



UNCCD Gender Equality Policy and Plan 2024 to 2030

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the only legally binding framework established to combat desertification and the effects of drought. There are 197 Parties to the Convention, including 196 country Parties and the European Union. The Convention - based on the principles of participation, partnership and decentralization - is a multilateral commitment to mitigate the effects of land degradation and to protect our land so that we can provide food, water, shelter and economic opportunities for all people.

Widespread land degradation threatens food production, water availability, biodiversity and energy security. When land is degraded and usable land becomes scarce, women are uniquely and differentially affected due to their substantial role in agriculture and food production, their reliance on forests, their greater vulnerability to poverty, and their typically weaker legal protection and social status jeopardizing the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment worldwide.

Within its mandate the UNCCD abides by the fundamental principle to pursue gender equality as enshrined in all key governing documents, frameworks and resolutions of the United Nations system including inter alia the founding UN Charter, the UN Declaration of Human Rights, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as well as the Chief Executive Board's System-wide Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (CEB/2006/2) and the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP 2.0).

The UN Secretary-General asserts that “women and girls represent half of the world’s population and, therefore, also half of its potential. Gender equality, besides being a fundamental human right, is essential to achieve peaceful societies, with full human potential and sustainable development. Moreover, it has been shown that empowering women spurs productivity and economic growth.”¹

UNCCD mandate on gender equality and women’s empowerment

Parties to the UNCCD are committed to improving the quality of life of women worldwide. This commitment is prominently enshrined in the [text of Convention](#)²³ and has been reaffirmed in several [decisions of the Conference of the Parties \(COP\) to the UNCCD](#). Through them, UNCCD Parties have committed to a variety of time-bound and action-oriented targets for mainstreaming gender into UNCCD operations, and acknowledge the need for gender-responsive policies and measures.

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/gender-equality>

² See text of the Convention Preamble, Article 5, paragraph (d), article 10, paragraph 2(f) and Paragraphs 1(a) and 3 of article 19

³ CBD, UNCCD, UNFCCC. 2012. The Rio Conventions. Action on gender
https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/publications/roi_20_gender_brochure.pdf



Purpose of the gender policy

Gender equality and women's empowerment is recognized as a cross-cutting priority across all aspects of the work of the UNCCD. The Convention secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM) promote men and women's equal and balanced participation in all aspects of the UNCCD process and implementation.

In particular, the policy reflects changes resulting from the adoption of the UNCCD Gender Action Plan (GAP) in 2017 and the Gender Action Plan Roadmap in 2022, as well as the enrollment in the 2018 United Nations System-wide Plan of Action on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-SWAP 2.0). The adoption of the GAP represents a landmark opportunity to transform gender equality and human rights into action.

The policy will take effect immediately upon promulgation and will supersede the relevant provisions of the UNCCD Gender Advocacy Framework.

UNCCD objectives concerning gender equality

The Gender Action Plan (GAP) contains five objectives that focus on the following:

1. Enhancing women's role as agents of change by addressing the gender inequalities they face
2. Building the capacities of women and girls to access the resources they need to improve their livelihoods, manage land sustainably and become resilient to drought
3. Building the technical capacities of UNCCD stakeholders at all levels to design and implement gender-responsive plans and programmes, including LDN interventions
4. Development of 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
5. Mobilization of adequate resources to achieve these objectives

While UNCCD Parties have the main role in implementing action toward the objectives of the GAP, the UNCCD secretariat and the GM are mandated to support them in their efforts. In that context, this UNCCD Gender Policy presents the goals of the secretariat and the GM for improving and applying their internal processes and procedures, so as to optimize the impact of their support to the GAP implementation.

Thus, building on the GAP objectives, this gender policy outlines the goals, priorities and approaches that the secretariat and the Global Mechanism will commit to and adhere to in all their operations. This will ensure that there is coherence between gender-responsive actions and practices undertaken by the UNCCD Secretariat internally, and the gender-responsive actions that the Secretariat advocates for, and which are agreed on, with Parties and all stakeholders.



Gender policy goals and priorities

Goal 1: Gender equality is integrated into all programmes and processes

The workplans and programmes of the secretariat and the GM consider gender equality as one of the priorities, and accordingly gender-responsiveness is integrated into all UNCCD programmes, projects and publications.

The secretariat actively encourages Parties to nominate women as members to the Bureaux, working groups, constituent bodies, committees and conferences, to increase women's representation and participation in UNCCD processes, in pursuit of gender parity.

Goal 2: Resources specifically for gender equality are allocated and tracked

In line with the recommendations of the UN Secretary General's High-Level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality, the UNCCD will monitor and track resources that are allocated for gender equality, with the aim to better organize its financing for gender equality.

In the first instance, this will mean establishing a meaningful baseline for financial budget allocations for gender equality, using a common UN methodology, and then establish or refine and meet its minimum financial targets. A gender marker or comparable system should be designed and implemented for this purpose.

Goal 3: UNCCD staff has the capacity to effectively advance gender equality

Ensuring that staff have the right knowledge, skills and tools to support gender mainstreaming at the institutional and programmatic levels is critical. Both the capacity assessment and the work session involving all units highlighted the need to equip staff with the right skills and knowledge to mainstream gender in their different areas of work, as well as to share best practice on gender mainstreaming on a regular basis.

Goal 4: UNCCD organizational culture is gender-responsive

The policy recognizes the need to ensure that men and women enjoy equal opportunities within the UNCCD Secretariat and the GM.

The UNCCD is committed to maintain gender parity amongst UNCCD staff, and to update staff on relevant UN policies that support wellbeing and contribute to advancing gender equality, including: flexible working hours, paternal leave, travel with infants, and others. Gender parity at all staff levels is continuously monitored and promoted, and gender audits are conducted on regular intervals.

Governance for gender equality

A gender-responsive organizational environment is necessary to advance gender equality within the institution. A GEWE gender architecture is an institutional arrangement that aims to ensure that gender dimensions are adequately integrated into all institutional processes and functions through specific requirements for accountable units, including the senior and executive management of the Secretariat and the Global Mechanism (GM). The policy recognizes that all staff have a role to play in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment. It therefore establishes a shared accountability framework



or architecture that clearly outlines responsibilities for its implementation across the UNCCD Secretariat and the GM.

The governance accountability under the gender architecture should cascade down from the Executive Secretary/ Deputy Executive Secretary level, through the Gender Policy Officer, then to the gender team members (gender focal points), to all staff.

Monitoring and reporting on the gender equality policy and plan

Implementation of the UNCCD Gender Equality Policy and Plan will be monitored and reported on annually, as part of the UNSWAP process. This will allow for any adjustments made or actions taken, under the action plan component of the UNSWAP report.

Next steps for implementation:

- Each Head of Unit to review the work programme outlined in the Annex to the policy, to identify which actions the Unit is directly responsible for
- Appointment by each Head of Unit of a gender focal point to represent the Unit on an internal Gender Team.
- Each gender focal point to assess the level of compliance of their respective Unit with the relevant actions, through discussion at a unit staff meeting, and using a template developed by the Gender Policy Officer. This assessment will identify any shortcomings and will indicate specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) actions to be undertaken to address these shortcomings.
- The assessment reports from each Unit will be consolidated by the Gender Policy Officer and the comprehensive report submitted to the Executive Secretary by end of July 2024 for review and feedback.
- Every 6 months (in June and November) these internal Unit assessment reports will be updated and sent to the Gender Policy Officer, and a meeting of the UNCCD Gender Team will be convened
- In October 2024, the Gender Policy Officer will conduct a capacity needs assessment, as the basis for developing a capacity building plan tailored to the needs of each Unit



Annex: 2024-2030 work programme for implementing the gender policy

Goal 1: Gender equality is integrated into all programmes and processes

- maintain and monitor gender parity among UNCCD staff and employees
- maintain and monitor gender parity among UNCCD staff and other employee groups (such as consultants, individual contractors, interns).
- invite the Gender Team members to join selected interview panels.
- achieve gender parity amongst UNCCD related working groups, panels and equivalent bodies set up by the UNCCD (e.g. SPI, CSO Panel, intergovernmental working groups).
- for meetings where the UNCCD controls the selection of participants, ensure that an equal number of women and men participate;
- strongly encourage and track gender parity in COP/CRIC/and CST bureaux
- encourage and track gender parity in the delegations attending the intergovernmental meetings; inviting Parties to increase representation of women in their delegations;
- document and compile gender data and best practices and make them available to Parties on the UNCCD website;
- document and share relevant data and best practices from the GM-supported projects on the UNCCD website;

Goal 2: Resources specifically for gender equality are allocated and tracked

- analyze the feasibility, and implications on the work of the secretariat and the GM, of establishing a gender marker. For a long-term solution, obtain additional resources for an additional Umoja module; for the short term, investigate options to implement via the allotment process or in payment requests
- in coordination with UNSWAP team, establish a gender marker for the UNCCD secretariat and the GM
- develop capacities for implementing the gender marker; implement the gender marker.
- set a benchmark for allocation of funds on gender-related work across UNCCD
- this is a long-term goal/process. A realistic target may be defined following initial assessment.

Goal 3: UNCCD staff has the capacity to effectively advance gender equality

- develop and implement a capacity building plan based on the findings of an updated capacity assessment; the plan should be flexible and include feedback and lessons learned from future assessment and evaluation processes
- encourage all staff to attend trainings from various sources on gender, diversity and inclusion; require staff who hold managerial positions/ supervisors to take UN training on gender, diversity and inclusion
- require managers to attend refresher training sessions on competency-based interviewing (CBI), including the unconscious bias module of the CBI training, every three to four years.
- encourage staff to attend interview practice training and career coaching sessions and United to Respect Dialogues
- all programmes and projects to integrate gender mainstreaming, and development of tools to support gender mainstreaming in their ongoing work
- allocate financial resources for regular training of staff on gender equality and women's empowerment;
- share good practices internally and continuously improve modus operandi updating our practices from the best examples within the UN and outside of the UN.



Goal 4: UNCCD organizational culture is gender-responsive

- reactivate and finalize TOR for the Gender Team members (including desired profile, selection process, percentage of time allocated to this function);
- include recognition of Gender Team member activities in their ePAS;
- provide opportunities for training courses on gender to the Gender Team members;
- update the gender architecture in writing and attach to the policy;
- establish an accountability mechanism for gender involving the ES/DES, and report annually on progress in implementing the policy.
- update staff on relevant UN policies that support wellbeing and contribute to advancing gender equality (flexible working hours, paternal leave, travel with infants, etc.)
- provide training to staff and management on prevention of sexual harassment, as well information on reporting mechanisms
- the Gender Team will conduct an annual survey of all UNCCD staff members to assess staff perceptions on gender, and share the findings internally
- the Gender Team will meet at least once a year with UNCCD senior leadership to discuss the progress of the Gender Policy implementation, and other matters related to promoting an inclusive environment