaches:

+ **Transparently present** the project’s gender mainstreaming position through solid arguments and a clear narrative.

+ Since it can be a disruptive element for certain actors, **gender mainstreaming** was an excellent way of integrating new elements into **existing groups**, helping to **break down pre-existing thought patterns**.

+ Existing **policy commitments** (The Biodiversity Plan itself or national commitments) can **justify** to actively **integrate gender** into concept notes and terms of reference for activities, helping to **add these issues to the agendas** of some stakeholders that would not have considered them in other circumstances.

+ It is important to **identify a clear baseline** for each context and activity. Initiatives do not need to be extremely ambitious to help generate true transformative change, as long as **progress** is achieved **with each step**.

At the end of the day, gender aspects were integrated thanks to the **initiative, drive and commitment** of the project’s team and its partners. Beyond negotiations and brilliantly drafted concepts and action plans, it is very simple to integrate gender. Just **decide** to do it and **make it happen**.

4. OPENING SPACES TO WOMEN ACTIVE IN BIODIVERSITY PRESERVATION ACTIONS

The role of indigenous women in biodiversity preservation:

The Convention on Biological Diversity has provided us, indigenous peoples, with a space where we can contribute from our perspective, showcasing how we can contribute to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. We can share our knowledge of biodiversity and how we use it according to our cultures and identities. As indigenous women, we protect, strengthen, and transmit traditional knowledge. The CBD gives us a space where we can share our contribution to conservation and how we care for nature’s good. This is at the same time a way for us to enrich all debates and negotiations at the global level.

For us women, in situ conservation, the sustainable use of our natural resources in our communities and villages is a priority, as well as the restoration of ecosystems, to heal Mother Earth.

POST-2020 BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK – EU SUPPORT IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AND IMPLEMENTED BY EXPERTISE FRANCE. IT AIMS AT FACILITATING THE PROMPT IMPLEMENTATION OF A TRANSFORMATIVE POST-2020 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK.

THIS PUBLICATION IS FUNDED BY THE EUROPEAN UNION. ITS CONTENTS ARE THE SOLE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE AUTHORS AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THE VIEWS OF THE POST 2020 BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK EU SUPPORT PROJECT, EXPERTISE FRANCE, THE EUROPEAN UNION OR THE EXPERTS CONSULTED.

9. https://www.women4biodiversity.org/publication/cop15/Gender_responsive_or_gender_blind_ENG.pdf

10. <https://www.women4biodiversity.org/womens-policy-briefs-for-a-gender-responsive-biodiversity-framework/>

4POST2020BD.NET
 @4POST2020BD

TRANSFORMATIVE ACTIONS.

TOGETHER FOR NATURE & PEOPLE.



Funded by the European Union

