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ASPIRING FOR EQUALITY

Updated Gender Analysis of the Great Green Wall Initiative

Informing the Next Phase of Action and Impact



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY



Yasmine Fouad

Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

Across the Sahel, the Great Green Wall (GGW) is rebuilding livelihoods by restoring land. GGW projects contribute to putting food on the table, bringing water within reach, and creating jobs for young people, thereby strengthening resilient communities and growing economies. The GGW continues to carry this promise built on the fundamental connection between people and the landscapes they restore.

Women and men work this land together, in complementary roles. Their work spans productive roles in agriculture, restoration, entrepreneurship, value chains and green jobs, alongside essential responsibilities in caring for families, managing households, collecting water and preparing meals. Understanding these gender dynamics and ensuring that restoration benefits everyone is the purpose of this updated gender analysis.

In the GGW context, women are often doing both – adding value to farm produce as well as care work, yet too often without an equal voice in decision-making and leadership. Therefore, gender equality in the GGW means removing the structural barriers that limit women's opportunities, access to resources and influence, while ensuring that women and men can contribute to and benefit from restoration on equal terms.

When women participate in decisions, GGW projects' governance and accountability grow stronger. When they share in ownership, communities protect what they have restored. When women are offered more opportunities, households and communities become more resilient, and families benefit from improved health, livelihoods and incomes.

This updated gender analysis reflects important progress in women's contributions to land restoration, building cooperatives and finding a voice through the Green Platform of Women. Yet too many women continue to do the work without having equal access to land, finance or the authority to shape how the benefits of their labour are shared. Much of their contribution also remains unrecognized and unmeasured.

The journey ahead runs from participation to leadership, and across generations. Young women and men who will inherit these landscapes need skills, green jobs and a seat at the table today. I therefore call on governments, development partners and investors to place women's empowerment and youth opportunities at the heart of the Great Green Wall's Phase 2 implementation, translating our commitments into concrete actions and measurable results.

Together, let us remove gender barriers, invest in tools and technologies that reduce women's time poverty, recognize and measure their contributions, and ensure that their voices help shape the decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods.

The Great Green Wall is much more than a restoration effort.

It is a commitment to restore not only land, but opportunity, dignity and resilience – and a promise from this generation to the next.

Water, health, and nutrition have been identified as co-benefits of land restoration by the gender survey respondents. Children near community orchards in Nigeria showed a 0.5 standard deviation increase in height-for-age (Castaing and Leblois, 2023).





INTRODUCTION

Why is gender equality important for the Great Green Wall?

The Great Green Wall of Africa is a flagship effort to build long-term livelihoods and resilient communities through land restoration across the Sahel. The updated gender analysis of the GGW, comprising a field study, survey responses and a desk review, reveals how GGW projects have improved women's participation and share of benefits, but also the critical areas of intervention and redesign for full gender equity across the region.

Launched by the African Union (AU) in 2007, the GGW stretches 8,000 km across 11 countries, with the ambitious target of restoring 100 million hectares of degraded land, sequestering 250 million tonnes of carbon, and creating 10 million green jobs by 2030. Almost two decades on, its project portfolio is growing, but so is the pressure from land degradation, life-threatening drought, food insecurity and youth unemployment.

These pressures act as force multipliers and affect women disproportionately. For example, women are the backbone of Sahelian society, serving as primary caregivers who also do much of the land restoration work. Yet men control most of the land assets, technology and finance that turn restoration work into results.

With the compounding effects of hunger and drought in this region, women's time is spent on survival work like fetching water and caring for children and the elderly, leaving them out of impactful activities such as training, leadership and decision-making. Therefore, gender equality in the GGW context translates as removing the barriers that put women at a socio-economic disadvantage, rather than excluding men altogether.

The GGW Accelerator, created in 2021 after the One Planet Summit in Paris, has improved coordination and monitoring of GGW projects, mobilized technical and financial support, and helped build a results framework with gender indicators recording women-led initiatives and gender balance in decision-making bodies. Yet only two of the 11 countries report on these indicators, leaving women's contributions and gains unrecorded.

This updated gender analysis, commissioned by the UNCCD Global Mechanism with support from the Austrian Development Cooperation, helps close that gap by building upon the analysis from Phase 1 (2020–2024) to strengthen GGW implementation.

The findings and recommendations of this analysis will inform the Phase 2 implementation of GGW projects, offering a chance to turn the GGW's gender commitments into concrete design choices, implementation arrangements and measurable results. This report shows where the gaps lie and recommends how to close them, so the GGW can contribute fully to the UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 of achieving gender equality by empowering all women and girls.

How to read this report



Six findings, pages 12–17 on the reasons for gender imbalance in Phase 1



Five pathways, pages 20–24 to gender equity in Phase 2 implementation

Gender balance ensures long-term land restoration through:

1. Stronger governance

Diverse leadership improves oversight, accountability and alignment with community needs. Without balanced representation from village committees to regional boards, women's priorities on land restoration, livelihoods and resource management are under-represented in the designs and negotiated outcomes.

2. Community ownership

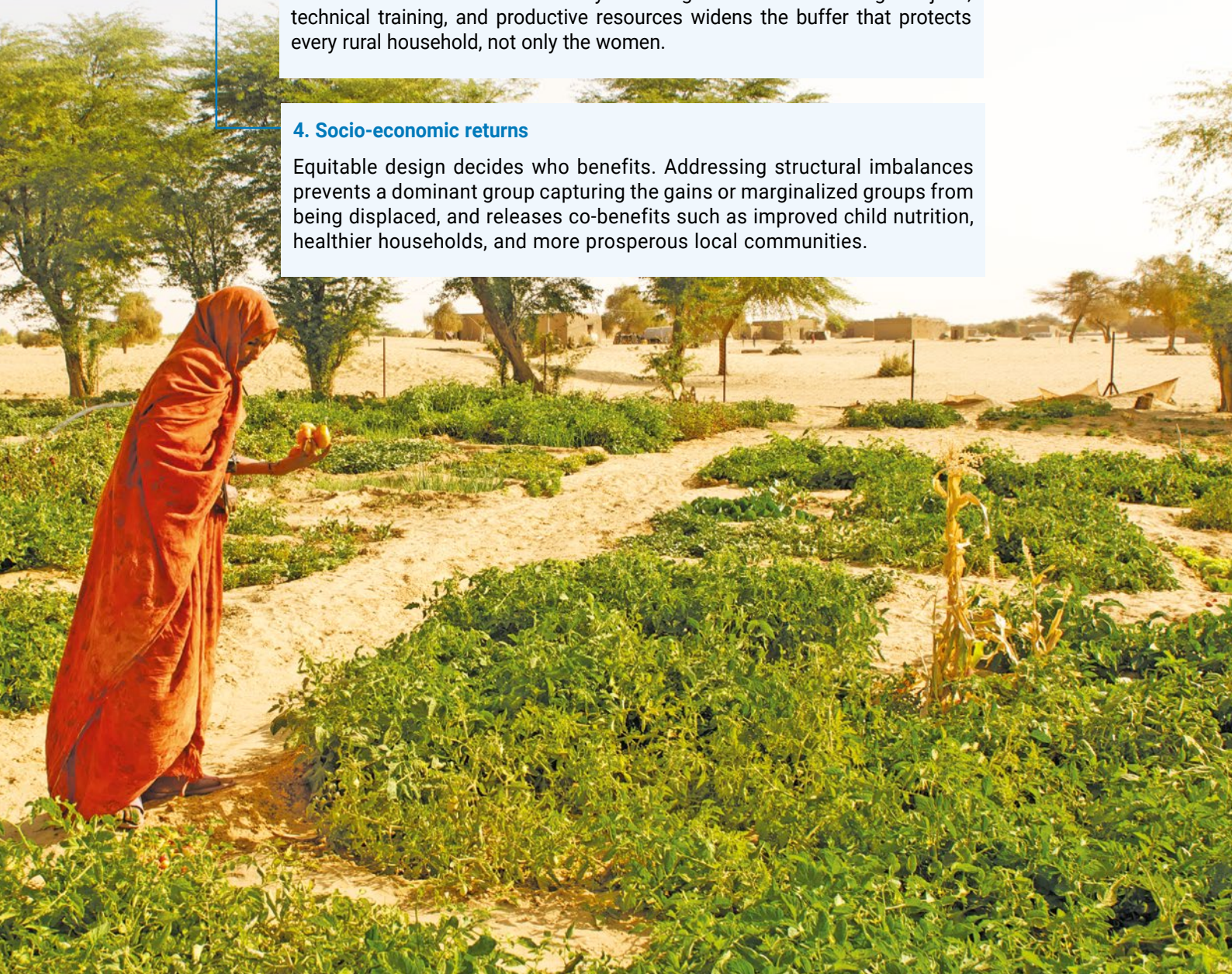
Land restoration lasts only when communities own the projects. Women hold rural Sahelian households together, doing much of the heavy lifting in daily agricultural and restoration work. Pairing restoration with women-led value addition (for example nurseries, community gardens, agroforestry processing units) converts participation into ownership and drives long-term ecological gains.

3. Resilience to climate shocks

Desertification, land degradation and drought are not experienced equally. Pre-existing inequalities compound into gender vulnerability, so the same shock affects women more harshly. Securing women's access to green jobs, technical training, and productive resources widens the buffer that protects every rural household, not only the women.

4. Socio-economic returns

Equitable design decides who benefits. Addressing structural imbalances prevents a dominant group capturing the gains or marginalized groups from being displaced, and releases co-benefits such as improved child nutrition, healthier households, and more prosperous local communities.





How are patterns identified?

Through a qualitative-led, mixed-methods design, this updated gender analysis integrates primary and secondary data into a framework that allows researchers to triangulate findings across diverse settings, ensuring practical results for decision-makers, and maintaining feasibility under the resource constraints of a multi-country study.

Three complementary evidence streams

Structured desk review

Generates the hypotheses

To build the updated gender analysis, researchers first mapped the gender policy, institutional and labour-market contexts from the GGW materials, UN reports, regional frameworks, national policies and project documents. Then, they established definitions, identified existing tools, and surfaced the gaps to be tested by the other two data sources.

Remote questionnaire

Tests how widely they resonate

56	23	13
questions	participants	countries

Responses from this questionnaire captured stakeholder perceptions across geographies, at the local, national and transboundary levels. Survey responses were recorded in both English and French.

Key informant interviews

Explain the patterns

The desk review and questionnaire were followed by targeted discussions explaining the emerging patterns. For example, what enables or blocks women's access to green jobs, which delivery mechanisms work in practice, and which institutional shifts are needed.

About the intersectional framework

This gender analysis of the GGW examines how gender overlaps with other dimensions of vulnerability and opportunity such as age, geography, disability and mobility. Because data collection was anonymous, this analysis is based on aggregated patterns and non-identifying, self-reported characteristics rather than individual profiling.

Ethics and quality assurance

Informed consent and strict anonymity were ensured throughout the data collection process to protect respondents who shared sensitive operational and local insights. Quality was maintained through standardized guides, systematic notetaking and coding, and internal review of emerging findings for coherence and plausibility.

Three constraints that shape how the findings should be read

1

field visit conducted

Data was gathered from a single farm visit in Djibouti. Without wider field access, on-the-ground dynamics could not be independently verified.

23

total respondents

Respondents were selected purposively to include diverse profiles, so the sample may lean towards more engaged or connected stakeholders. With 23 respondents from 13 countries, the results are indicative, not statistically representative.

74%

survey respondents were women

This reflects the study's focus on women's roles and barriers and strengthens the representation of their experiences. It does not show that women of every age, location, livelihood or ability are equally represented.

The findings of this updated gender analysis identify patterns that recur across the desk review, survey and interviews, not detailed metrics of the sum of individual GGW projects. Phase 2 project data, disaggregated by sex and age, is needed to confirm these patterns.



Six key findings. One pattern emerges

The Great Green Wall is restoring land and livelihoods across the Sahel, but women, who significantly contribute to land restoration efforts, do not own the land or hold power to decide. Six findings from the updated gender analysis show why and how missing gender data feeds this pattern of gender imbalance.

The Great Green Wall of Africa is delivering shared prosperity across the Sahel, with a large portfolio of restoration projects generating real benefits measured in terms of economic growth, nutrition and health, water security, and greater access to digital technologies.

However, these positive outcomes exist amid the reality of persistent political instability and high unemployment rates that compound inherent gender inequalities in the region. The Phase 1 gender analysis identifies the root causes of gender inequality in the 11 countries, and the common thread points to a lack of reporting data that can shape potential mitigation strategies.

Read separately, each of the six findings appears to be a separate problem, but together they offer nuance and insight into what holds GGW communities back on gender equality. The six findings compound one another to form a loop where poverty, hunger and socio-economic instability keep women engaged in care work and locked out of ownership and leadership roles.

Accountability gaps are likely to have several causes. Male-dominated governance may be one, if it means gender data receives low priority. Optional reporting requirements, limited technical capacity, staffing and resources may also play a part. Whatever the cause, the lack of data, particularly on women's access to technology and the co-benefits they generate from land restoration, makes gender imbalance harder to see and correct, both on the ground and at the decision-making table.

This loop of findings locks at the accountability stage.

Points to ponder

Women contribute more.
Most survey respondents describe land restoration as shared work, and processing, marketing and household food security as women's work.

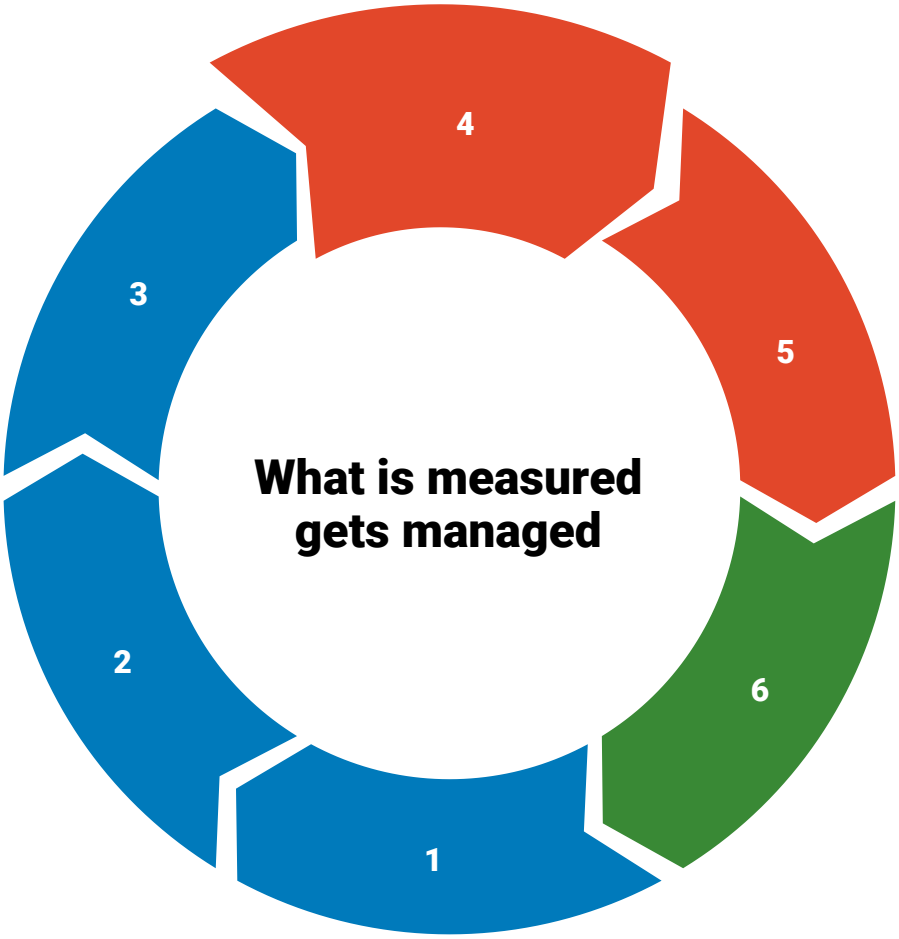
Men own land assets and make decisions.
The gender survey respondents attribute land rights to men. Only one of the 11 national GGW agencies is headed by a woman.

Addressing the lack of reporting data is a key priority.
To achieve gender balance in Phase 2, gathering gender relevant data from GGW projects is crucial. Today, only two of 11 countries report against the core gender indicators.

3 · Women absent in governance & leadership
Only one of the 11 national GGW agencies is headed by a woman. Leadership may be one reason gender data gets low priority, alongside reporting rules, capacity and resources.

4 · Lack of gender accountability
Only two of the 11 countries report on the core gender indicators such as hectares restored, sex-disaggregated beneficiary data, and jobs created for women. As a result, it is not possible to credibly assess whether implementation is translating into gender-responsive outcomes.

5 · Technology is largely inaccessible to women
The cost, design and maintenance of technology-based agricultural tools can work against women, and no GGW-wide data tracks technology adoption by sex.



2 · Participation and ownership
About 86 per cent of survey respondents classify land restoration as shared work, but land rights are attributed 100 per cent to men.

1 · Enabling environment
Six of the 11 GGW countries are conflict-affected, with food insecurity as high as 74.8 per cent, resulting in women's time poverty due to care burdens.

6 · Lack of reporting on co-benefits
Women's economic empowerment strengthens most where restoration is paired with practical value chain entry points such as agroforestry, community gardens, and food processing units. But these co-benefits are largely under-tracked across the portfolio.

Structural inequality Evidence gap Unrecorded gains



1 Enabling environment for gender inequality

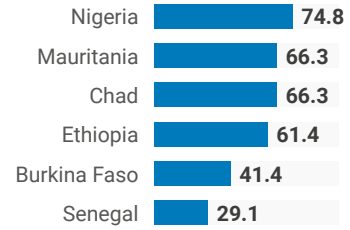
All 11 countries face overlapping development, fragility and climate risks. When water, food and jobs are scarce, women and girls are forced to spend extra hours on household work such as fetching water, securing food, and caring for children and the elderly.

It is a universally observed phenomenon that poor human development indicators and gender inequality reinforce each other. In the GGW countries, this phenomenon is exacerbated by conflict, which further disrupts incomes, health care, education and basic services, resulting in water, food and energy scarcity. These shortfalls are filled by women and girls' unpaid work: fetching water and fuel, securing food and caring for vulnerable family members. This leaves them with less time for school, paid work, training or community engagement.

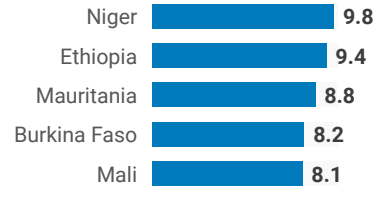
Early pregnancy further reduces girls' schooling, while unequal access to land, finance and leadership opportunities limit women's financial independence and social influence. When drought, hunger, or conflict strike, these inequalities leave women more exposed, holding back entire households and communities.

Hunger and drought are widespread

Moderate or severe food insecurity, %



Drought exposure, 0–10



Source: Food Systems Dashboard (FAO FIES); INFORM Risk Index, mid-2025

Sudan: Project implementation at breaking point

The conflict that began in April 2023 has become the world's largest displacement crisis with 11.6 million people internally displaced by the end of 2024, and more than 25 million – over half the population – facing acute food insecurity. Around one million refugees and returnees have crossed into eastern Chad.

The near-total collapse of infrastructure has constrained or halted GGW projects implementation, while rising reports of sexual exploitation, violence and abuse restrict women's mobility and safety.

6 of 11
countries classified as conflict-affected (World Bank, FY2025)

3×
more unpaid care and domestic work done by women and girls than by men

54.17%
youth unemployment in Djibouti, a clear outlier among GGW countries (ILOSTAT)

2 Full participation, limited ownership

Land restoration work is shared by both women and men, but value addition to agricultural produce is viewed as women's work only. Men continue to own the land and have the final say in family and community decisions. These trends indicate that gains from the GGW projects are real and tangible, but often project-enabled rather than embedded in local norms or governance.

Women work the land, tend nurseries, and process and sell agricultural produce, on top of unpaid care work. But working the land is not the same as owning it. Access to land and secure tenure is one of the barriers cited by survey respondents. Wherever land rights were mentioned, respondents attributed them to men, and men hold most authority over land-use decisions. Without secure tenure, women struggle to use land as collateral for credit. And without control over what they earn, their labour rarely turns into income, assets or influence.

The Amakene women's cooperative in Burkina Faso shows what changes when women gain skills and get included in decision-making. Its members once carried heavy buckets of fertilizer to their fields on their heads. Within a year of training in cooperative management, they were processing local crops into enriched flour, improving nutrition and earning independent incomes.

The cooperative's leader, Florence Banou, says this newfound recognition has far-reaching effects in terms of inspiring the next generation of girls. Gains like these are real, but they came through GGW projects. For them to last, women also need secure land rights and a formal voice in local decisions.

> **"For the first time, we were not just participants in a project; we were decision makers shaping our own future.**



Florence Banou
Leader of the Amakene women's cooperative, Burkina Faso

Top barriers to women's fuller participation, share of mentions

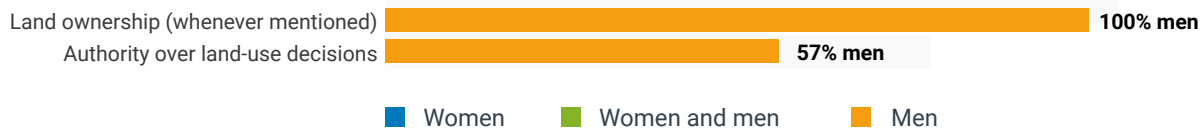
35%	30%	22%	13%
land access and tenure	finance	social, cultural and religious norms	time burdens

Shared work, unshared control

WHO DOES THE WORK



WHO HOLDS CONTROL





3 Women absent in governance and leadership

The Great Green Wall is restoring land and livelihoods across Africa's Sahel, but the people steering it are mostly men. Women, who contribute more to restoration work and whose families depend on its results, are largely missing from the boards, committees and councils where its future is being decided.

Every restoration project begins with decisions: which land to restore, what to plant, who is trained, who is paid and how success is measured. Across the GGW, these choices are made by ministers, national agencies and local committees, with women rarely part of these conversations leading to the decisions.

At the central level, GGW is governed by the Panafrican Agency of the Great Green Wall (PAGGW), while each of the 11 countries has a National Coalition with planned gender activities, but funding and links to real decisions and budgets are uneven. Within these coalitions, the National Gender Focal Points exist in several countries, but their structures and mandates differ considerably, leading to unevenness in gender data reporting.

Women bring their own knowledge of the land, and so they know which changes would be most impactful on the ground. Without women's lived experience included in decision-making, GGW projects risk losing long-term, self-sustaining impact on the local economies.

1 of 11
National GGW agencies is headed by a woman, in Sudan



2 of 30
Land Degradation Neutrality country profiles worldwide reference women

95.8%
of National Drought Plans include gender-related keywords

Leadership also shapes what is counted and where resources are allocated. When gender is missing from institutions' rules and reporting, projects rarely track how women participate or benefit. Their contribution stays invisible, and what is invisible is hard to plan for, fund or scale.

For the GGW's future, gender balance is about effectiveness, not just fairness. Diverse leadership improves oversight and aligns decisions with community needs, and restoration lasts longer where local communities own it. Clear rules for representation and properly funded women's platforms could make women's leadership the norm.



4 Lack of gender accountability

The Great Green Wall keeps count of the land restored, carbon sequestered, and jobs created, but rarely records the gender of beneficiaries and participants. Without this key data point, the GGW lacks the evidence to decide whether projects are working for women or hold anyone to account when it falls short.

Accountability means being able to show what a programme promised, what it delivered and for whom. With support from the GGW Accelerator, the Harmonized Results Management Framework (HRMF) serves as a shared system for reporting project results, including women's participation and leadership.

But few countries use this tool for reporting, so the record stays largely blank where women should appear. This matters because gender commitments without evidence remain promises. If no one records whether women are trained, hired or consulted, programmes lack the visibility of who is being left out, and cannot course correct or demonstrate which approaches deserve to grow. Women's contribution to restoration stays invisible, and so do the barriers holding them back.

Accountability also protects participants. Safe, confidential ways to report abuse, and regular checks on whether projects add to women's daily workload, help ensure that land restoration does no harm to the women and families it is meant to serve.

For the future of the GGW, the stakes are high. Governments and donors need evidence to keep investing, and women need proof that their work counts. The good news is that the tools already exist. Making gender reporting a requirement rather than an option would turn good intentions into results that can be measured, funded and built upon.

The indicators already exist

The GGW Harmonized Results Management Framework (HRMF) already defines gender indicators:

- **4.2.2** income-generating activities created for youth and women
- **4.3.1** the proportion of women-led initiatives supported through GGW projects
- **4.3.2** gender balance in decision-making bodies at the community and institutional levels

The UNCCD master dataset holds totals, but not the sex and age breakdowns or consistent job definitions needed to show who benefits.

2 of 11

countries report against the core gender indicators

4

key gender fields left largely unreported in the 2024 dashboard extract



5 Technology is largely inaccessible to women

Solar-powered pumps, better irrigation and simple harvest processing machines have the potential to reduce women's farm labour and raise incomes across the GGW. Yet these tools rarely reach women on equal terms. Without secure land, credit or the right training, the women who do much of the restoration work are often left behind.

In the Great Green Wall, technology is not gender neutral. Its cost, the labour it demands, how safe it is to use and who maintains it all decide whether a tool eases women's work or adds to it, alongside unequal access to land, credit and training. No GGW-wide data tracks technology adoption by sex. As a proxy for national capacity, this analysis counted the sustainable land management (SLM) practices each country has documented in the Global SLM Database of the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT). The counts ranged from none in Djibouti and Nigeria to 72 in Ethiopia. They reflect implementation capacity, partner presence and documentation systems, not how many people, or how many women, use these technologies.

Barriers to women's use of technology

What holds women back	Potential solutions
Weaker asset base	Labour-saving technology bundled with maintenance and local technicians
Credit tied to insecure land tenure	Secure land rights and financing mechanisms for women
Exclusion from skill extension and training	Extension services that reach women; training in fields they choose
Poor access to climate information	Information and early warnings that reach women

Source: UNCCD (2022)

Even when women receive training and access to new equipment, several challenges persist. For example, a solar pump or cooling facility that needs frequent maintenance does not necessarily reduce women's labour. Technology is an asset only when it is designed with women, around the time and labour they have, and comes with local maintenance.

When technology is harnessed mindfully, the benefits accrue to all. Solar-powered pumps and drip irrigation reduce the time women spend on fetching water over long distances. Processing equipment and cold storage turn harvests into marketable products. Reliable energy, above all, frees women's time for training and business.

This matters for the future of the Great Green Wall. Restoring land on the scale it aims for depends on women's access and ability to deploy technology for the common good.

6 Lack of reporting on co-benefits

The benefits of land restoration are numerous. Restoration recharges groundwater levels, improves child health and nutrition outcomes, and expands women's incomes. However, these co-benefits are rarely recorded, let alone gender-disaggregated, so their value remains largely invisible and unaccounted for.

Co-benefits are gains that come with land restoration but are not its main aim: water sources replenished, gardens and orchards that feed families through the dry season, and nurseries and small businesses that create new income streams. The updated gender analysis of the GGW highlights that women's economic empowerment strengthens most when land restoration is paired with practical value chain entry points, such as seedling production, agroforestry products, community gardens, and processing.

In Chad, Adouia Brema once believed electricity was a man's job, until she trained to install, maintain and repair solar panels. With women and girls from her village, she started a small business offering solar panel installation services. Now she hopes her sisters and other women of the village also follow her example.

Yet gains like these are rarely recorded. Monitoring focuses mostly on the land itself, seldom recording gender-disaggregated co-benefits. What is not recorded cannot be built on: programmes cannot see which approaches work best for women, or who is being left behind.

For the future of the GGW, good reporting is the bridge from pilot projects to national policy. Clear evidence of what women gain persuades governments and donors to invest and helps successful models amplify. Counting these benefits would show the Great Green Wall's full value to the Sahelian ecosystem and socio-economic fabric.

> **"If women of my village learn new skills, they will become capable of working and earning independently.**



Adouia Brema, Chad

Shea from Burkina Faso to the world

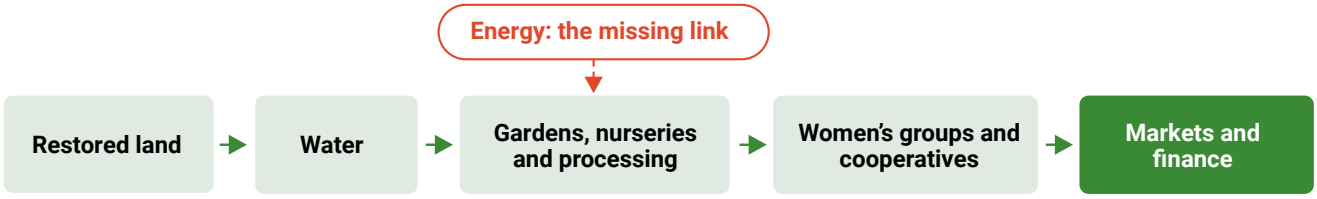
The Global Shea Alliance – a non-profit platform whose members include women's groups alongside companies and brands – organizes producers, sets quality standards, and builds market linkages. The lesson for gender equity in the GGW is to focus on one or two restoration-linked value chains per country that combine aggregation, standards, buyer relationships and governance that protects women producers' benefits.

95%
of respondents name water as the biggest gain of GGW projects

2,553
women in five cooperatives in Burkina Faso and Mali restored 160 hectares in a Phase 1 pilot

25
integrated farms in Chad, each linked to a women's cooperative

From restored land to women's income





Five pathways to gender balance for land restoration

The findings from the updated gender analysis point to recommendations that transition Phase 2 implementation from inviting women's participation to eliminating systemic barriers that hold them back. The five pathways, built like an arch, begin by establishing women's leadership and end at delivering on-ground results, with mandatory gender reporting in the centre as the keystone to change.

In Phase 2, the Great Green Wall can turn its gender commitments into results on the ground. The five recommendations from the updated gender analysis outline the pathways to remove the barriers that keep women out of land ownership and leadership and make gender data the foundation of decision-making and resource allocation.

If there is one common thread running through the key findings of the first-phase gender analysis, it is this: women significantly contribute to land restoration efforts across the Great Green Wall, yet they rarely own the land, sit at decision-making tables, or appear in the data dashboards. With Phase 2 under implementation, the updated gender analysis sets out five recommendations, framed as transformative pathways with the aim to turn gender commitments into concrete design choices, implementation arrangements and measurable results.

The recommendations start from one shift: from "inviting women" to "removing barriers". Participation is meaningful only when time poverty, limited mobility, unpaid care work and exclusion from skills training are addressed. Every participation target should be matched by a leadership target, so that women and youth do not simply attend GGW meetings and committees, but make decisions, shape priorities and influence how resources are allocated.

The five pathways work like an archway or entry point to real, measurable change, each bearing weight for the others. The first two shape who decides: participation that grows into leadership, and governance rules that make women's representation the norm. The last two shape what is delivered: scaled-up programmes that benefit women without adding to their workload, and the skills and knowledge to deliver long-term, self-sustaining impact on local economies.

The key to structural integrity of these pathways is accountability. Today, only two of the 11 GGW countries report against the core gender indicators. Mandatory reporting, with restored hectares, sex-disaggregated beneficiary data, jobs and leadership roles recorded in the GGW dashboards, would show whether the initiative is working for women and hold the other four pathways in place.

With that evidence, Phase 2 decisions on resource allocation, leadership, training and capacity building can be guided by what women contribute and gain. As the report concludes, putting women's empowerment at the centre, investing in water and energy, and fostering collective action through value chains can deliver lasting benefits for both people and the environment.

Key Priorities

Phase 2 should remove barriers, not just invite women.

Activities should fit around women's time, mobility and care work, and every participation target should come with a leadership target.

Gender commitments should become enforceable rules.

The report recommends a gender policy adopted by the Council of Ministers, at least 40–50 per cent women on every GGW board and committee, and mandatory gender reporting in all 11 countries.

Scaling up should not add to women's workload.

Water, energy and value chain investments should follow the 'no additional burden' principle and build on group models that already work for women.

3 · Make gender reporting mandatory

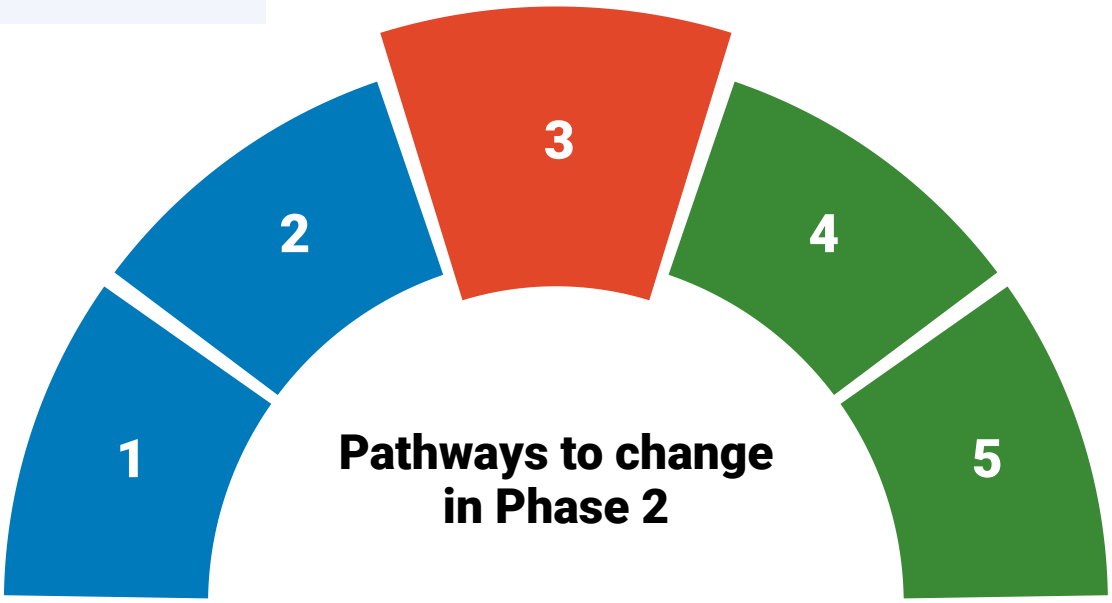
Record restored hectares, beneficiaries by sex, jobs and leadership roles in the GGW dashboards. Enforce zero tolerance of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, with confidential grievance channels.

2 · Build women's representation into governance

The report recommends a gender policy adopted by the Council of Ministers, with at least 40–50 per cent women and one senior woman leader on every board and committee. Resource the Green Platform of Women, with a reporting line to the Council, and advocate for women's secure land tenure.

4 · Scale up without adding to women's workload

Follow the 'no additional burden' principle. Prioritize water and energy, and bundle technology such as solar pumps with maintenance and local technicians, so that additional burdens do not fall on women.



1 · Move women from participation to leadership

Remove time and mobility barriers: bring water closer to homes, and provide labour-saving tools, childcare and transport where women want them. Match every participation target with a leadership target.

5 · Invest in gender skills at all levels

Capacity strengthening is a core enabling condition for turning commitments into results. Train senior managers in gender-responsive budgeting, and monitoring teams to track time use, land access and control over benefits. Write gender competencies into job descriptions, and mentor women leaders at the local and national levels.

Decision-making Data reporting Delivering results



1 Move women from participation to leadership

Participation is meaningful only when time poverty, mobility limits, unpaid care and exclusion from skills pipelines are addressed. Women and youth should act as trailblazers and co-leaders, shaping priorities, solutions and resource allocation.

FROM
Being allowed to take part

TO
Chairing GGW spaces, shaping priorities and resource allocation

Remove time and mobility barriers

- Set the locations and schedules of activities, trainings and meetings with women, avoiding peak care hours.
- Bring water closer to homes, supply labour-saving tools, and provide community childcare and transport where women and girls want them.
- Offer tailored training and mentorship in fields women choose; consult regularly and track participation and outcomes.

Include youth

- Add youth targets to every project: numbers trained, contracted and employed, by sex.
- Take specific measures where youth unemployment is very high, as in Djibouti.
- Use short apprenticeships linked to GGW work — nurseries, restoration, water systems, processing, digital services — and involve youth in monitoring and technology.

Design for inclusion

- Build feasible access pathways for women with disabilities and other vulnerable groups, noted as a data gap.
- Create inclusive public spaces — small parks and community gardens where people can rest, walk and sit safely.

The evidence behind this pathway

86%
of respondents say restoration is shared work

100%
of mentions of land rights attribute them to men

38.9%
still describe women as excluded or dependent on their husband's agreement



2 Build women's representation into governance

Diverse leadership improves oversight, accountability and alignment with community needs. Gender rules, transparent reporting and formal channels linking women's groups to decision spaces are central to transforming GGW governance.

FROM
One of 11 national agencies headed by a woman

TO
At least 40–50 per cent women, and one senior woman, on every board and committee

Adopt a gender policy	• An internal gender policy adopted by the Council of Ministers, with minimum standards for participation and representation in all GGW bodies. • At least 40–50 per cent women on all boards and committees, and at least one senior woman as director, chair, vice-chair, treasurer or secretary. • Publish the composition of leadership and committees every year.
Amplify women's voices	• Dedicated resources, a regional coordinator and regular reporting to the Council of Ministers for the Green Platform of Women. • Harmonized mandates, workplans and reporting channels for gender focal points in all 11 countries. • Resourced gender plans for national coalitions, and harmonized AU-led and Panafrican GGW platforms.
Secure women's land tenure	• Use the Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) and AU land policy frameworks to push for equal inheritance, joint co-ownership and women in land administration. • Close the gap between law and practice: accessible documentation, affordable registration, effective local dispute resolution. • Prevent land grabbing with transparent, community-validated land agreements that include women.
Raise women's influence in global spaces	• Set targets for women in national UNCCD delegations, with pre-briefings and speaking roles. • Ensure the Green Platform of Women takes part in UNCCD COPs.



3 Make gender reporting mandatory

Without standard metrics on restored hectares, beneficiaries by sex, jobs, leadership, time burdens and land access, gender commitments stay aspirational. Accountability has to sit at the core of project design and delivery.

FROM
Two of 11 countries report on the core gender indicators

TO
Mandatory reporting in all 11 countries

Report against the gender indicators	• Make reporting against the core gender indicators mandatory. • Code all gender-relevant outcomes in the GGW results dashboards: restored hectares, beneficiaries by sex, jobs and leadership. • Train countries that struggle to report, and showcase 'champion countries'.
Strengthen risk management and grievance systems	• Enforce zero tolerance of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in every country. • Provide accessible, confidential and impartial grievance channels, with protection against retaliation and respect for participants' privacy.
Monitor what matters to women	• Track women's time burdens before and after interventions. • Monitor land access and control of benefits: decision-making authority, earnings and workload.
Operationalize every platform	• Clear mandates, resourced secretariats and regular reporting lines, including to the Council of Ministers — above all for the Green Platform of Women.

Green Platform of Women

This was created to recognize and mobilize women's contributions to the Great Green Wall and amplify their collective voice. Launched regionally in Bamako, Mali, in April 2024, it has national platforms in six countries, at different stages. It signals growing recognition of women's role, and USD 150,000 has been proposed for it in the provisional 2026 budget. But until it has a clear mandate, stable funding and formal links to decision-making, its ability to shape priorities and budgets remains constrained. Properly resourced and reporting to the Council of Ministers, it could turn women's voice into real influence.
The six countries with national platforms are Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, Chad, Mauritania and Djibouti.



4 Scale up without adding to women's workload

Scaling is a chance to transform structural constraints, not deepen them: labour-saving technology, equitable land access, inclusive finance and delivery models that meet women where they are.

BEFORE SCALING, ASK

- **Does it add to women's unpaid work?**
- **Who maintains it?**
- **Who controls the benefits?**

Harness water and energy

- Invest in water systems and energy that cut time burdens and unlock dry-season production: gardens, nurseries, small processing.
- Prioritize labour-saving technology — solar pumps, small irrigation, processing equipment, cold storage — bundled with maintenance, spare parts and local technicians.
- In fragile and conflict-affected contexts, especially Sudan, favour low-infrastructure, community-based and conflict-sensitive approaches.

Build women's enterprise through collective action

- Expand 'restoration + enterprise + groups' models, building on the 2,553 women who restored 160 hectares in Burkina Faso and Mali.
- Reserve a share of paid roles and contracts for women and women-led groups.
- Plan exits for cooperatives. As they mature, connect cooperatives with large private buyers and banks.

Document the benefits

- Capture impacts on livelihoods, nutrition, health and empowerment systematically, including case studies.
- Record social benefits for vulnerable groups, such as parks and spaces for wellbeing.



5 Invest in gender skills at all levels

Gaps in gender-responsive budgeting, outcome monitoring and mainstreaming limit the effect of policies and dilute accountability. Each role needs tailored skills, backed by knowledge management for learning, adaptation and scale.

FROM	TO
One-off training	**Gender competencies built into every role**

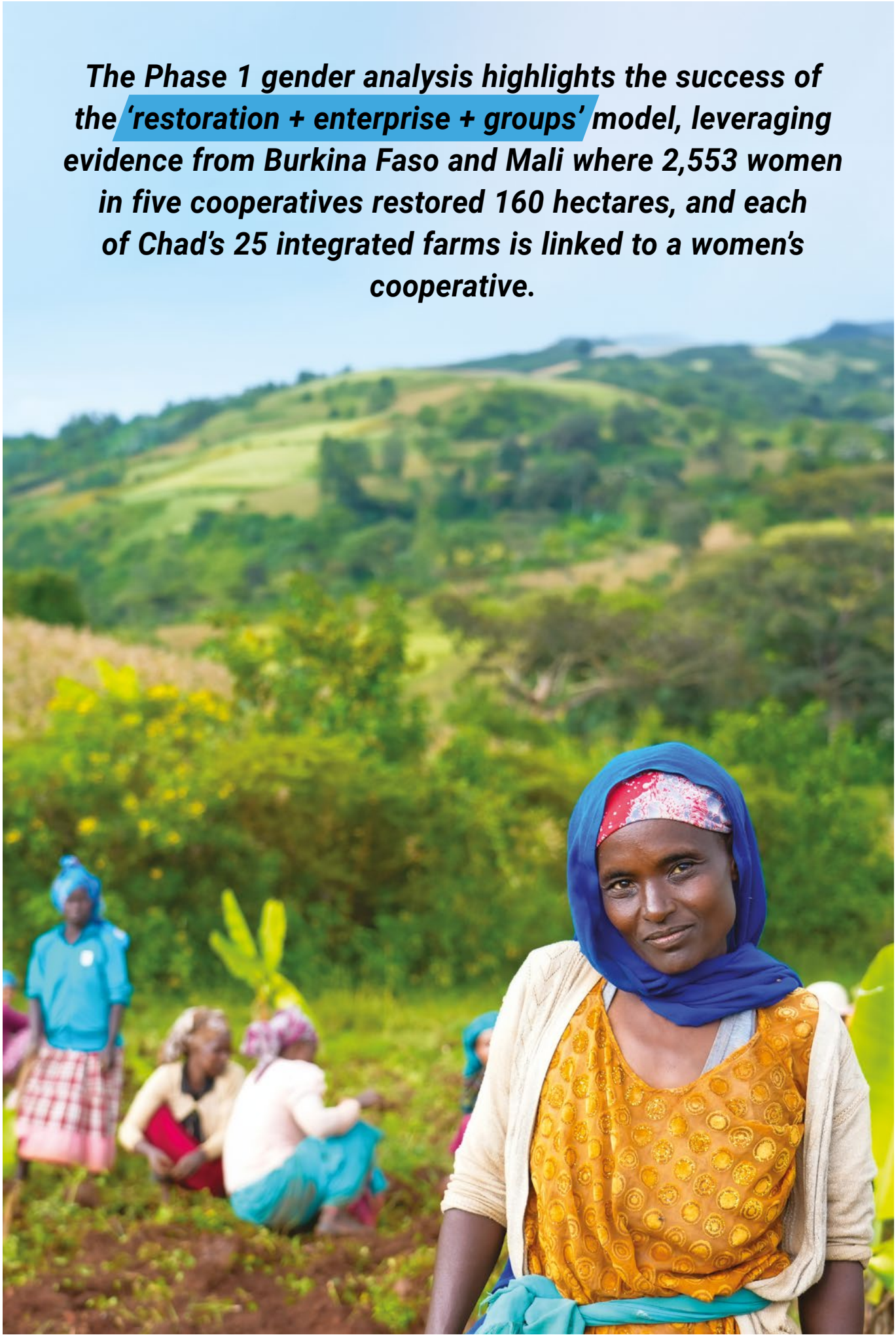
Senior leadership and directors	• Train senior managers and directors in gender-responsive budgeting, so gender priorities shape planning, budgets and resource allocation. • Link gender allocations to measurable results and accountability requirements.
Monitoring, evaluation and learning teams	• Build skills to track time use, leadership, land access, livelihoods and control over benefits. • Record relevant, feasible gender indicators aligned with the HRMF and the GGW Observatory.
Programme officers	• Facilitate practical, role-specific training on integrating gender into design, implementation, risk management and supervision. • Write gender competencies into job descriptions, performance assessments and operational guidance.
Women leaders, local and national	• Conduct structured training, coaching and mentorship for women in GGW governance, implementation, cooperatives and platforms.

"I come from a large family of modest means. My parents realized that education is the best gift for their children. At Compagnie Ivoirienne de Production d'Électricité (CIPREL), I am responsible for scheduling new power projects. I have acquired new skills in this role and benefited from local and international training. My parents are proud of me, and this role allows me to plan my future.

— Zaccaron Rahamatou, first female engineer in Ivory Coast



The Phase 1 gender analysis highlights the success of the 'restoration + enterprise + groups' model, leveraging evidence from Burkina Faso and Mali where 2,553 women in five cooperatives restored 160 hectares, and each of Chad's 25 integrated farms is linked to a women's cooperative.



CONCLUSION

Six findings, five pathways

One common mission

The latest gender analysis of the Great Green Wall provides a nuanced perspective of the complex ways in which care work and porous reporting can keep women out of governance structures and offers data-driven pathways to redesign implementation and delivery in Phase 2. Here's why this matters for the future of the GGW in Africa and land restoration across the world.



This is a gender report that listens before it prescribes. Through a qualitative-led, mixed-methods study, this report brings together field interviews, survey results, and a structured desk review by stakeholders across the region. The report's intersectional lens keeps age, location and vulnerabilities in view before arriving at the diagnosis.

The result is six important lessons from Phase 1. Women are central to restoration and household wellbeing, but their influence in formal decision-making remains limited. Phase 2 can respond through five transformative pathways: move women from participation into leadership; institutionalize gender-responsive governance and strengthen women's land rights; make accountability measurable through stronger indicators, reporting and grievance mechanisms; scale restoration alongside water, energy, labour-saving technologies and inclusive value chains; and invest in the skills and knowledge systems needed to sustain gender-responsive delivery.

The opportunity is therefore bigger than improving participation. It is about redesigning delivery so women can shape priorities, access resources, build enterprises, influence decisions and benefit from the landscapes they help restore. The report offers encouraging proof: women-led cooperatives, integrated farms and restoration-linked enterprises demonstrate that environmental recovery and economic empowerment can reinforce one another.

The common mission is simple: restore land, strengthen resilience and ensure that no one is left behind. Phase 2 can turn evidence into institutional change for lasting, equitable impact across the Great Green Wall.

> **"In the course of history, there comes a time when humanity is called to shift to a new level of consciousness, to reach a higher moral ground. A time when we must shed our fear and give hope to each other. That time is now.**
>
> — Wangari Maathai

By centering women's empowerment, prioritizing investments in water and energy, and fostering collective action through value chains, the initiative can deliver far-reaching benefits for both people and the environment. Continued commitment to documenting impact and scaling successful models will ensure that the GGW not only restores landscapes but also uplifts communities, especially the most vulnerable, laying the foundation for a resilient, equitable land restoration model that can inspire change across the world.

To mitigate under-representation of women in the GGW leadership and governance structures, the Green Platform of Women was launched regionally in April 2024 with the operational mandate centred on four core functions: women's representation, coordination, knowledge sharing, and advocacy.



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United Nations
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Desertification

GREAT GREEN WALL

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