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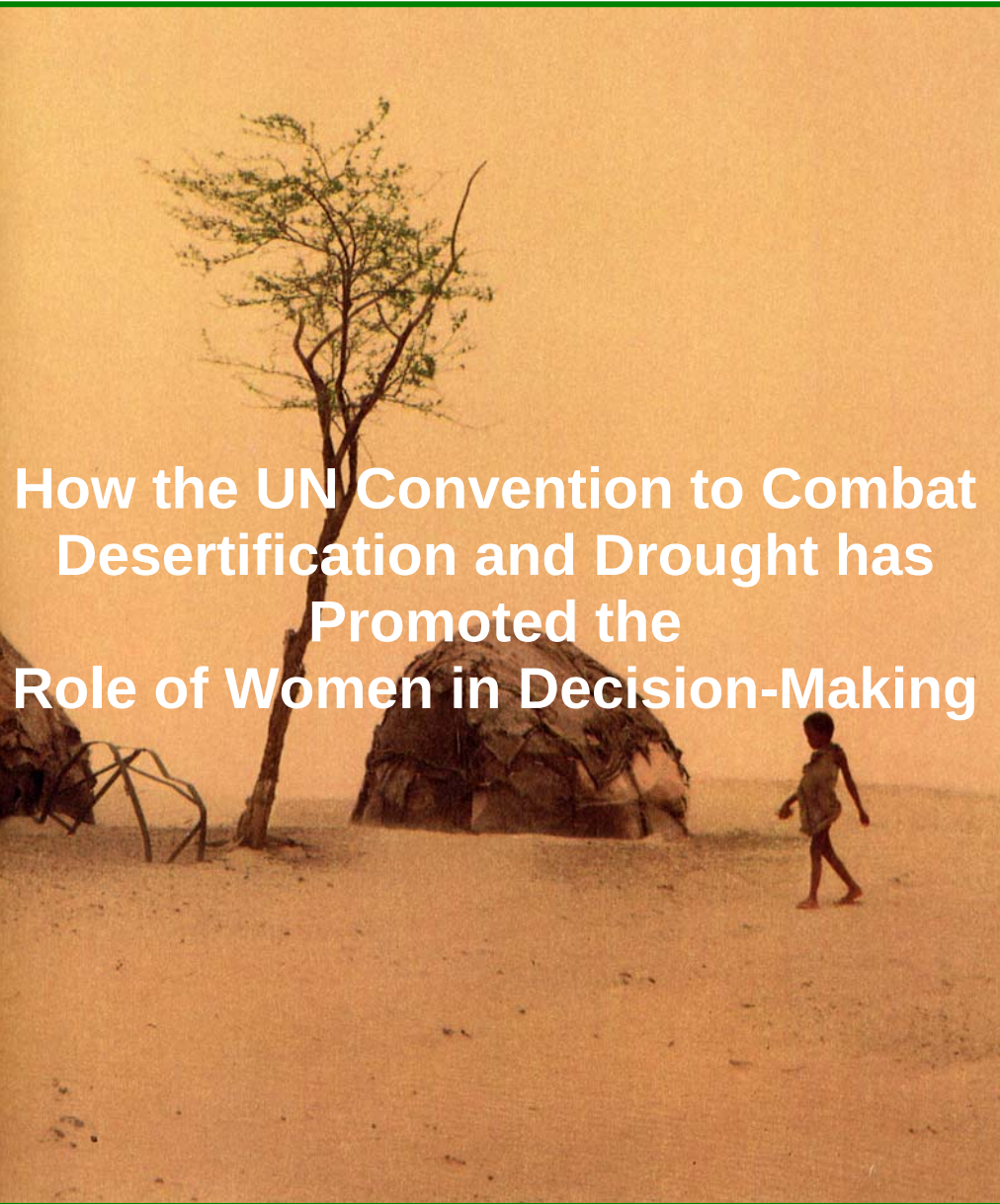
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Promoting Equality between Men and Women
through Multilateral Environmental Agreements



Prepared for IUCN by
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May 18, 2004

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Does desertification impact differently upon women than upon men? Would strategies to combat desertification and mitigate the impact of drought look differently if developed by women than if developed by men alone? Or would strategies developed by men and women together be more effective than strategies developed by men only?

The Inter-Governmental Negotiating Committee (INCD) that prepared the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought (UNCCD) in the early 90s established that to combat desertification effectively both women and men should participate fully in the preparation and implementation of dryland development activities. The INCD also recognized that participation does not materialize just by a decision but requires special support activities that will promote women's opportunities for participating including awareness raising, training and capacity building, and education.

The commitment to promote equality between men and women has definitely formed an important element in many UNCCD related activities at the local, national, regional, and global levels that have taken place since the finalization of the Convention text in 1994. Governments, NGOs, and international organizations have provided financial and technical support to programs that specifically target women's active participation in the implementation of the UNCCD. Moreover, the Convention has often been highlighted for its committed effort to strengthen women's role at all levels of its implementation – an element that is frequently lacking in other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). It has therefore been suggested that other MEAs could benefit from the UNCCD experience.

But what is that experience? What led the participants in the INCD to deliberately promote women's role as decision-makers in the implementation of the UNCCD? What were some of the key factors leading to the recognition that specific activities aiming at women's participation were needed?

To chronicle the experience, this publication will present a brief history of the processes that led to a legally binding document obliging Governments to promote the role of women in dryland management. The history of the *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa* is extensive and numerous publications have presented fascinating descriptions. Similarly, a wealth of studies exists on the role of gender in today's environmental management; including dryland development. A simple Internet search by Google on Gender and Environment generates more than 1.5 million hits while a search on the UNCCD generates 35,000 references.

The present publication does not seek to present the full and detailed history on how and why women and gender issues made its way into an international environmental agreement. Rather, we want to present an easily read chronicle on what we consider major events that led to this landmark international agreement. We have carried out a number of informal interviews persons who played key roles in the early and defining phases of the UNCCD process, including official government delegates, representatives from UN agencies, representatives from the media, and NGO participants. Furthermore, we have analyzed publications and minutes related to the UNCCD process.

After a brief summary of the context in which the UNCCD evolved, the publication will present how major groups sought to promote the role of women and gender concerns during the negotiation of the Convention. The publication will then highlight how gender concerns are reflected in the operationalization of the UNCCD here at the end of 2003; six years after the Convention entered into force and at a point where around 190 countries have ratified the instrument¹. Finally, the publication will present some major conclusions based on personal experiences with the preparation and implementation of the UNCCD.

The annexes will present suggestions for further reading on the UNCCD and gender and environment as well as a glossary of terms and acronyms for easy reference.

This publication would not have been possible without continuous support from IUCN's senior gender expert, Ms. Lorena Aguilar who for years has been working relentlessly to ensure equality of men and women in environmental management. We would like to express our deep appreciation for Lorena's commitment to this publication. We would also like to express our heartfelt thanks to a number of people who have assisted us in the preparation of the publication; people who were instrumental in the development of the innovative sustainable human development instrument that the UNCCD is. Particularly we would like to thank Mr. Nessim J. Ahmad (former IFAD, now ADB), Mr. Bernard Bohmert (CREDIL), Ms. Pamela S. Chasek (Earth Negotiation Bulletin), Ms. Sissel Ekaas (former Government of Norway and UNSO/UNDP, now FAO), Ms. Brownie Ledbetter (WEDO), Mr. Masse Lo (ENDA-TM), Ms. Wagaki Mwangi (Earth Negotiation Bulletin), Ms. Jocelyne Néron (former SCS, now Objectif Terre), Mr. Samuel Nyambi (UNDP), Mr. Erwin Ortiz (Government of Bolivia), Ms. Marion Parry (Government of Canada), Mr. Octavio Perez-Pardo (Government of Argentina), Ms. Jan Sheltinga (Government of Canada), Ms. Joana Talafre (Government of Canada), Ms. Edit Tuboly (former Both-Ends, now HIVOS), Ms. Marilyn Yakowitz (OECD), Ms. Vera Weill-Hallé (IFAD).

¹ The UNCCD follows the rules of international treaties. To enter into force means that the instrument becomes legally binding for the countries that ratify the treaty. The ratification process is based on a parliamentary decision whereby the treaty will be integrated into national law. As such, in countries that have ratified the UNCCD, the Convention is also part of national legislation.

2.1. An evolving understanding of environmental management during events leading up to the UNCCD

The way we perceive our interactions with the environment as human beings has developed tremendously over the last three decades. Looking back at the declarations from some of the major international conferences and events on environmental governance, if nothing else, there has definitely been a semantic development. From the Stockholm Conference on Human Environment in 1972 where 113 participating countries declared that “Man” has the fundamental right to “an environment of a quality” to the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 where 104 Heads of States declared their commitments to women’s empowerment, emancipation, and gender equality to ensure sustainable development. But the development is more than semantic. It reflects the growing understanding of the intrinsic link between a healthy environment, sustainable development, and equality between men and women. It also reflects the common understanding that effective management of the environment and natural resources requires an active participation of all stakeholders – women and men alike.

The idea and concept of an international convention to combat desertification came to life and developed between the Stockholm Conference on Human Development in 1972 and the Rio de Janeiro Conference on Environment and Development in 1992.

The widespread droughts in Africa in the early 70’s caught world attention and the need for a global response was advocated by a number of affected countries within the UN system. In 1974, after months of consultations Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso) proposed a resolution to the General Assembly calling for a UN Conference on Desertification which led to the UN Conference on Desertification (UNCOD) organized in Nairobi in 1977. In preparation of the Conference expert groups prepared background documentation which included analysis of the relationship between desertification and climate, ecological change, technology, and society. A major conclusion from the preparatory work was that desertification is a global problem and is strongly interlinked with human activities.

The preparation and organization of UNCOD took place in the 1970s which was also the second UN Development Decade marked by a growing acknowledgement that integrated approaches with focus on socio-economic issues is a prerequisite for successful development interventions. Looking back at the different UN development conferences in the 1970s on issues such as Population, Women, Environment, and Human Settlement, it is interesting to see how the conferences fed into each other. So while the Stockholm Declaration from 1972 is clearly based on the linkages between environment and socio-economic issues UNCOD in 1977 went further in explaining socio-economic factors as causes and consequences of environmental challenges such as desertification. Furthermore, the major outcome from UNCOD in 1977 – the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification (PACD) – reflects the discussions around the First World Conference on Women held in Mexico in 1975.

The PACD outlines 28 global recommendations with specific activities to be carried out at national level. Some of the language from the Stockholm Declaration on Human Environment seems to be carried over, for instance when the PACD recommends

creation of shelters for “man and animals” and indicators on “man as a land user” and states that the socio-economic aspects of desertification is closely linked to “man, his welfare, and his institutions.”

But contrary to the Stockholm documents the PACD makes specific references to women and recommends that:

- being largely responsible for fuel wood collection and use, women should be consulted on any new and improved energy devices and they should be trained in management and “encouraged to find alternative, productive uses for any time freed by their introduction,” and
- demonstration units should be established where “men and women engaged in farming, agriculture or pastoralism could participate for appropriate periods of time.”

2.2 Desertification and Women as part of the 1992 UNCED Agenda

Responding to the strengthened focus on the integrated development processes, the UN General Assembly established the “World Commission on Environment and Development” (the Brundtland Commission) in 1983. The Commission’s mandate was to prepare “A Global Agenda for Change” with recommendations of long-term strategies for achieving sustainable development by 2000 and beyond. The major outcome of the Commission, the publication “Our Common Future” from 1987, highlights that an overriding priority should be given to the essential needs of the world’s poor and that sustainable development requires effective citizen participation in decision-making. So while the Brundtland Commission does not refer directly to women, it has been argued that the spirit of equal opportunities is evident in “Our Common Future” and that this can only be done by giving special attention to women. Moreover, the Brundtland report recognizes desertification as a major threat to the integrity of major regional ecosystems and states that the “destruction [in the 1970s] of much of Africa’s dryland agricultural production was more severe than if an invading army had pursued a scorched-earth policy.”

In 1989, the UN General Assembly decided to follow up on the Brundtland Report by preparing and organizing the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) – the Earth Summit which took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The Preparatory Committee that was established for the Summit met at five global conferences. In addition, special Inter-governmental Negotiation Committees were established for the Conventions on Climate Change and Biodiversity. Albeit a special call from the General Assembly in 1989 to give high priority to desertification control at the Earth Summit no special negotiation committee was established to that end. In fact, very little attention was paid to the issue of desertification during the first three UNCED Preparatory Conferences although the African Group² requested that desertification would be at the top of the agenda at the fourth Preparatory Committee. When the fourth Preparatory Meeting took place in New York in April 1992, the first agenda item was desertification³ and the need for applying participatory approaches and environmental education to effectively combat desertification was highlighted. Delegates also discussed the consequences of fuel-wood consumption and the severe impact on

² Corell, Elisabeth “The Negotiable Desert – Expert Knowledge in the Negotiations of the Convention to Combat Desertification.” Department of Water and Environmental Studies, Linköping University, Sweden. 1999.

³ Earth Negotiation Bulletin, Vol. 1 UNCED PrepCom4. Available at www.iisd.ca

women as responsible for household energy supply. As such, some of the major priorities and recommendations from UNCOD and PACD were highlighted again. But the major outcome of the discussion on desertification was probably the request for the “preparation and adoption of an “International Convention to Combat Desertification particularly in Africa” even though no final agreement among the participants was reached during the Preparatory Conference.

The debate on desertification at the preparation of UNCED was fueled by the UNCOD status report presented by UNEP. The report entitled “Status of Desertification and Implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action to Combat Desertification⁴” recognized that “progress has been modest in implementing the PACD between 1978 and 1991” mainly due to the lack of appropriate national and international technical and financial support. Furthermore, the unsuccessful implementation was seen as a result of the limited understanding that desertification is not “just another environmental problem” but is as much a socio-economic issue. So the report showed that “technical means were often sought to solve the problem, while the solutions rested in the socio-political and socio-economic mechanisms.” In going into more details of why the PACD did not live up to the expectations the report stated *inter alia* that “women land users often failed to obtain credit and access to advisory services that could improve their land use practices.” But the report also highlighted some successful training courses, seminars and workshops on the role of women in combating desertification that had taken place during the 1980s. Looking ahead, the report recommended that male and female farmers and pastoralists get better access to education, training and appropriate technologies. Moreover, national action programs to combat desertification should be based on participation of farmers, pastoralists, and women at all stages. Likewise, women, youth, and children organizations should be active partners in anti-desertification activities at all levels. Finally, women should be involved in private dryland investment activities based on policies outlining tenure security, appropriate technologies, credits, extension programs, local food security, and appropriate pricing systems.

The lack of direct references to women in the Brundtland report might have been an extra incitement for some women leaders, including world renowned Bella Abzug, to not only participate actively in the preparation of UNCED but also organizing the “World Women’s Congress for a Healthy Planet” in 1991 (Miami). The Congress should also be seen in the light for the UN Conference on Women organized in Nairobi in 1985. Again, there seems to be a strong case for how the international conferences feed into each other. So as women’s concerns and social issues in general became recognized as crucial for environmental management in the 1970s and 80s, likewise did environmental concerns become an integral part of conferences on the advancement and empowerment of women. The Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies⁵ from 1985 highlight the growing challenges of fuel-wood and water scarcity and the special impact on women as “intermediaries between the natural environment and society.” The Strategies also state that “The problem will continue to be greatest where water resources are limited - in arid and semi-arid areas” and call for women’s full participation in environmental management. Finally, the Strategies highlight the need to focus on women’s secure rights to land, training, credit, investment, and agricultural development.

The main ideas from Nairobi were developed further by the 1,500 women from all over the World who participated in the Women’s Congress on a Healthy Planet. The

⁴ Available at www.na.unep.net/des

⁵ Available at www.un.org/womenwatch/confer

Congress developed a “Women’s Action Agenda 21⁶” policy document to feed into the UNCED process to ensure that the outcome of UNCED would build on equality between men and women. Considering that women bear the major responsibility for domestic food production “as well as for protection of soils and other natural resources” and that women who till the land and use its resources know the “realities of the over-exploitation of the land” better than anyone else, the Women’s Agenda 21 calls for full participation of women in environmental management at all levels. Furthermore “women’s access to food, land inheritance, tenure, and ownership must be regarded as a basic human right.” Finally, the Agenda calls for women’s access to credit, water and fuel supplies, food processing technologies, and alternative energy sources such as fuel-saving stoves.

The Women’s Agenda 21 does not make any direct references to desertification - or specific ecosystems for that matter. However, the call for equality between men and women in environmental decision-making as well as the need for special attention to women because of their predominant role in natural resource management were reflected in the final proposal for a specific chapter – Chapter 12 - in Agenda 21 on “Managing fragile ecosystems: Combating desertification and drought.”

Agenda 21 is a comprehensive plan of action for the implementation of the Rio Declaration that states *inter alia* that “Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable Development.” Agenda 21 contains 40 chapters presented in four major sections including section II on “Conservation and Management of Resources for Development” which covers 14 different environmental topics such as desertification, biodiversity, climate change, deforestation, water, and waste management. Looking at the different chapters in section II, it is interesting to note that apart from the chapters on Protection of the Atmosphere, Biotechnology, and Radioactive Waste, all programs on conservation and management of resources for development call for special activities to promote and ensure women’s active participation. These activities include awareness raising, training and education, capacity building of women’s organizations, consideration of women’s needs when developing programs, ensure women’s equal access to land, water, and forest resources and to technologies, financing, marketing, processing, and distribution. Furthermore, several programs call for special attention to women’s traditional knowledge. Chapter 12 – the Desertification Chapter – can therefore not be characterized as outstanding in the context of Agenda 21 but rather representative when it calls for:

- Involvement of local population, particular women and youth, in the collection and use of environmental information,
- Land users, particularly women, to be main actors in combating land degradation,
- Protection of women’s property rights,
- Involvement of women in policies and programs to improve land use, manage common lands, incentives, and private investment in the drylands,
- Full participation of women when drawing on local knowledge and experience,
- Increased level of education and participation of people, particularly women,
- Creation of rural banking to facilitate access to credit for rural populations, particularly women, and

⁶Available at www.iisd.org/women/action21.htm

- Review, development, and dissemination of gender-disaggregated⁷ information, skills, and know-how at all levels on ways of organizing and promoting popular participation.

The focus on women's role in sustainable environmental governance and the strong lobby work of women's groups formed at the Women's Congress on a Healthy Planet not only led to consideration of women's concerns within the various chapters of Agenda 21, but also to a specific Chapter entitled "Global Action for Women towards Sustainable and Equitable Environment" (Chapter 24). The Chapter calls for increased participation of women in decision-making, capacity building of women's organizations, measures to eliminate women's illiteracy, programs to alleviate women's heavy workload, women-centered health facilities, equal employment opportunities for women, rural banking for women, monitoring and evaluation on progress made to promote the role of women, gender-sensitive databases, and increased knowledge of the impact on women of environmental degradation, particularly drought and desertification.

2.3 From Rio to Paris or from Chapter 12 to UNCCD

In December 1992 and based on the recommendations in Chapter 12 of Agenda 21, the UN General Assembly established an Inter-Governmental Negotiating Committee for an International Convention to Combat Desertification (INCD)⁸. The task given to the INCD was to finalize its work by June 1994 under the chairmanship of Swedish Ambassador Bo Kjellén. The Committee was to meet at an initial organizing conference followed by five substantive sessions to negotiate a finalized version of the Convention that would be approved by countries participating in the INCD. Furthermore, the UN General Assembly decided that the first regular session of the INCD should be devoted to information sharing on drought and desertification with involvement of experts. Additionally, and in the spirit of the Earth Summit, NGOs were invited to contribute to the INCD process. In order to facilitate the work of the INCD, including the preparation and organization of the negotiation sessions, the General Assembly did also establish the INCD Secretariat under the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

The first substantive session of the INCD process - INCD 1 – was hosted by UNEP and took place in Nairobi in May/June 1993. The session brought together representatives from most governments in the world as well as a number of UN agencies, development banks, NGOs, and research institutions. At the opening of the two-week session UNEP underlined that 900 million people suffer from desertification and "those most affected are overworked farmers and women" who should be supported through a successful convention⁹. The first week of INCD 1 which was dedicated to information sharing included 31 presentations by technical advisors from UN agencies, research institutions,

⁷ There seems to be confusion in the use of the concept "gender-disaggregated" data – as there generally is confusion in the use of the concept "gender." "Gender-disaggregated data" refers to indicators based on "sex-disaggregated data" combined with specific gender information, i.e. economic, social, and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female in a particular setting in a particular time. Still, "gender-disaggregated data" is often used when referring simply to "sex-disaggregated data." As such, "sex-disaggregated data" can be seen as the minimum requirement for gender mainstreaming and activities to promote the role of women. Nonetheless, in spite of numerous calls for at least "sex-disaggregated data" it continues to constitute a stumbling block for effective initiatives to promote equality between men and women all over the world. Needless to say that "gender-disaggregated data" are even shorter in supply.

⁸ UN, "Establishment of an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa", UN Resolution A/RES/47/188, December 22 1992

⁹ Earth Negotiation Bulletin coverage of the UNCCD. Available at www.iisd.ca/vol04

and governments and covering experience in addressing drought and desertification, as well as the physical consequences, socio-economic dimensions, and international cooperation¹⁰. While sporadic references to the role of women were presented in several of the background papers, only two provided more detailed analysis of the role of women in natural resource management based on experiences from Sub-Saharan Africa. The paper “Integrated Community Approaches: Participation in Decision-Making, Freedom of Information, Education and Awareness, role of NGOs, Women and Other Groups”¹¹ states that:

- successful strategies must involve poor and women who are normally marginalized from community decisions,
- women possess invaluable knowledge and skills regarding use of natural resources, e.g. best caloric values of wood species. But this knowledge is threatened as a result of environmental degradation,
- “a rather tragic perception tends always to view [women in Sub-Saharan Africa] as eternal collectors of wood, carriers of water and children, the poorest of the poor, ignorant and excluded from the domains of power and decision making. These stubborn images mask other realities and fail to recognize current major changes in women's role with regard to common property resources,”
- “the diversity in the position of women is considerable and makes generalization very dangerous,”
- “socio-ecological imbalances create new obligations for the majority of women without really giving them new powers: they are family heads and/or resource use managers *de facto* but not by right. The complexity of these changes is ignored or badly understood by external agencies” contrary to the local communities who “know that if women decide to migrate, the rural areas will be deserted by the entire population,”
- experience shows that traditional “women projects” often fail due to conflicts as they forget to see women as major partners in their communities. “Thus it is clear that the fight against the degradation of common property resources should not be confused with that for the socio-economic advancement of women,” and
- a win-win approach will improve women’s access to natural resources and improve their income.

Still, the main impression from the UNCCD is that of women as one stakeholder group often pictured as overworked due to domestic responsibilities including fuel wood and water collection. However, other critical points highlighted by Gary Howe are reflected in the Convention. As such the UNCCD recognizes that local communities have to be involved in planning and implementation of the programs to combat desertification and drought. Moreover, the UNCCD promotes traditional knowledge and women’s special role in that regard.

The other background paper that went into more details about women’s roles in rural areas was – “Economic, social and cultural causes and consequences of drought and desertification, including linkages to poverty, population pressure, food security,

¹⁰ The full list of background documents is available at www.unccd.int/knowledge/INCDinfoSeq

¹¹ Howe, Gary. Available at <http://meltingpot.fortunecity.com/lebanon/254/ignc2.htm>

international trading patterns, traditional mechanisms for coping with droughts and desertification, and gender/religion aspects.¹² This paper states that:

- because of mal-functioning local institutions women are often marginalized from decision-making,
- due to women's role in natural resource management and their responsibility in collection water and fuel wood for domestic use, they are often disproportionately affected by environmental degradation as compared to men,
- lack of access to land is major institutional bias against women, hindering the development process, e.g. through lack of access to credit,
- extension services are rarely targeted female farmers' needs, and
- women's lack of education is a major hindrance for equal participation.

Again, some of the elements highlighted as critical for the promotion of women's equal participation in environmental management, namely women's secure property rights and access to credit, are not reflected in the final text of the UNCCD. This in spite of the fact, that Chapter 12 of Agenda 21 already included provisions for women's property rights.

The discussion following immediately after the presentation of the two papers only set off a couple of general remarks regarding the importance of promoting the role of women in the UNCCD¹³. During the general discussion at INCD 1 on the elaboration of the UNCCD that followed all 31 presentations at the information sharing segment, several delegations referred to the need for promoting the role of women¹⁴, particularly what has been referred to as the "pro-women" Nordic governments¹⁵, Denmark, the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, and Norway as well as Canada and Australia. But also some developing¹⁶ countries, including Madagascar and Cape Verde, highlighted the central role women play in natural resource management and hence the need for specific attention to their role in the UNCCD. The NGOs made a joint statement emphasizing the centrality of community-led activities in combating desertification and the need for targeting women. The NGOs furthermore argued that due to their strength in community mobilization, they should be involved as equal partner in the implementation of the UNCCD. This linkage between NGOs, local development, and therefore the role of women has been important in the activities related to women and the UNCCD.

Following the one-week information sharing segment, INCD 1 proceeded to a week of discussing elements of the "Format and Possible Content" of the Convention. The INCD Chairman made the transition between the two weeks by reiterating some of the major conclusions from the information sharing segment that should form the basis for the negotiation of the actual content of the UNCCD. As such, the Chairman stressed among other issues the need for local participation and full integration of women. In the subsequent discussions some delegates stressed that the role of women in farming and training on appropriate methods requires more research which should be highlighted in the UNCCD.

¹² Ahmad, Nessim. Available at www.unccd.int/knowledge/INCDinfoSeg/ignc.php

¹³ From personal interviews with presenters and participants.

¹⁴ Earth Negotiation Bulletin coverage of the UNCCD. Available at www.issd.ca/vol04

¹⁵ From interviews with official delegates to the INCD.

¹⁶ The UNCCD applies the distinction between "developed" and "developing" countries referring mainly to donors and development aid-recipient countries respectively.

Based on the discussions at INCD 1, countries were invited to submit detailed drafting proposals for the Convention to be used for the ensuing negotiation sessions. The INCD Secretariat received a total of 30 proposals from governments and organizations which were compiled with 69 statements made during INCD 1 into one document¹⁷ laying out the general structure of the UNCCD:

- Preamble: Principles, Objectives, and Definitions;
- Commitments and Obligations:
 - o Structure and nature of commitments,
 - o Action Programs: National, Sub-regional, and Regional,
 - o Scientific and technical areas: Research and Development, Information, Technology Transfer,
 - o Other: Capacity building, Education and Public Awareness, Financial issues, Coordination and Cooperation.
- Institutional and Procedural Arrangements: Institutions, Procedures, Final Clauses.

In their proposals governments and invited organizations included specific text regarding the role of women:

- Preamble should recognize:
 - o the “critical role of women in the economic and social lives of developed and developing countries and the emphasis to be placed on their role in combating desertification,¹⁸”
 - o that desertification is a particular African problem with special emphasis on the “the large number of refugees the majority of whom are women” (proposed by the Organization of African Unity, OAU),
 - o that women generally constitute the majority of the drylands and that they are particularly prone to poverty, famine, malnutrition, and illiteracy (proposed by Burkina Faso), and
 - o the need for women to participate fully at all levels in political and economic decision-making on measures to combat desertification and drought (proposed by Tunisia and Burkina Faso).
- Commitments:
 - o “should clearly recognize women’s role as resource managers, their contribution to combating desertification, and their need for better access to education, training, and credit and other financial services,”
 - o National Action Programs should emphasize a “participatory approach in policy-making and implementation, which would engender a sense of partnership with local populations, particularly women,”
 - o Action Programs should “promote the role of women” and “establish a local framework guaranteeing the rights of rural groups” including women,

¹⁷ Interim Secretariat for the UNCCD “Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification in Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa - Compilation of Government Views, Statements and Drafting Proposals” Available at www.unccd.int

¹⁸ The background document with proposals for Convention text does not indicate source of proposals that come from a large number of delegations and as such seen as generally acceptable to the majority of the delegations.

- o National Action Programs should draw up an encourage “land tenure legislation suited for the local socio-economic context which will guarantee for the various categories of producers, including women, a right of access to land” (proposed by Burkina Faso),
- o Participatory research should be encouraged including with women farmers, and
- o Education and public awareness programs should give special attention to the role of women.

Compared to Chapter 12 of Agenda 21 a couple of developments regarding the integration of women’s issues in the UNCCD took place in the process up to the submission of proposals for the text of the Convention. As such, the call for “gender-disaggregated data”¹⁹ did not find its way into the proposals. On the other hand, the proposals put more emphasis on capacity building with special focus on women than could be found in Chapter 12.

The compilation of proposals formed the basis for the subsequent four INCD sessions²⁰. According to official delegates who participated in the five INCD sessions leading up to the final approval of the UNCCD on June 17, 1994, the issue of women and gender “received a fair amount of favorable attention” but was never controversial. What was often seen as the “traditional women lobby,” namely NGO groups that strongly advocated for the role of women during UNCED²¹, it has been noted that they were never really active in the INCD process. Rather, the issue of gender and the role of women was mentioned in statements by various official delegates now and then - often as a result of collaboration with UN agencies and NGOs focusing on dryland development. There was a general consent among the delegates that the UNCCD should have a strong poverty and community orientation and the issue of women was seen as a natural part of this. Furthermore, the priority given to Africa also means that the UNCCD is more based on the reality of Sub-Saharan Africa and hence the generally acknowledged fact that women bear a major responsibility when it comes to natural resources management. Some delegates have later expressed that it “resonated well with the donors” and it might very well be that integration of the issue of women was seen as the “tone of the day” – as a *sine qua non* when development agreements were to be negotiated.

2.4 The UNCCD and the role of women

The final text of the UNCCD²² recognizes in its Preamble “the important role played by women in regions affected by desertification and/or drought, particularly in rural areas of developing countries, and the importance of ensuring the full participation of both men and women at all levels in programmes to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought.”

¹⁹ Kindly refer to earlier note in Chapter 2.2 regarding “gender-disaggregated data” and “sex-disaggregated data.”

²⁰ INCD 2 in Geneva in September 1993, INCD 3 in New York in January 1994, INCD 4 in Geneva in March 1994, and INCD 5 in Paris in June 1994.

²¹ Particularly groups that were associated with the “World Women’s Congress for a Healthy Planet” in 1991 (Miami) as described in Chapter 2.2.

²² Available at www.unccd.int

Affected country Parties to the Convention have therefore committed themselves to “promote awareness and facilitate the participation of local populations, particularly women and youth, with the support of non-governmental organizations, in efforts to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought” (Obligations, Article 5.2).

A central element for the implementation of the Convention at national level is the establishment of partnerships between national authorities, representatives from civil society such as NGOs and grassroots organizations, research institutions, and representatives from the international community including donors. Among the major responsibilities of the national partnerships is the establishment of National Action Program (NAP) processes. Based on principles of continuous planning processes and active involvement of the dryland populations, the NAPs constitute a new generation of environmental plans. To ensure their success, special attention is required to support the launching of the NAP processes.

In addressing the issues of participation in the implementation of the UNCCD the provisions on NAP processes highlight women as a stakeholder group that should be advanced. Moreover, NAPs shall “provide for effective participation at the local, national and regional levels of non-governmental organizations and local populations, both women and men, particularly resource users, including farmers and pastoralists and their representative organizations, in policy planning, decision-making, and implementation and review of national action programmes.” (Action Programmes, Article 10.2.f).

Full participation of dryland populations in national partnerships and other institutional aspects of the implementation of the UNCCD, implies the need for targeted support to different stakeholder groups. This should be done taking into account resources and capacities of the stakeholder groups in order to ensure that the participation will not be reduced to mere assistance in meetings for instance. The Parties to the UNCCD have committed themselves to “promote, as appropriate, capacity building: through the full participation at all levels of local people, particularly at the local level, especially women and youth, with the cooperation of non-governmental and local organizations” (Support Measures, 19.1.a). It should be noted that the same article (19) defines capacity building as “institution building, training and development of relevant local and national capacities -- in efforts to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought”.

The need for cooperation among various development actors to ensure the advancement of women in the implementation of the UNCCD is further emphasized in article 19.3 laying out that “The Parties shall cooperate with each other and through competent intergovernmental organizations, as well as with non-governmental organizations, in undertaking and supporting public awareness and educational programmes in both affected and, where relevant, unaffected country Parties to promote understanding of the causes and effects of desertification and drought and of the importance of meeting the objective of this Convention. To that end, they shall”:....“(e) assess educational needs in affected areas, elaborate appropriate school curricula and expand, as needed, educational and adult literacy programmes and opportunities for all, in particular for girls and women, on the identification, conservation and sustainable use and management of the natural resources of affected areas” (19.3.e).

Apparently, the UNCCD can be seen as a genuine effort and commitment by the international community, national governments, NGOs, and community-based organizations to work together to promote gender-sensitive activities in order to ensure sustainable development. However, it has been argued that some basic elements that

would make the UNCCD an effective tool for gender mainstreaming and empowerment of women are lacking. As such, sex-disaggregated data are generally seen as crucial when it comes to promoting the role of women and gender mainstreaming. Otherwise, it will be impossible to assess, for instance, whether programs and projects respond to the need of women. But the UNCCD contains no provision for sex-disaggregated data. Furthermore, numerous studies have shown that issues relating to women's property rights and access to credit are crucial for ensuring equality between men and women in rural development. Chapter 12 of Agenda 21 insisted on these elements and Burkina Faso stressed in its proposal for the UNCCD text presented to the INCD that NAPs should encourage land tenure legislation what would ensure women's rights to access land.

But maybe, "the fight against the degradation of common property resources should not be confused with that for the socio-economic advancement of women" as Gary Howe presented in his paper to INCD 1? And maybe the way the UNCCD integrates issues related to women and gender reflects the differences in opinion about the definition of desertification. According to E. Corell²³ African and other developing countries requested that socio-economic causes of desertification should be part of the definition of desertification in the UNCCD as "it would be impossible to combat desertification unless issues such as external debt, international market conditions, exchange rate variations, pricing and trade policies, and poverty were adequately addressed.....However, the industrialized countries were reluctant to adopt a definition that listed a whole range of socio-economic factors." It should also be noted that several delegates who have been interviewed for this publication have pointed to the fact, that the negotiation process for the UNCCD was delineated by the processes for the negotiation of the two "sister Rio Conventions", namely the UN Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

As noted earlier, Chapter 9 of Agenda 21 (Protection of the Atmosphere) does not make any references to the role of women or gender, either does the UNFCCC. On the other hand, Chapter 15 (Conservation of Biological Diversity) calls for recognition of the role of women, special research programs for ecosystems where women play key roles, and participation of women. Furthermore, Chapter 15 makes references to Chapter 24 (Global Action for Women towards Sustainable and Equitable Development). In the Preamble of the final text of the Biodiversity Convention the parties recognize "the vital role that women play in the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and affirming the need for the full participation of women at all levels of policymaking and implementation for biological diversity conservation."

Still, the concrete initiatives called for in the CBD do not make any specific reference to the role of women or gender considerations. An analysis of the implementation of the CBD will be required to assess whether a general initial statement in the Preamble is sufficient for gender sensitive initiatives.

²³ Corell, Elisabeth "The Negotiable Desert – Expert Knowledge in the Negotiations of the Convention to Combat Desertification." Department of Water and Environmental Studies, Linköping University, Sweden. 1999.

Chapter 3 Major groups' role in supporting the role of women and gender equality in the UNCCD

As noted in the description of the genesis of the UNCCD in Chapter 2, different participants advocated for the promotion of gender and the role of women at various stages in the preparation and implementation of the UNCCD. In the following we will highlight specific actions and programs of some of the major stakeholder groups. We have mentioned those as examples because we believe that they have had major impacts in the way gender and the role of women is being taken into account within the UNCCD context. At the same time we have definitely left out activities by a number of other important institutions that have been crucial for the way women and gender is considered in the UNCCD context. The non-inclusion of specific examples is not based on any judgment of the relevance or importance.

From the beginning of the work of the INCD, it was clear that the negotiations for the UNCCD would not be without difficulties and problems. In a recently published article in RECIEL²⁴ the INCD Chairman, Ambassador Bo Kjellén states that several serious crises occurred between OECD²⁵ countries and the G77²⁶, and between the African countries and other members of the G77. The major contentious issue concerned the financing of the Convention, which resulted in an ongoing North-South conflict throughout the negotiation process. Furthermore, discussions about the priority to be given to Africa in the Convention showed some disagreement among the different regional groups. Differences of positions emerged again later when the work program of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) was being debated. By the time of the final negotiation session questions related to both issues remained unresolved.²⁷

3.1 Positions of Official Delegations regarding gender mainstreaming and women's participation in the UNCCD

As was mentioned in the introductory chapter, from the initial INCD process negotiation participants generally agreed that the UNCCD should give special attention to women. Within the UN framework, as in other global settings, government delegations often coordinate their work and harmonize their positions within geographic regions. In the negotiations for the UNCCD, the African Group played understandably a crucial role. Without their insistence at the UNCED Conference the UNCCD process would probably not have been initiated at all. The African Group negotiated its various positions with other southern regional groups of the G77. Often, the spokesperson for the G77 presented a consolidated view, derived from informal sessions and numerous negotiations among the different regional groups of G77. Similarly, within the OECD group, the European Union (EU)²⁸ usually presented a common perspective on policy issues and negotiation positions. In addition to these regionally based coalitions, and similar to other multilateral forums, a number of government delegates from non-EU industrialized countries met as a group, referred to as JUSCANZ. This group, originally

²⁴ Kjellén, Bo "The Saga of the Convention to Combat Desertification." RECIEL 12 (2) 2003.

²⁵ The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development.

²⁶ The G77 represents 135 developing country members within the UN system. www.g77.org

²⁷ Kjellén, Bo, RECIEL 12 (2) 2003.

²⁸ The European Union – EU – is a Party to the UNCCD. However, without voting rights.

composed of Japan, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, is often joined by Norway, Switzerland, Mexico and South Korea (when it officially becomes JUSSCANNZ).²⁹ In addition to these groups, regional subgroups as well as other more informal “cross-groups” met on a regular basis to negotiate, coordinate and harmonize positions on the UNCCD.

Thus, the official negotiation sessions of the INCD, in which the regional groups presented their positions, were accompanied by numerous informal consultations, working groups and discussions. It was often in these private or public meetings that agreements were negotiated and joint or coordinated positions developed. These processes were generally based on briefings that the different delegations had received from their governments regarding national positions. Some delegations received very broad and flexible negotiation instructions while other delegations were more restricted in what they could agree to and as a result did not present official positions on specific points in the negotiations. Participants at the initial sessions agree that personality and experience of some delegates, gained through continuous participation in the work of the INCD, gave them a predominant role in the negotiation. This enabled them to pursue positions on specific agenda items with skill and perseverance and/or excel in mediating between diverging and sometimes contradicting positions.

When the participation of women and gender mainstreaming was discussed in the INCD, it was often within the informal working group sessions. While representatives from the “pro-women Nordic Group” that we referred to in Chapter 2 would often take the lead in promoting issues relating to the role of women in the UNCCD the issue would be further elaborated and endorsed by other delegations from different regions, such as Senegal, Uganda, Argentina and India. Many of these countries would base their positions on official policies on Gender Mainstreaming. Norway, for instance, has worked actively in promoting the role of women and gender equality in its international development cooperation for several decades and the country took a leading role in promoting equality between men and women within the UNCCD. As such, already in 1985 the Ministry of Development Cooperation presented a coherent policy document on the integration of Women in Development into Norway’s Official Development Assistance. A Strategy for Assistance to Women in Development was published the same year presenting *inter alia* the opportunities for promoting the role of women through Norway’s active participation in multilateral cooperation.

Canada serves as another example. According to Canadian delegates at the early INCD negotiations, Canada took a strong position in promoting issues related to gender equality and endorsed wholeheartedly the promoting of the role of women within the UNCCD. This followed from the country’s engagement in gender mainstreaming and women-focused programming within the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). At the same time, it should also be noted that although many countries stated strong positions for promoting equality between men and women within the UNCCD, they did not necessarily suggest concrete activities as to how to ensure women’s participation in the UNCCD at all levels.

In addition, a number of delegations from each of the regional groups met regularly with the NGO delegates from their country. Information was shared on various positions and, according to several NGO delegates, concerns regarding gender issues regularly appeared on the agenda during these informal consultations.

²⁹ Definition of these and other acronyms are available at www.unccd.int/knowledge/glossary-eng.html

3.2. Global Institutions of the UNCCD

In order to understand the role of the governing bodies of the UNCCD for promoting the role of women the following will present the major global institutions established within the UNCCD and discuss examples of how women and equality between men and women have been addressed within these institutions.

3.2.1 Conference of the Parties - COP

The Conference of the Parties (COP) is the highest policy organ of the UNCCD. Its mandate is to make the “decisions necessary to promote its effective implementation”, including regular review of implementation, exchange of information, and establishment of subsidiary bodies as necessary for the implementation of the UNCCD, such as the Committee on Science and Technology (CST).³⁰ Important for the operation of the COP is its Bureau whose members represent each of the five regional groups. The Bureau is composed of the President, 9 Vice Presidents, and the Chair of the Committee on Science and Technology. There are no rules regarding the gender composition of the Bureau and a quick look at the composition of the different bureaux so far shows that less than 10% have actually been female members. This also reflects that it is generally heads of delegations who are elected as bureau members and the delegations are mainly constituted of men.

During the four-year INCD process, only three delegations were headed by women. According to Wakaki Mwangi³¹ positions such as chairs of the sub-committees were occupied by men while the relatively few female delegates seldom played visible roles. In fact, the representation of women in the UNCCD framework seems to follow what happens in most contexts of society namely that the number of women dwindles as one moves up the hierarchy. So while women participate or might be consulted at the local level in planning activities of the National Action Programs for instance, the representation of the delegations to the INCD and COP has definitely been male dominated.

3.2.2 Committee on Science and Technology - CST

It was clear from the beginning that scientific research would play an important role in the implementation of the UNCCD. The Committee on Science and Technology (CST) was established as a major subsidiary body under the COP with the purpose “to provide it with information and advice on scientific and technological matters relating to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought.”³² The CST was expected to coordinate existing research, cooperate with a wide range of expert organizations already working in related fields and identify additional areas of research required for the implementation of the UNCCD. Given its important role in identifying priority areas for research as well as standard setting for implementation and reporting purposes, the CST can be seen as one UNCCD structure where concrete application of

³⁰ Article 22, 2. The full text of the Convention is available at www.unccd.int

³¹ Mwangi, Wagaki “A gender Analysis of Decision-Making in the Global Bodies of the CCD” – Background note presented by UNSO/UNDP at INCD 10bis. UNSO/UNDP. 1997.

³² UNCCD, Article 24.1

the UNCCD principles including that of equal participation of women and men should be put into practice.

The INCD started negotiations on the mandate and operations of the CST at its seventh session. From the outset these negotiations were complex and contentious as they signalled the continuing North-South conflict.³³ A draft text of the terms of reference of the CST was presented to INCD 8. A key issue, debated during that session, was the composition of the CST membership. G77 delegates wanted to keep the CST, its Bureau and the Ad Hoc Panels small and efficient and composed only of government representatives. OECD countries were committed to see independent experts as members of the CST. The competing demands for consideration of geography, multidisciplinary, gender, and NGOs, and representation of Intergovernmental institutions further complicated the various intentions. The final compromise resulted in government representatives on the Committee itself, while an independent Roster of Experts was simultaneously established from which Ad Hoc Panels could be drawn.³⁴ The text of the Procedures for the Establishment of Ad Hoc Panels states in point 5:

“Every effort shall be made to ensure that the composition of the Ad Hoc Panels reflects an appropriate gender balance³⁵ as well as local and traditional knowledge and expertise.”³⁶

NGO delegates, who had been observing the proceedings, had also targeted the CST deliberations at INCD 8. Through direct interventions from the NGO “bench” at the back of the hall and through successful lobbying of a number of government delegations from all regional groups, some NGO suggestions were incorporated and adopted by the official delegates. The proposals called for more attention to women, local people, and traditional and local knowledge and technology within the work of the CST as well as in the themes of its various panels. Some participants have observed that it was above all the collaborative initiatives between national governments and NGO delegates that provided the basis for the results. Others noted that as the INCD work progressed, the increasingly good organization, coordination and pointed interventions by some NGO delegates also contributed to the inclusion of relevant references on women’s participation.

3.2.2.1 CST Structure and Work Program

At its first session during COP 1, the CST reviewed the results of the various consultations established during INCD 9 and 10 regarding its work program and operations. The draft program of work for the CST, as established by the INCD, included the establishment of a Roster of Experts, the integration of Traditional Knowledge as an area of work, as well as the development of Benchmarks and Indicators and other monitoring tools. The informal and open-ended consultation process, set up by the INCD Secretariat in response to INCD decisions 8/8 and 9/12³⁷ and which included experts from Governments, international organizations and the scientific community, dealt specifically with Benchmarks and Indicators. Again, the inclusion of gender issues and the role of women could be seen as particular important.

³³ Kjellén, Bo. RECIEL 12 (2) 2003

³⁴ Article 24 of the UNCCD establishes the CST, the Roster of Experts and the Ad Hoc Panels.

³⁵ It should be noted that “gender balance” does not mean “gender expertise.”

³⁶ A/AC.241/57, www.unccd.int/cop/officialdocs/incd/pdf/24157eng.pdf

³⁷ A/AC.241/INF.4. Available at: www.unccd.int/cop/officialdocs/incd/pdf/241inf4eng.pdf

While the summary report on the Conclusions of the informal consultation does not suggest any specific indicator to monitor gender equality and/or the role of women in the implementation of the UNCCD, it suggests that the indicator for “Effective participation of actors involved in defining national priorities” (one of four indicators to monitor awareness building and identification of national priorities) should entail:

“verification of the extent of involvement of local actors in defining national priorities: local communities, basic community units, NGOs, but also young people and women as actors who are especially targeted by the Convention; Providing local actors with accurate, complete information, in particular as concerns the CCD stakes and selected national options, is an essential factor in their full-fledged participation in decision-making.”³⁸

During the review of the report from the informal consultation at the first session of the CST, relevant recommendations to the Committee regarding gender issues were spelt out in more detail. For example, it was recommended that “data used in developing and applying implementation indicators under section 4 of the document should be gender-disaggregated”. Two sets of indicators were established: “implementation” and “impact” indicators. It was agreed that “impact indicators” in particular require a bottom-up approach and should draw on local knowledge. The collection of data at the local level should also be gender sensitive. Furthermore, it was noted that gender issues would be important as a measure for evaluation as would be the level of women’s participation within the processes.³⁹

At a subsequent informal consultative meeting organized by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Ottawa, Canada the aspect of gender in the context of indicators was addressed, although it was not on the official agenda. Rather, the issue was suggested by a gender consultant who participated in the meeting on behalf of UNSO/UNDP. The major background study produced by the IDRC on Grassroots Indicators for Desertification recognizes that grassroots indicators are valuable and essential for assessing dryland ecosystems. However, the introduction and overall conceptualisation of the subject in the study makes little mention of gender aspects or the specific role of women for the development of indicators. Gender-disaggregated data are referred to at some point; yet without further details. The case studies omit these aspects completely.⁴⁰ Still, the conclusions of the consultative meeting, propose a wide range of aspects of benchmarks and indicators, including definitions and elements for methods to determine indicators relevant to gender. For instance, under Implementation Indicators it is suggested that:

- “Under Annex 1.A.2 (Effective programmes implemented in compliance with priority fields), reference to government policies on gender would also be appropriate as an evaluation parameter”, and
- “Under Annex 1.C.3 (Effectiveness of measures in local capacity building) the number of women involved in the process could also be specified as an evaluation parameter.”

Most of the references to women’s participation and gender related data is confined to the local level implementation of the UNCCD. The final recommendations of CST 1 suggested that gender specific data should be collected “where relevant”. It can be

³⁸ A/AC.241/INF.4. Available at: www.unccd.int/cop/officialdocs/incd/pdf/241inf4eng.pdf

³⁹ ICCD/COP(1)/CST/3/Add.1

⁴⁰ Hambly, Helen and Onweng Angura, Tobias, eds. “Grassroots Indicators for Desertification. Experience and Perspectives from Eastern and Southern Africa”. IDRC 1996, ISBN 0-88936-794-9.

argued that, with the initial restriction of data on gender to the local level, important opportunities for integrating gender aspects into the review and monitoring process would be missed.

As mentioned earlier, the participation of women in the INCD, COP, and subsidiary bodies has been limited. In reviewing issues related to the role of women and gender mainstreaming in the work program of the CST, limited progress can be observed. At COP 4 (Bonn, 2000), the Roster of Experts had 1,510 experts of whom 14% were women. Furthermore, it was noticed at COP 4 that some disciplines remained underrepresented including “anthropology and sociology” that comprises gender according to the classification of the Roster. Countries have to use the classification when filling out the standard CV forms for the registration of experts. Again at COP 6 (Havana, 2003) the UNCCD Secretariat was requested by the COP to make the Roster “more balanced in terms of gender.” At that time 15% of the 1,730 experts were women.⁴¹

A look at the 88 countries that have submitted candidates for the Roster at the time of COP 6 shows that 23 countries covering all five regions have not submitted any female candidate.⁴² According to the Convention, the nomination of candidates to the Roster of Experts is the responsibility of the individual country Party and it is therefore also their responsibility to suggest a balance of female and male candidates. As the Ad Hoc Panels draw on the Roster of Experts for their composition, the under-representation of women in the Roster creates additional inequality problems. So far, three ad-hoc panels have been established under the CST: Traditional Knowledge, Benchmarks and Indicators and Early Warning Systems. Each has consisted of an average of two women experts to seven to ten male experts. But it should also be noted that Parties at the COP sessions have pointed out that there has been no reporting regarding the use of the Roster and the real problem in the lack of gender expertise or female experts is therefore difficult to assess.

During COP 6 some progress was made regarding the selection criteria for experts to be included in the Roster in order to avoid biases against the participation of women. A consultative group was set up that included NGO (women) delegates to review and revise the criteria with the aim to open the Roster to a broader representation of disciplines and stakeholders. Still, there seems to be little progress in other aspects of the work of the CST where gender aspects play a major role. For instance, although it is often highlighted at CST sessions that sex-disaggregated data are essential in the design of benchmarks and indicators concrete follow-up is lacking. In its report to CTS at COP 4, the Ad-Hoc Panel on Traditional Knowledge states the need for “real participation of women, the elders, as well as others from traditional and social categories.” Nonetheless, the report does not suggest any specific recommendations to respond to this need.⁴³

Since COP 4 there has been a push from many delegations for a reform in the operations of the CST. In order to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the CST, it was decided at COP 5 (Geneva, 2001), that a Group of Experts (GoE) should be established with five representatives from each of the five regions. Overall 5 of the 25

⁴¹UNCCD Secretariat “ICCD/COP(6)/Add.1 “Committee on Science and Technology – Maintenance of the roster of experts”, July 2003. Available at www.unccd.int/cop/officialdocs/cop6/pdf/8add1eng.pdf

⁴² Poulsen, Lene “COP 6 and the Promotion of Women.” Paper presented at IUCN's Global Biodiversity Forum, Havana, Cuba August 2003.

⁴³ ICCD/COP(4)/CST/2; page 7

Experts are female⁴⁴, which is positive taking into account that the Experts are selected from the Roster where only 15% are women. In line with the expected rise in the percentage of women in the Roster it is hoped that the composition of the GoE should also become more equal in terms of male and female participation. It should be noted that the regional focal points were all men at the time of COP 6.

The professional focus areas of the participants of the GoE seem biased towards physical science (42% Agricultural Science, 50% Natural Resource Management, 38% Soil Science, and 38% Ecology/Ecosystems) while only one Expert has expertise in Anthropology/Social Science according to the information provided in the Roster of Experts. However, as mentioned earlier the format does not provide information on experts' expertise in gender mainstreaming within their fields so the expertise might very well be broader. Again, it has therefore been recommended that the Roster include information on the experts' gender mainstreaming expertise.⁴⁵

The GoE's Summary Work Program, based on the proposals received by the UNCCD Secretariat from Parties, does not give any indication of planned activities with a focus on gender mainstreaming or women's role in the UNCCD. Yet, the presentations to the GoE's second meeting included reference to the "involvement of women in anti-desertification and capacity building programs." With reference to the need to connect land degradation and poverty, the experts reviewed cross cutting issues in case studies (Kenya and Chile) and identified women's participation and land tenure arrangements as key issues.⁴⁶

To support the work of the CST and general implementation of the UNCCD, a database was established in 1999 with information of networks, institutions, agencies, and bodies with expertise on desertification issues as stated on the homepage maintained by the University of Arizona. Furthermore, the database includes sex-disaggregated data for staff at the institutions. A search at the end of 2003 on "gender" generated 377 registered institutions with gender related work. "Women" is not a search word for the search engine for main topical areas.⁴⁷

3.2.3 UNCCD Secretariat

The Secretariat for the UNCCD was established by the UN General Assembly to assist the INCD in its work and later, after the Convention entered into force, to support the Conference of the Parties (COP) in preparing for its sessions and provide normative support to the UNCCD implementation. As such, the Secretariat also supports the COP in overseeing that the implementation of the UNCCD takes place as planned and that different provisions in the Convention and COP decisions will be realized. Early on in the INCD process the Secretariat assigned one of its junior staff as focal point on women's issues as an additional responsibility to the staff member's other duties. At INCD 10 it was reported that the Interim UNCCD Secretariat had employed only two women at the professional level. The composition of the staff members in the Secretariat in terms of technical disciplines is decided by the COP, but is based on proposals made by the Secretariat itself. In addition to a technical/administrative review these proposals reflect what the COP would likely approve. In the budget and work plan

⁴⁴ The list of Group of Experts is available at www.unccd.int/cop/cst/groupofexperts/list-eng.pdf

⁴⁵ Poulsen, Lene "COP 6 and the Promotion of Women." Paper presented at IUCN's Global Biodiversity Forum, Havana, Cuba August 2003.

⁴⁶ Presentations available at www.unccd.int/cop/cst/groupofexperts/6

⁴⁷ Poulsen, Lene "COP 6 and the Promotion of Women." Paper presented at IUCN's Global Biodiversity Forum, Havana, Cuba August 2003.

proposals that the Secretariat has presented to the COP so far, the issue of a full time, senior gender focal point or gender advisor has never come up.

Still, the Secretariat has been supportive of activities to promote the role of women through various actions. As such, the Help Guide prepared by the Secretariat to assist countries in preparing their first national reports on the implementation of the UNCCD⁴⁸ and presented in 1999 suggests a number of questions explicitly referring to the role of women and gender that could be used for the national review process (i.e. non obligatory), including:

- Extent of involvement of young people and women as actors in defining national priorities,
- Gender balance in NAP Steering Committee, national coordination body, and national NGO coordinating body,
- Realization of gender awareness training for the NAP steering committee and coordination bodies,
- Implementation of Government gender policy,
- Approaches used for women's participation in the NAP process, and
- Measures still required for addressing existing gaps in relation to gender mainstreaming in the NAP.

Eight percent of the questions and suggestions for issues to be covered by the national reports refer to gender and women explicitly and in fact 39 out of 41 African countries that reported to COP 3 answered to part of the suggested questions related to gender and or women - particularly the ones related to men/women ratios in committees, coordinating bodies, etc. Several countries recognized the very low level of female participation as a problem. A couple of countries highlighted that resource persons with "gender in development" and "women and environment" expertise had been recruited for the National NAP Steering Committee.⁴⁹

Finally, it can be argued, that the best way to check if plans and projects for gender mainstreaming are more than nice words would be to assess budgetary allocations. Looking at the latest budget (2004 to 2006) presented by the UNCCD Secretariat to COP 6 (Havana, 2003) it can be characterized as "gender neutral" at best in the sense that there are no specific budgetary allocations that would promote the equality between men and women, including for the advisory support the Secretariat will be providing developing countries. Likewise, the program of work and the budget do not specify any need for gender expertise among consultants and permanent staff members at headquarters and or regional coordination units⁵⁰.

3.2.4 Global Mechanism - GM

Article 21 of the UNCCD outlines various actions needed to establish financial mechanisms for the implementation of the Convention. As stated earlier in this Chapter,

⁴⁸ UNCCD National Reports Help Guide. Available at www.unccd.int

⁴⁹ Poulsen, Lene "Integration of gender concerns and special activities related to promote the role of women in dryland development activities in the implementation of the UNCCD – Assessment of African National Reports to COP 3", UNSO/UNDP. 1999.

⁵⁰ Poulsen, Lene "COP 6 and the Promotion of Women." Paper presented at IUCN's Global Biodiversity Forum, Havana, Cuba August 2003.

funding for the Convention was the main issue of contention: a North-South conflict where the OECD countries remained unwilling to accept G77's demand for a new funding mechanism. By the time of the final session of the INCD, the funding issues remained open. Some delegates to the early INCD sessions felt that the issue of financial constraints also had a negative impact on gender-focused initiatives and programming.⁵¹

The establishment of the Global Mechanism (GM), as one of several financial mechanisms to support the implementation of the UNCCD, represented a compromise in the North-South positions. In the final text of the UNCCD emphasis was placed on multi-source funding approaches and the GM was established to "increase the effectiveness and efficiency of existing financial mechanisms" (UNCCD, Art. 21.4). Furthermore, the GM should also support the transfer of technology.

COP 1 decided that the GM should be housed at the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)⁵² and endorsed a collaborative institutional arrangement between IFAD, UNDP and the World Bank in support of the GM. Moreover, COP 1 called for active support to the GM from other UN institutions and programmes, development banks, NGOs and the private sector.⁵³ The GM describes itself as a "partnership builder that actively works on the interface between resources needed and resources available, between supply and demand, with the task of mobilising substantial resources for combating desertification and drought."⁵⁴ Furthermore, it acts as a "catalyst" and "broker" adding value to the interventions of other development partners.

GM's Operational Strategy, submitted to COP 3, includes the following reference to gender in the context of indigenous and traditional knowledge where it is stated: "...in particular, transfer of techniques and best practices, with emphasis on the role of gender and youth in development issues, will be given priority."

The GM has launched several initiatives to increase the capacity of civil society to participate actively in the implementation of the UNCCD, particularly the Community Exchange and Training Program (CETP). CETP's purpose is to "encourage the establishment of systematic dialogue and the exchange of experiences between natural resource users as a basis for building a partnership between local communities, the (central or local) government and other partners, including donors and NGOs."⁵⁵ Target groups are vulnerable stakeholders including women and participatory approaches should be applied. The Program was launched in 2000 at a capacity building session for Southern African countries and has since been replicated in 16 countries across Africa, Asia and Latin America. The Sub-Regional Action Plan, developed at the launching session, is being implemented by a number of NGOs. At COP 6, a special side event provided the opportunity to share lessons learned from the program and consult with other interested stakeholders. Participating women NGO representatives stressed that the CETP was seen as important for promoting the role of women.⁵⁶

An Independent Evaluation of the GM, commissioned by the COP was presented at COP 6. While gender-focused programming is included in the GM Operational Strategy and various activities funded by the GM such as the CETP, the Independent Evaluation Report does not include any assessment of this topic. Neither does the GM Business

⁵¹ Interviews with delegates.

⁵² Decision 24/COP.1, ICCD/COP(1)/11.

⁵³ Details on the operations of the GM available at www.gm-unccd.org/default.html

⁵⁴ www.gm-unccd.org/English/About/GM.htm

⁵⁵ For a description of the CETP : www.gm-unccd.org/English/Activities/Enabling.htm#Community

⁵⁶ Report from NGO Session at COP 5.

Plan 2003-2006 suggest any particular initiative in the direction of gender-focused programming. At the same time, a commitment is made to work with the Facilitation Committee to ensure that resources are made available to NGOs and community groups.⁵⁷

3.2.5 Ad Hoc Working Group and Committee on the Review of the Implementation of the Convention – ADWG/CRIC

In accordance with Article 26 of the UNCCD each Party to the Convention is required to report regularly on actions taken to implement the UNCCD. The first comprehensive reports on measures undertaken by country Parties were submitted to COP 3 (1999) for review at COP 4 (2000). To ensure that proper attention was given to the assessment process COP 3 also decided to establish an Ad Hoc Working Group (AHWG) for the review of the implementation of the UNCCD. The AHWG was given the mandate to “review and analyse in depth, at the fourth session, reports submitted ... in order to draw conclusions and propose concrete recommendations on further steps in the implementation of the Convention.”

After reviewing the report of the AHWG and taking into account the requirement for an ongoing review process of Reports on the implementation of the UNCCD, COP 4 decided to establish a permanent Committee to Review the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC). CST and the GM were invited “to provide information to be used for the review of the implementation of the Convention.”⁵⁸ The CRIC was formally established at COP 5 (2001) and completed review sessions in 2002 and 2003. A third session for an in-depth review of the UNCCD implementation in Africa is scheduled for the fall of 2004. African countries will therefore prepare updates of their national reports submitted for the first review session in 2001. As mentioned earlier, the Help-guide prepared by the UNCCD Secretariat to facilitate the first review process explicitly called for information on activities to promote the role of women and in fact, 8% of the recommended questions in the guidelines dealt with issues related to gender mainstreaming and the role of women. The updated Help Guide still calls for information on “gender balance of actors involved in defining NAP priorities” and urges countries to provide disaggregated information “whenever possible” for specific measures aimed at involving women. Likewise, countries are requested to provide information on male/female ratios in national coordination bodies for the NAP. But the number of questions that explicitly deal with women and gender issues have decreased significantly since the first Help Guide. Actually, only one specific question is left, namely “is gender and the private sector dimension a specific element of any program in the NAP?” The outcome of the new Help Guide and what will actually be reviewed and discussed during CRIC 3 regarding gender and the role of women is still to be seen.

As more NAPs are being developed and implemented, the CRIC mechanism should also become more prominent as an instrument for monitoring gender mainstreaming and the role of women in the implementation of the Convention. The “Interim report of the Co-Chairmen of the first session of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the review of implementation of the UNCCD” is encouraging in this regard when it states:

⁵⁷ www.unccd.int/cop/officialdocs/cop6/pdf/misc2eng.pdf

⁵⁸ Decision 3 COP.4; <http://www.unccd.int/cop/officialdocs/cop4/pdf/11add1eng.pdf>

“It was noted that considerable progress was being made on critical issues such as improved natural resources governance, land tenure or the promotion of women’s role in rural development.”⁵⁹

It should also be noted that in his concluding remarks to the AHWG session in April 2001, the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD, Ambassador Hama Arba Diallo stressed the need to put emphasis on women’s participation in the UNCCD and highlighted the lack of female participants in the government delegations.

3.3 United Nations and other Intergovernmental Organizations’ Contribution to the UNCCD Processes

Since the beginning of the INCD process, international organizations, specialized agencies of the United Nations System such as UNDP and UNEP, as well as other international intergovernmental and international organizations have participated in the proceedings. It goes beyond the scope of this publication to present in detail the contributions of the INCD process of the various agencies. Most Agencies have elaborate corporate gender policies that often formed the base for the contributions of the Agencies. As showed in Chapter 2 for instance, IFAD presented key background documents on the role of women in dryland management based on the Fund’s experience from Sub-Saharan Africa.

One Agency took a more prominent lead in developing specific programs in support of civil society participation and gender mainstreaming in the UNCCD, namely UNDP’s Soudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO). The following will present some of UNSO’s programs to promote the role of women as an example of the role of collaboration between a UN agency and NGOs in advancing, defining, and operationalizing activities for equal participation of men and women in the implementation of the UNCCD.

3.3.1 UNSO/UNDP

In response to the severe droughts in West Africa in the late 1960s and beginning of the 1970s, the UN Sahelian Office (UNSO) was created in 1973 by the UN General Assembly to assist in the humanitarian relief efforts. In 1976, UNSO’s geographical mandate was expanded to include 23 African countries in the Soudano-Sahelian region and at the same time the Office became part of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) while the activities gradually moved from relief efforts to dryland development activities. Over the years, UNSO implemented integrated community level projects based on participatory approaches and with special attention to the needs of women. UNSO participated actively in the preparation and follow-up to the UN Conference on Desertification (UNCOD) in Nairobi in 1977 and became more and more involved in national policy development and planning activities for the drylands. UNSO was therefore also closely involved in the preparation of Chapter 12 – the desertification chapter – of Agenda 21 and provided technical and financial support to the development of the UNCCD.

UNSO’s experience in dryland development was recognized by UNCED in 1992 and the Conference requested the Office to support dryland development activities in all developing countries affected by drought and desertification. In 1994, UNDP therefore reorganized UNSO as UNDP’s Office to Combat Desertification and Drought supporting

⁵⁹ ICCD/COP(4)/11/Add.1. <http://www.unccd.int/cop/officialdocs/cop4/pdf/11add1eng.pdf>

countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean in the operationalization of the UNCCD.⁶⁰ Over the following years, UNSO prepared a number of methodological concept papers and guidelines in order to facilitate the implementation of the UNCCD. This work was developed in cooperation with major partners such as NGOs, governments from both developed and developing countries, research institutions, and other UN agencies and the thematic areas included partnership building, participatory approaches, NGO networking, national desertification funds, and strengthening the role of women.

From the start of the negotiation phase of the UNCCD UNSO organized a number of formal and informal encounters with other partners to discuss the operationalization of the good intentions in the Convention, including gender-sensitive implementation. During INCD 10 (1997), UNSO, RIOD's⁶¹ Caucus on Women and Desertification, and CARE-Norge⁶² agreed to organize an International Workshop to develop concrete activities for the promotion of the role of women in the implementation of the UNCCD. The need for developing concrete activities stemmed from the conclusion that in spite of all the discussions and good intentions for gender mainstreaming and strengthening the role of women, it appeared that many discussions had almost become an end in themselves with no concern about implementation. Informal discussions with potential donors (particularly the "pro-women" Nordic governments referred to in Chapter 2.3) confirmed an interest in participating in one way or the other in bringing the workshop forward.

3.3.1.1 Oslo Workshop – Strategy for Strengthening the Role of Women

After further discussions on the modalities and concepts to be developed during the workshop, proposal writing, and negotiation with donors, the Government of Norway decided to provide financial and technical support. The discussions among the partners clearly showed the need for targeting all levels of the UNCCD and not reduce the issues of women in decision-making to "women in the field." It was felt that only through a coherent approach targeting decision-making at all levels would the UNCCD be able to make a difference in the live of women. The partners also agreed that the workshop should not deal with all elements regarding women and desertification - for instance technical solutions for fuel saving techniques - but rather focus uniquely on the decision-making processes in order to move away from "we know what the women need" to "let the women decide" what they and the communities, countries, etc. need in order combat desertification.

The objective of the workshop was defined as the development of a 12-month strategy and plan of action with concrete activities to promote the role of women in decision-making processes at all levels of the implementation of the UNCCD. Normally, gender strategies are being prepared by one or two consultants (gender specialists) who often work in isolation from the reality of the sector for which the gender strategy is intended. This is seen as a major cause for the lack of implementation of many strategies. The concept behind using a workshop for the elaboration of a strategy with many participants

⁶⁰ As part of UNDP's decentralization efforts, UNSO was transferred to Nairobi in 2001 and transformed into UNDP's Dryland Development Centre (DDC). More information available at www.undp.org/drylands

⁶¹ Réseau International des ONGs sur la Désertification – International NGO network on desertification.

⁶² Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere – CARE Norge (CARE in Norway) is one of 11 national and independent CARE organizations and has extensive experience in integrated community development projects in Africa with special focus on the role of women. More information available at www.care.no

already involved in the UNCCD process was therefore to produce a relevant strategy that would already have UNCCD practitioners buying in to it.

The workshop took place in Oslo in August 1997 with 30 participants who were specialists in different fields, including gender. As such, the organizers of the workshop found that the best combination of participants would be a mix people who had specific experience in dryland development and the UNCCD but no specific gender work, combined with gender specialists mostly with no former experience with the UNCCD. Furthermore, the participants came with relevant experience from governments, NGOs, research institutions, and the UN system. Still, all participated as resource persons in their personal capacities and not as representatives for their respective institutions. The agenda of the Workshop was designed to provide a rigorous structure that moved in a logical manner from general discussions of key concepts to a historical understanding of what had happened since 1994 regarding women and the UNCCD. This would then lead to the identification and analysis of issues that needed to be addressed and finally the elaboration of the Strategy and 12-months Plan of Action. It was also decided beforehand, that the Plan of Action should be tested for being realistic, feasible, concrete, effective, and comprehensive.

At the start of the Workshop, a special session on the introduction of the concept of gender was organized following a methodology where gender is introduced based on workshop participants' personal experience. The session proved very useful for all participants – both gender specialists and non-gender specialists all claiming to have learned something new reflecting that gender is a dynamic concept. Considering the positive feedback from participants as well as the requests for “gender specialists” that UNSO continued to receive from countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, it was decided that the two participants who facilitated the session, Ms. Edit Tuboly, and Ms. Roben Penny, would prepare “Guidelines for Conducting a Working Session to Introduce the Concept of Gender.” The booklet was published at the end of 1997 in several UN languages and was widely distributed to UNCCD practitioners in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean.

The main outcome of the workshop was a comprehensive strategy identifying goals at national/local, regional, sub-regional, and global level leading to the preparation of what proved to be key documents for moving the women and the UNCCD agenda forward. The Goals of the Strategy⁶³ were identified as:

1. Decentralized and gender sensitive planning and implementation processes, including national, sub-regional, and regional action plans to combat desertification,
2. Systematic gender sensitive funding mechanisms, including National Desertification Funds,
3. Institutionalized gender responsive partnerships in the implementation of the UNCCD,
4. Integration of gender issues in all implementation activities,
5. Significant progress toward gender equity and participation of women in decision-making bodies, and gender sensitization of representatives in those bodies is enhanced, and

⁶³ UNSO “Strategy Document – Strengthening the Role of Women in the Implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification” – UNSO/UNDP, October 1997.

6. Use of gender dimension criteria and indicators to monitor and report at the global level.

The Plan of Action for the implementation of the Strategy outlines measures, actions, priority, time frame, cost, and institutions responsible for moving the measure forward. For instance, one measure identified for reaching “Integration of gender issues in all implementation activities” (goal 4) was the “development of a framework for gender analysis and for the definition of a methodology and procedures to mainstream gender in national activities.” This measure would require the development of TORs and a Consultant. The measure was considered of high priority and estimated to be carried out during one month for a total cost of US\$ 10,000. UNSO was identified as the institution to facilitate the implementation of the activity – which would include the mobilization of necessary resources.

Following the Workshop, UNSO organized a panel discussion during INCD 10b (1997) to discuss the preliminary results from Oslo. The presentation served two purposes – firstly it allowed for checking the recommendations with a broader audience and secondly it raised awareness on the Strategy. At the same occasion UNSO also presented some reflection notes to stimulate the discussion including “Obstacles and Enabling Factors for Full Participation of Women in the COP, CST, and GM - Some thoughts on the role of women in the decision-making processes of the global bodies of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification⁶⁴” and “Linkages between global, regional, national, and local level of the strategy.”⁶⁵

3.3.1.2 Moving the Strategy ahead

In order to get wider use of the documents, UNSO chose to recruit a professional publisher to prepare documents that “looked nice and attractive.” Furthermore, all documents were deliberately prepared to be short and concise. The documents were presented as a Kit containing the Strategy Document, the 12-months Plan of Action, the Guidelines for Conducting an Introductory Session to the Concept of Gender, and additional background documents. All documents were published in English, French, and Spanish and distributed widely through UNDP’s decentralized system with Country Offices in more than 140 countries as well as through RIOD’s national focal points. The documents were also published on a special web site UNSO established for strengthening of the role of women. Moreover, partners in countries such as India translated the Plan of Action and part of the Strategy into local languages. The web site included case studies, other relevant documents, links, and a discussions forum as well.

During the year following the publishing of the Strategy, UNSO took advantage of other meetings and events throughout the world to present the program for Strengthening the Role of Women. This included both events in the framework of the UNCCD such as regional meetings but also events with a general gender agenda considered as relevant for dryland development. Some examples:

- At a workshop organized by the Southern African Development Community (SADC) on gender mainstreaming in the NAP processes in the 13 SADC countries, the Kit provided the general framework for discussions among participants representing government women machinery, UNCCD focal points, NGOs, and UN technical advisors. The concrete actions developed included plans for ensuring that gender

⁶⁴The reflection note was based on a background paper prepared by a consultant, Ms. Wagaki Mwangi from Econews/Kenya as an input to the Workshop on Strengthening the Role of Women in the Implementation of the UNCCD.

⁶⁵ The reflection note was based on the regional background papers presented at the Oslo workshop.

assessments would be integrated in all activities at local, national, and sub-regional level. South Africa provides a good example for follow-up activities to the SADC workshop. A gender specialist was recruited for the UNCCD Focal Point Institution and gender analysis of ongoing and planned activities were carried out.

- At a regional NGO workshop on gender mainstreaming for African NGOs, the Kit provided a framework for development of concrete activities. As an example can be mentioned that NGOs from Senegal launched activities at national level to monitor gender mainstreaming in the NAP activities.
- In Argentina, a meeting of the National Steering Committee on the NAP process (involving public and private sectors from the 17 provinces) included a full day for discussions regarding gender parity in the NAP process. The Kit was used as a basis for the discussion and the participants decided on follow-up activities such as a gender analysis of the NAP document.
- The Strategy and the 12 months Plan of Action were integrated as a major focus area in a joint program between UNSO and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) in support of the NAP processes in Central America and the Dominican Republic.

While the Strategy and Plan of Action were never implemented as such⁶⁶, the documents proved to be very useful in the dialogue with different partners such as NAP practitioners, government delegations to the INCD/COP process, UN organizations, and donor agencies. Partners often stressed that the documents gave a clear idea of what could be done and as such served as inspiration for development of concrete activities. Based on discussions with a number of NGOs and Government UNCCD focal points, we consider that the Strategy and Plan of Action together with the supplementary documents have been important for the attention given to gender issues in the initial activities for the implementation of the UNCCD at national level.

3.3.1.3 World Day to Combat Desertification

The final text of the UNCCD was approved on June 17, 1996 and the UN General Assembly decided to designate the day as the “World Day to Combat Desertification.” Over the years a number of activities have taken place at local, national, regional, and global level to commemorate the day and thereby draw public attention to dryland development challenges. Considering that 1999 was the five year mark for the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing) it was also the year were women and gender issues related to development were scrutinized generally in the preparation and organization of the special UN session on Beijing +5. In collaboration with NGO partners, UNSO therefore suggested to use the celebration of June 17 in 1999 to promote the role of women through a worldwide campaign that followed the Oslo Strategy.

The program was developed at two levels; a general media campaign that was carried out on June 17 combined with specific awareness raising and capacity building projects in a limited number of countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean in the three months leading up to the commemoration of the World Day.

⁶⁶ In fact, a strict evaluation looking only at goals and performance would probably show that the Strategy and Plan of Action were not successful, as the objectives were not met. On the other hand, an impact evaluation would probably show that the documents were successful.

The general media campaign included a press kit that was distributed to the media officers in all UNDP offices and as such distributed widely to the mass media in both developed and developing countries. The press kit included case studies highlighting how women successfully manage natural resources in the drylands of Iran, South Africa, Senegal, Brazil, China, and Mauritania and documented through written stories, photos, and a video and supported with background data. The press kit also contained background description of the UNCCD and the role it gives to women in the form of texts that could be used as stand alone articles or background for articles. In addition, UNSO prepared a number of proposals for op-ed articles signed by UNDP spokespersons and that were distributed to major newspapers during the months of May and June. A number of press briefings were organized around June 17 where UNSO presented the Role of Women and the UNCCD, including at the UN Secretary General's daily press briefings.

In addition to the general media campaign, UNSO collaborated with NGOs and Governments in 15 countries where national workshops were carried out with key players to assess bottlenecks for women's full integration in implementing the UNCCD. The workshops led to partnerships and networks with national institutions that committed to support to the process of gender mainstreaming of the UNCCD. In follow-up to the workshops concrete measures to improve the situation were implemented with special attention given to harmonization with national activities for the follow-up to the Beijing Conference on Women.

Some examples:

- In Ghana, Friends of the Earth organized a workshop with 122 participants from six rural communities, women institutions, government agencies, NGOs, CBOs, UN, traditional authorities, parliamentarians, and journalists. The participants identified poverty as the overall problem linked to gender inequality in the drylands. The follow-up activities included alternative income generating activities, credit, small dams to facilitate water access, and training of women in leadership skills.
- In Bolivia, UNDP in collaboration with the Sub-secretariat for Gender, Generations, and Family Matter (VAGGF) and the Ministry for Sustainable Development and Planning (MDSP) organized decentralized activities aiming at making women's activities related to land management, livestock, and family matters more visible. The major challenge was seen as women not being part of the institutionalized development schemes. The workshops suggested a number of solutions including the establishment of regional centers of experiences and gender sensitive budgeting.
- In Iran, the national NGO Cenesta organized workshops in Yazd and Tehran in collaboration with the government UNCCD focal point. The workshop participants included NGOs, donors, parliamentarians, central and local governments, and the UN and focused on traditional knowledge and stakeholder analysis. The workshop was the first occasion for all major stakeholders in dryland development to sit together and discuss challenges and options and it was particularly noted that women from the affected areas participated actively in the process.

This summary of the use of the World Day to combat Desertification is only a brief description of some of the activities. Unfortunately, the program was never evaluated, but UNSO received positive feedback and overall the program was seen as conducive to strengthen women's active participation in decision-making processes of the UNCCD.

3.3.5 Engendering the NAP processes

As the countries initiated the preparation of National Action Programs (NAPs) to combat desertification, more and more governments and NGOs contacted UNSO with requests for guidelines on how to address gender issues within the NAP processes. Furthermore, an assessment of the 41 progress reports African countries submitted to COP 2⁶⁷ on UNCCD implementation showed a widespread awareness that gender sensitive approaches should be applied in the implementation of the UNCCD. However, the reports also showed a need for more help on the “how-to” gender mainstream NAP processes.

A draft document “Guidelines for Engendering the NAP processes” was prepared by UNSO and presented at a workshop organized during COP 3. 67 persons from governments, NGOs, and multi-lateral agencies in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Caribbean, Europe, and North America participated in the workshop, which was seen as the first opportunity for a broad discussion on concrete ways to engender the NAP process. The participants represented all levels of the UNCCD implementation, including practitioners involved in the implementation at local level and heads of delegations to the COP as well as the Chairman of the CST. The draft document was partly based on experiences from Argentina, Senegal, and South Africa on empowering women to fully participate in dryland development. Small groups discussed each of the eight components identified in the Guidelines as key elements in the NAP process:

1. Basic arrangements for NAP facilitation,
2. Stakeholder identification,
3. Participation and Partnership Arrangements,
4. Review of National Plans, Strategies, Policies, and Legislative Measures related to dryland development,
5. Awareness Raising, Advocacy, and Information,
6. Development of Concrete Activities and Implementation,
7. Mechanisms for Monitoring and Evaluation,
8. Financial Mechanisms.

For each of the key elements the Guidelines presented an introduction, rationale for gender consideration for this particular element, possible directions for gender mainstreaming activities, and a checklist. The workshop led to some suggestions for the improvement of the Guidelines but also to discussions around some basic principles for gender mainstreaming that the participants found particularly significant, such as the importance of a participatory approach involving the grassroot level, strengthening of the national women machineries, and emphasis on women’s equal participation in leadership positions. Participants also stressed that all actors involved in the NAP process are responsible for applying gender sensitive approaches.

Finally, the workshop recommended that the document should be kept as a draft and open document allowing for frequent updating and participants agreed to use the

⁶⁷ Poulsen, Lene “Integration of gender concerns and special activities related to promote the role of women in dryland development activities in the implementation of the UNCCD – Assessment of African National Reports to COP 3”, UNSO/UNDP. 1999.

Guidelines as presented after the workshop and provide continuous suggestions for improvements. The Guidelines were updated to take the workshop comments into account and were then tested in various countries including Mexico and Uganda.

3.4 Civil Society Participation in the INCD Process

The “Rio Mentality” leading to increasing involvement of NGOs in international negotiations on sustainable development was also reflected in the INCD process. Reviewing documentation and discussing with INCD participants it becomes clear that the involvement of civil society organizations, particularly NGOs, throughout the process had a major impact on the final outcome. As such effective NGO lobbying throughout the INCD process was a major factor for the way the UNCCD recognizes the importance of women’s participation at all levels of dryland development

Already at the first INCD session, 84 civil society organizations and networks were accredited to participate. Over 50% of these were from the South with a strong representation of African groups. Among the 84 accredited organizations, eight specifically defined their program in relation to women by either carrying ‘women’ in the organization’s name or describing their work with and for women in the identification summaries.⁶⁸ Still other NGOs incorporated women-related programming in their mandate without this being spelt out in the summaries provided by the Interim UNCCD Secretariat. In terms of NGO delegates at the INCD sessions, men were by far in the majority. Some NGO delegates at the time observed that the equal participation of women was far from being implemented at the level of NGO representation.⁶⁹

In general terms, and not surprisingly, NGO delegates emphasized the need for strengthening of community-led programs targeting women. Many NGO delegates had long-term experience in this field of work. Yet, the issue of women’s participation in policy debate and the expressed focus on their direct involvement in the proceedings did not necessarily guarantee an in-depth priority concern for the majority of NGO delegates during the early negotiations. For example, at an informal NGO Meeting in Bamako in August 1993, organized by the Interim UNCCD Secretariat, the emphasis in NGO deliberations was on local and community issues, such as land tenure and on the consequences and difficulties for the communities resulting from limited access to land. Thus, the gender dimension was more implicit than spelled out. Other topics dealt with drought coping mechanisms and the need for community-led approaches to combat desertification; again without a specific reference to the role of women in these activities.

According to NGO participants at the time, the issue of gender mainstreaming and equal participation of women took a secondary place in their own approach to the early negotiations. The main concern was to ensure that Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and NGOs were given full participation in the various processes. Still, some women representatives, mainly from Africa, made their views heard and provided powerful evidence of the importance of their positions being taken into account. As one participant expressed, the continuity in attendance by many of the NGO delegates, both men and women, throughout the INCD process facilitated and promoted a growing influence of women’s voices. Consistently, and sometimes quite aggressively, women delegates insisted on their points of view.⁷⁰ For delegates from developed countries, the

⁶⁸ A/AC.241/9 List of accredited NGOs.

⁶⁹ Personal interviews.

⁷⁰ Personal interviews.

priority issue at the time was the North-South dialogue on the UNCCD and solidarity with NGOs from developing countries.

As mentioned earlier, the active participation of NGOs in the INCD had an important impact on the negotiation process and final outcome. Starting with INCD 1 the number of participating civil society groups increased substantially with every session (at the time of COP 6 in 2003 around 700 NGOs were accredited with 153 attending the session). It is also important to note that contrary to other multilateral agreements the majority of NGO delegates at the INCD/COP have represented southern organizations and groups and that there has been a noticeable absence of representatives of big international NGOs specializing in either environmental or women's issues. The active participation of NGOs created opportunities as well as challenges: a wealth of experience and expertise contributed to discussions and negotiations. At the same time, it soon became evident that there was a need for coordination on issues and approaches promoted by NGOs. Joint and agreed statements were expected from the official delegations. These had to be well thought through and policy positions argued to arrive at a consensus or compromise. While new ideas and concrete experiences in the struggle against desertification could be shared, many NGO representatives were new to the international negotiation and consultation processes and not familiar with the procedures required in the INCD context or how to use informal channels. Special parallel NGO meetings complemented the official sessions to discuss the wide range of issues relating to the UNCCD and to assist new delegates in understanding the main issues and procedures. These meetings also served as a forum for exchange of experience and the preparation of NGO statements and interventions.

Regularly during the NGO meetings of the early INCD sessions, a number of participants insisted that major priorities should include full participation of women in the UNCCD at all levels as well as pro-women programming at the local level. Yet, their concerns were expressed primarily at the level of general policy and principles. Many of the women-focused NGOs defined their priorities at the local and national levels in terms of special programming for women and by women, additional and separate financial resources to allow women to participate, and for capacity building programs to assist women in developing the necessary capacities. For instance, given their already heavy workload, women at the community level would require extra resources as well as motivation before they would be able and willing to participate as equal partners in the NAP design and implementation. Concrete experiences related to women's participation in dryland development activities were presented at many of the NGO meetings. Yet, for a number of reasons, comparative analysis and lessons learnt were seldom presented.

Nevertheless, putting the women's case on the agenda unremittingly and aggressively at internal NGO meetings also contributed to better-articulated NGO positions regarding the participation of women in the INCD and later in the COP. Practical examples of increasing the profile of women delegates at NGO meetings were the rotation of chairs at the meetings, of reporting, and presentation functions. The various leadership and facilitation roles were increasingly shared between men and women. An ongoing concern was the visibility of women in the official INCD sessions. Whatever the occasion - whether press meetings, informal sessions with officials, briefings, etc. - the issue of women was always referred to.

From the beginning of the INCD sessions, NGOs were invited by the Chair to make statements on behalf of all participating NGOs at the opening and plenary sessions. Normally, one of the NGO statements at the INCD Plenary Sessions was prepared and subsequently read by one of the women delegates. As an additional side benefit, the

strengthening of women's voices at the sessions contributed to women delegates growing in assurance and self-expression. This in turn augmented their confidence when negotiating with their own government delegations. One of the recurring topics raised in the NGO statements, was the issue of women participation in the UNCCD process at all levels. Another major issue for the NGOs was the equal participation of women and men in anti-desertification programs at the national and local levels.

For example, at the closing session of INCD 7, the representative of the Sudan Environmentalist Society and on behalf of the women NGO delegates, appealed for more women to participate at all levels in the preparation of NAPs; the allocation of designated funds by potential Parties for women's programmes; and increased numbers of women in the official delegations at INCD 8.

In the final NGO statement at the Closing Plenary of INCD 10bis, the NGO delegate of Friends of the Earth stated that the role foreseen for women within the Convention's text was not sufficiently reflected in the number and quality of their representation in the structures and mechanisms of the Convention.

3.4.1 The RIOD Network

From INCD 1 and onwards, NGOs participating in the sessions started to organize themselves into a loosely structured network. RIOD, an acronym taken from the French name, *Réseau International des ONG sur la Désertification* (International Network of NGOs working on Desertification) was formed in 1994 at an international NGO meeting organized in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The objectives of RIOD were defined as:

- coordinate activities for the UNCCD implementation,
- expand knowledge of desertification among their networks and communities, and
- facilitate and support civil society groups working in this field.

RIOD's Action Plan highlighted, among other priorities, "informing people in affected communities about the Convention and developing methods for consulting them about action to be taken and promoting women's involvement in the implementation of the Convention."⁷¹ The Action Plan was subsequently reviewed and updated during the Second Global RIOD Meeting held in Dakar, Senegal in 1999.

While the NGO participation in the INCD process created its own momentum regarding their influence on the UNCCD negotiation process, RIOD NGOs were also able to organize, or participate in, several international and regional meetings to pursue the implementation of their Action Plan and to develop policy strategies. For instance in 1996 RIOD participated actively in several meetings that focused on the UNCCD: a Pan-American regional NGO meeting was held in USA, a Mediterranean meeting was organized in France, an Afro-Asian NGO meeting in India, the first Asian regional NGO meeting held in Pakistan, and the first Latin American and Caribbean meeting organized in Peru. These meetings had been sponsored by various donors, including UNSO/UNDP and the INCD Secretariat and covered a range of topics concerning implementation of the Convention and how to strengthen North-South cooperation.⁷²

⁷¹ Summarized in the NGO report on the UNCCD for RIO+5 by the Steering Committee of RIOD, January 1997. Available at www.ecouncil.ac.cr/rio/focus/report/english/riod.htm

⁷² Summarized in the NGO report on the UNCCD for RIO+5 by the Steering Committee of RIOD, January 1997. Available at www.ecouncil.ac.cr/rio/focus/report/english/riod.htm

Two meetings are highlighted here for their particular importance in the context of this publication:

- The Euro-Mediterranean NGO Forum organized in Montpellier, France (December 1996) on the Implementation of the UNCCD brought together 60 representatives from NGOs, networks and research institutions from 19 countries (both North and South). The objectives of the workshop were to re-state NGOs and women's roles in the implementation of the Convention a few days prior to its entry into force (which took place on December 26) and to build on existing partnership arrangements in order to create new ones. Four workshops presented concrete recommendations for follow-up.⁷³
- The Afro-Asian Conference held in Hyderabad (December 1996) drew more than 100 participants from 62 countries. One of the major features of the Afro-Asian Forum was the four Round Table group discussions on the following themes:
 1. the role of different stakeholders in the implementation of the Convention decisions during the interim period (June 1994 to December 1996),
 2. the specific role and status of women in sustainable dryland development,
 3. networking and partnership building, and
 4. the role and relevance of media and advocacy.

The Round Table on women's role and status stressed the need for capacity building through organizing of women, training in on-farm and off-farm activities with emphasis on the value of education, alternative livelihoods and indigenous knowledge.⁷⁴

The two meetings are mentioned here for their particular importance for moving the gender-mainstreaming agenda for the UNCCD forwards. Among the outcomes were the support to the Women and Desertification Caucus established among NGOs attending the INCD sessions.

3.4.2 RIOD Women and Desertification Caucus

Informal meetings among a group of women NGO delegates had been organized from the beginning of the INCD sessions leading to the establishment during INCD 7 of the "Caucus on Women and Desertification" as part of the RIOD network. With the support and cooperation of UNDP/UNSO and several Governments, including Canada, the Caucus organised a Side Event Panel on "Women and Desertification" to introduce this new initiative and to discuss pertinent issues arising in the context of the INCD 7. The Women and Desertification Caucus, which would be open to all NGO delegates, had several objectives. First of all, its intention was to coordinate activities and share experiences among those who implement women-focused programs and to strengthen their capacity to engage communities in policy and awareness raising of the UNCCD and its importance for their local activities in the fight against desertification. At the same time, the NGO delegates of the Caucus intended to continue to sensitize and lobby delegates at the INCD and COPs to move the women's participation issue to a higher policy level and to strengthen the representation of women at all levels of the UNCCD structures, from delegations to the Bureau to the percentage of professional

⁷³ INCD 10, ECO#7, 15 January 1997 (Daily bulletin of RIOD published during the INCD sessions).

⁷⁴ INCD 10, ECO#9, 17 January 1997

women staff at the UNCCD Secretariat. It was furthermore the objective to explore common ground among interested stakeholders on new strategies for the implementation of the UNCCD at the national, regional and international levels.

Again at INCD 9 the RIOD's Caucus on Women and Desertification organized a Side Event with presentations on:

- Women's access to credit,
- Women, land tenure, and ownership, and
- Pilot projects to inform rural women about the UNCCD and prepare them for participation in the UNCCD.

Interventions from Kenya, Uganda, India, Mali, South Africa, among others, presented concrete examples of women's involvement in anti-desertification programs. Several participants explained how access to credit and land tenure would have a major positive impact on the well-being of rural communities and the environment in the drylands. It was stressed in several case studies that the predominance of men in decision-making did hinder the implementation of local programs in the fight against desertification.⁷⁵

3.4.3 Open Dialogue Sessions (ODS)

On several occasions during INCD sessions, delegates pointed out that it would be useful and important to hear about case studies and experiences from civil society groups to provide examples of good practices as well as lessons learned from projects at community level. Some delegates commented on the professed drawback of working primarily at an abstract level during the negotiations. The Side Events during INCD sessions presented one opportunity but, given tight schedules and other commitments of delegates, only a small number was able to attend these.

A special one-day NGO Forum was organized during COP 1 to provide delegates and NGOs a platform to dialogue on issues of common interest and concern. While one of the subjects addressed local experiences and traditional knowledge, another one was specifically addressing "Gender, Desertification, Drought and Poverty". The INCD Chairman, Ambassador Bo Kjellén chaired this workshop which was organized by the Women and Desertification Caucus and moderated by one of its members. Among the issues presented were the specific role required for women in the development of the National Action Program (NAP in Sudan and the realities and constraints faced by women in the fight against desertification at community level in Uganda and Mali. These presentations focused on how women as natural resource managers at the field level suffer from the impacts of drought and desertification.⁷⁶ While it was important to highlight experiences of women at the grassroots level through the presentation of case studies, several participants have highlighted the need for a more thorough analysis of women's opportunities and challenges in dryland development. Nevertheless, efforts were made to highlight strategic issues in the following dialogue. It should also be noted that the fact that women (and men) from local organizations took the plenary floor of the COP and addressed the Conference was in itself a major achievement. The impact of

⁷⁵ Report produced by Cecilia Kinuthia-Njenga, ELCI, available in French at: www.enda.sn/energie/desertif/15gen.htm#FEMMES; the newsletter includes abstracts of papers presented as well as other relevant references to Women and Desertification.

⁷⁶ ECO, Numéro spécial. COP 1, 6.10. 97. Report of the session:

the presentations on women's issues did have an as the recommendations emanating from the presentations found endorsement by a considerable number of delegates.⁷⁷

Starting with the Forum at COP 1 one or two Open Dialogue Sessions (ODS) are normally organized during the COPs by the Women Caucus in collaboration with other NGO delegations and the UNCCD Secretariat. Actually, a decision at COP 1 institutionalized these events to allow government delegates and NGOs to share experiences and engage in a constructive dialogue. The ODS sessions are generally appreciated by the Delegates.

At COP 3 the Open Dialogue Session focused on the participation of women in the NAP process. In his opening statement to the session the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD, Ambassador Hama Arba Diallo stressed the need to strengthen the involvement of women in activities to combat desertification; particularly since women play a major role in natural resource management. He furthermore encouraged Parties to ensure women's involvement in formulation and implementation of NAPs. Among the various interventions on women's equal participation in the NAPs, a delegate from Mali emphasized the importance of identifying development projects for women by women; to acquire visibility in the decision-making process; and to promote decentralized, gender-oriented processes and access to financing mechanisms for gender awareness. The recommendations from this ODS were reflected in COP 3's closing session where, it was recommended, *inter alia*, that Parties should be encouraged to assess and evaluate progress in women's participation through the appropriate application of benchmarks and indicators. Moreover, Parties were requested to take measures to ensure that women's capacities to participate in the design and implementation of dryland development activities, particularly at the grassroots level, would be reinforced through NAPs. The medium term plan for the Secretariat also emphasized as one of the priorities support to the promotion of the role of women as well as of NGOs and other groups.

During COP 4, the lack of substantive civil society involvement in the design and implementation of the NAPs was reiterated in the opening statement by the NGO representative and a catalogue of "to-dos" was listed. The Parties were urged to promote and encourage the establishment of indicators for assessing the participation of civil society in the design and implementation of the convention and for the mainstreaming of gender. "Mr. Chairman, we all are aware that there is no alternative to the participation of civil society for the successful implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification. We therefore urge the Parties to allow for the establishment of indicators for assessing the participation of civil society in the design and implementation of the Convention, as well as for the mainstreaming of gender."⁷⁸

One of the two Open Dialogue Sessions at COP 4 was again organized and moderated by members of the Women and Desertification Caucus. The presentations and the ensuing debate with delegates represented a comprehensive effort for mainstreaming gender issues into the debate at the COP. Several concrete recommendations were presented by the Caucus and subsequently endorsed by a number of delegations.⁷⁹ To ensure the endorsement, the recommendations were presented in a document and informally discussed with several government delegates from the different regional groups. The document recommended *inter alia* better cooperation with all stakeholders

⁷⁷ Personal interviews.

⁷⁸ The full statement is available at www.forumue.de/forumaktuell/positionspapiere/00000014.html

⁷⁹ Report by the NGO moderator of the ODS.

including women at the local level and the integration of NGOs' NAP progress reports into the national reports on NAPs.

It may appear that the strong participation of NGO women delegates in COP 4 led to the assumption that women were sufficiently integrated into the process; at least as far as NGO participation at the COPs were concerned. Anyhow, it was felt that a separate women's caucus or special focus on the role of women through separate initiatives was no longer required. The results of COP 5 and COP 6 demonstrate that this approach may have been somewhat premature. At COP 5, NGO women delegates participated in the proceedings, yet the emphasis on gender issues had waned. The two Open Dialogue Sessions, while focusing on the general themes for the preparation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002 (WSSD), the issue of women's participation and gender mainstreaming took a back seat. The Women and Desertification Caucus did not hold any separate group meetings either as priority was given to regional group meetings among NGOs.

In the preparation of COP 6, a proposal to have one of the ODS organized and moderated by NGO women delegates, was sidelined and criticized in the NGO discussion forum as being superfluous and no longer necessary. In the event, both ODSs were moderated by men and the first ODS, on water and resource management - a topic of interest and concern to women - did not even include a woman panellist. The second ODS, which focused on pastoralism and agroforestry, showed a better balance and the two presentations by women delegates were highly praised by participants. As a result of these re-emerging trends, it was probably not surprising that at the end of COP 6, calls re-emerged for the reinvigoration of the Women and Desertification Caucus. It has also been noted that the Caucus should have a higher profile at COP 7. Incidentally, the statistics of the composition of NGO delegations in COP 6 might also give some additional reasons for a review of gender balance among NGO participants: According to the UNCCD Secretariat list of NGO delegates at COP 6, 153 delegates were registered. Of these only 34 were women, representing just over 22%. While the delegation of Cuban NGOs had the highest participation of women with 15 out of the 36 delegates, once this delegation is omitted from the calculation, the percentage of women participants was even lower: 16%. This figure is not much more encouraging than the percentage of women on the Roster of Experts with 15%, which has been, rightly, heavily criticized by NGOs.

The UNCCD is definitely a result of the interaction of many different groups such as governments, NGOs, and UN agencies. The UNCCD negotiations were generally seen as sessions of positive relationships between the different groups and several official delegates have expressed that the constructive participation of NGOs that government representatives had witnessed during the INCD and COP sessions had also assisted them to promote a more conducive environment for collaboration with NGOs in their own countries and to work more closely with them.

As we have shown women's participation and gender mainstreaming have been on the agenda of the UNCCD since the beginning of the INCD negotiations particularly because of insistence and perseverance of the various groups. The partnerships between UN agencies and different NGOs - and not exclusively those represented by women - contributed to getting gender concerns on the agenda of the UNCCD, while the engagement of a growing number of government delegations kept the issues in the forefront of the debates on the implementation mechanisms of the Convention.

Chapter 4 Are women and gender still a concern in the implementation of the UNCCD?

Six years have passed since the UNCCD became legally binding and the Convention should now be in full implementation in the more than 100 countries affected by drought and desertification that through their ratification have committed to obligations laid out in the UNCCD⁸⁰. In this new phase, stakeholders involved in the design and implementation of programs might feel that there are too many priorities to respond to – and too little resources. So is the commitment to promoting equality between men and women still a priority?

At the end of 2003, more than 56 countries had presented National Action Programs (NAPs) that were ready for implementation⁸¹ and in many cases concrete field activities had already been initiated. A review⁸² of 56 NAPs⁸³ available as well as national reports to the COP on national implementation reveals that for the vast majority of countries in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean the commitment to promoting the role the women has not been forgotten. However, countries of the Northern Mediterranean Annex seem to avoid considerations regarding gender or the role of women within the UNCCD implementation activities. While it is still too early to make an impact assessment of the NAPs, the following will show some of the major trends in terms of methodologies and approaches that the countries have chosen to promote equality between men and women in the implementation of the UNCCD.

More than seven countries have outlined detailed program areas as part of their NAPs specifically for women's empowerment or gender mainstreaming in addition to activities to promote equality between women and men within other program areas of the NAPs. Other NAPs do not have detailed and specific action areas on the role of women and/or gender mainstreaming as such, but still include participation of women as one of the overall objectives of the NAPs.

Some countries have long traditions for national policies on gender equality and have already well-developed frameworks that can be used in implementing the NAPs. The NAP-Uganda, for instance, outlines the enabling environment for gender mainstreaming established by the Government since 1986, including the Constitution that stipulates that women must make up one third of the seats on councils and committees at all levels. The NAP-Zambia integrates the Zambian Policy on Gender that focuses on reducing the existing gender inequality at all levels with special emphasis on promoting women's welfare. On the other hand, the NAP-Tunisia recognizes that the NAP activities will contribute to achieving the objectives of the 9th five-year development plan regarding women's participation in natural resource management.

⁸⁰ As of February 2004, 190 countries are Parties to the UNCCD with Timor Leste being the last country to deposit its accession in August 2003 and thereby becoming Party in November 2003.

⁸¹ The National Action Programs (NAPs) are the central operational mechanism for the UNCCD. A key principle of the NAPs is that they should be iterative processes with constant monitoring and updating. As such, the UNCCD calls for NAP processes instead of NAP documents. This also means that a "final" NAP does not exist.

⁸² This chapter is based on Poulsen, Lene "Promotion of the Role of Women in the Implementation of the UNCCD" – paper presented at IUCN's Global Biodiversity Forum, Havana, Cuba August 1993. Available at www.gbf.ch

⁸³ In some cases only summaries were accessible at the time of the assessment.

Many countries specifically describe the involvement of women in the NAP preparation; particularly with the participation of women's organizations such as the Federation of Female Associations in Senegal and the National Women's Council in Mongolia. For cultural reasons, some countries have decided to organize special events for women and men and Morocco for instance finds that many women will only be able to participate actively in the planning process when groups separated by sex are established. Similarly, Yemen has chosen to establish permanent commissions for men and women respectively. Most of the NAPs that address the role of women and gender equality put emphasis on capacity building. Benin, for instance, plans to support independent local organizations for women to strengthen their capacity to participate in the NAP process and Mali will build capacity in environmental management for all NAP stakeholders with special attention to women. Several NAPs plan for regular training on gender equality for the various NAP stakeholder groups. NAP-Ethiopia is an example of this and the planned activities include training of male extension agents on how to include gender aspects in dryland development programs.

The majority of the NAPs describe women's conditions in the drylands as unequally demanding compared to men's; particularly with respect to the workload linked to fuel wood and water collection but also in terms of "double" responsibilities - both for the household and for the field work. Furthermore, many NAPs recognize that women are often not targeted for rural support services such as credit, extension services, and land titles. While some NAPs respond to part of the outlined problems for women in dryland development, many outlined constraints are not followed-up by concrete actions including access to credit and extension services and sometimes actions are described in very general terms without any description about how this will happen.

Linked to the "how to" is the "with what". For many years now, proponents for equality between men and women have stressed the need for special budgets and/or budget lines. Some countries, such as Zambia, Tunisia, and Kenya include special budget lines for the activities to strengthen the role of women and gender mainstreaming. Generally, these budget allocations are relatively small, amounting to about 3% of the overall budget. Future evaluations will have to assess whether the allocated resources were sufficient.

The need for specific indicators and benchmarks on gender, the role of women in dryland development, and the conditions of women as causes and consequences of desertification processes have been highlighted at many occasions throughout the INCD/COP process as we have described earlier. Still, looking at the NAPs and national reports, very few indicators on the equality between men and women have been suggested. Cap Verde suggests as an indicator "Equal participation of men and women in all phases of the NAP (from concept to implementation)" while NAP-Bolivia refers to women's participation in its monitoring and evaluation plan. Still, in order to monitor if women and men have the same opportunities sex-disaggregated⁸⁴ data at all levels would be required as recognized in the desertification chapter (Chapter 12) of Agenda 21. But as mentioned earlier, this provision was left out in the final text of the UNCCD and there seems to be very little attention to the issue at the implementation of the

⁸⁴ While sex-disaggregated data and indicators are necessary it should be noted that such measures only show what each sex is doing and they do not provide any information on gender equality *per se*. Indicators on gender relations as such showing the differences and unequal distribution in power and influence between men and women should be based on qualitative information about the relations and relative social and cultural status of men and women. This type of information is collected through interviews with men and women.

UNCCD at country level. Some countries plan research programs that could be useful to establish proper benchmarks and indicators on gender issues. As such, Uganda-NAP plans research on involvement of all stakeholders in the NAP process with special attention to gender issues while NAP-Eritrea suggests research on the impact on women's conditions from land use change – including urbanization.

In terms of general approach to gender and the role of women, it should be noted that there is a tendency in many NAPs and national reports to consider women as a stakeholder group - often mentioned on the same line as farmers, pastoralists, governments, and NGOs. This might partly be in response to the UNCCD itself that calls for “participation of local communities, including women, farmers, and pastoralists. Similarly, women, youth and children are often lumped together and seen as one group, as in Agenda 21 in fact, and the UNCCD itself calls for awareness campaigns to ensure participation of women and youth which might mask different agendas of women and youth.

Another misconception of gender and the promotion of equality between men and women that can be found in several NAPs is the perception that women are more gender sensitive than men. So while gender training of male NAP participants will provide positive capacity building it is probably just as important for female participants. Similarly, it is positive that terms of reference for the NAP Steering Committee include a gender focal point. However, some countries state that the position will be filled with a woman.

Still, considering the enormous challenges in establishing an innovative model for international environmental governance based on principles such as participatory approaches, socio-economic development, and gender mainstreaming, it is remarkable that only six years after the UNCCD became legally binding, it seems to be the norm that national strategies to combat desertification inevitably have to integrate gender considerations.

Looking back at the more than 10 years that have passed since the launch of the UNCCD negotiations it is evident that the Convention is an outstanding Multilateral Environmental Agreement (MEA). Of particular importance is the recognition by all involved groups that in order to achieve sustainable dryland development women at all levels must be empowered. As such, the UNCCD has often been mentioned as an innovative instrument with strong political commitments; including the commitments to promote equality between men and women.

As we have seen in this document, many different stakeholder groups have been essential in the way the role of women was integrated in the final text of the UNCCD. Moreover, the same stakeholder groups have played an important role in ensuring that the role of women is considered in the implementation of the Convention and so far positive results can be observed in the National Action Programs that have been prepared in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The Convention has also made significant progress to internalize equality between men and women in the governance of the UNCCD and there has been an increasing participation of women at the governing bodies over the years. Still, there is still a long way to go before women and men are represented equally and calls for rectifying gender inequality have been repeated by various delegates at each Conference of the Parties (COP), particularly regarding the low participation of women in the Roster of Experts, the Ad Hoc Panels, and in the NAP processes in general.

During the six COP sessions that have taken place so far, discussions on the role of women and gender mainstreaming have not had a prominent role in plenary discussions of either the COP itself or the Commission on Science and Technology (CST). Looking at the decisions from the different sessions, gender aspects and the role of women are only referred to in a very limited way with general conclusions and recommendations that require substantial work before they can be translated into operational activities. As such, COP 6 invited partners to promote “gender-sensitive capacity-building measures” for the NAP processes, urged countries to submit more female candidates for the Roster of Experts, and requested indicators on participation of “women and youth” in the Help Guide for the national reporting on the UNCCD implementation.

Special side events and panels such as the Open Dialogue Sessions (ODS) between NGOs and Government delegates organized during the COP sessions have focused on the role of women at many occasions but mainly limited to women’s role as environmental care takers at the local level. Likewise, the decisions at the different sessions only refer to aspects of gender and the role of women in a very limited way.

From the discussions with key persons who have participated in the UNCCD process since the early and defining moments in the preparation of the Rio Summit, it becomes clear that because the UNCCD was more closely linked to local development and poverty eradication than other MEAs such as the Biodiversity (CBD) and Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conventions, the issue of women became a natural part of the negotiations. Furthermore, it has also been recognized by many INCD and COP participants that the issue of women was the “tone of the day” as we have shown in chapter 2. Still, some key factors for promoting equality between men and women in

general such as sex-disaggregated data is often absent from the discussions and are not even part of the UNCCD.

At the field level, it is generally recognized that women lack a number of services such as credit, property rights, and targeted extension services but concrete initiatives to address this challenge within the UNCCD have been limited so far, although some recently prepared National Action Programs plan for special initiatives. The operationalization of these initiatives still need to be developed and in fact, several resource persons interviewed for this publication have stated that the issue of the role of women and gender is often limited to rhetoric and that there almost seems to be void in terms of concrete activities. This might be the result of capacity limitations and it should be analyzed and addressed in future UNCCD initiatives.

Another important issue also emerges from the discussions with various INCD/COP key persons. Many refer to the leadership of individuals from specific Governments, UN agencies, and NGOs that have taken on the issue almost as a personal agenda and worked relentlessly to ensure that women in the drylands would gain from the UNCCD. But this also means, that when those individuals have moved to other positions, a lack of leadership has been observed resulting in a discontinuity of important programs and activities.

As all stakeholders seem to agree that women and men should have equal opportunities within the UNCCD, an institutional leadership should be identified by the Parties to ensure that the issue will receive the full attention it deserves on a continued basis. Several institutional measures could promote such a leadership, including the recruitment of a gender focal point at a senior level within the UNCCD Secretariat and the establishment of a Task Force on Gender Equality. Needless to say that budgetary allocations should support these measures.

To monitor and provide guidance for the implementation of the UNCCD, the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) is expected to play an important role in the future of the UNCCD. The importance of equality between men and women in the governance of the UNCCD was already highlighted by the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD at his final statement to the Ad Hoc Review Committee that met before the establishment of the CRIC as a permanent institution. Furthermore, the Help Guides prepared by the UNCCD Secretariat for the review process explicitly refer to the role of women in decision-making as well as specific activities to promote the role of women in dryland development activities and programs. Still, as the Help Guides have developed there seems to be a decreasing importance given to the assessment of the role of women and gender equality. So far, CRIC has not planned any thematic review but it would be important to have a special session at each CRIC dedicated to the follow-up to the commitments in the UNCCD regarding the role of women. The discussion should also include development of appropriate benchmarks and indicators as well as suggestions for proper integration of issues related to the role of women and gender mainstreaming in future versions of the Help Guides. Gender experts from other fields could be invited to animate these discussions.

We have highlighted the importance of NGOs in the INCD/COP processes. At most session, NGO delegates have restated the importance of gender mainstreaming and women's involvement at all levels of decision-making. Yet, most of the statements have not been followed-up or substantiated by concrete experience from NGO sponsored activities at local, national, and regional levels. As has been reflected in this publication, COP delegates have often expressed their interest in hearing and learning more about

NGO's concrete experience and it would be recommended that NGOs follow-up to this request. The Women Caucus should be revitalized and good practices should be documented and promoted by the NGO community. This could be done in collaboration with the UNCCD Secretariat that recently launched an initiative to document good practices of women's role in combating desertification. It would be useful to expand this initiative not only to include "stories from local communities" as planned now but to include good practices of gender equality at all levels of dryland development.

The implementation of the UNCCD has witnessed a number of initiatives including the establishment of Regional Coordination Units, Thematic Program Networks, Regional and Subregional Action Programs; some of which have special gender mainstreaming activities, South-South Cooperation, Harmonization of Public Policies, Synergies between the Rio Conventions, Dryland Development Initiative - to name a few. Recently, the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) has launched an Operational Program (OP15) providing substantial support to the implementation of the UNCCD. All these initiatives will have significant impact on the outcome and effectiveness of the UNCCD and it will be important that a Gender Focal point in the UNCCD Secretariat will be empowered to ensure proper monitoring of the various activities from a gender equality perspective including guidance as to how gender equality could be incorporated. As suggested above, the Gender Focal Point should collaborate with a Task Force on Gender Equality which should integrate a wide range of stakeholders such as Government Representatives, NGOs and other representatives from Civil Society, Research Institutions, and other UN agencies. As has been shown in this publication many of these stakeholders launched substantial programs and activities to promote the role of women in the UNCCD. These support activities have been crucial for the implementation of the Convention but unfortunately many of them have been discontinued to the detriment of the UNCCD. The Task Force on Gender Equality would have an important role to revitalize coherent support programs to promote equality between men and women in the implementation of the UNCCD.

Finally, it should be noted that 2004 marks the tenth year of the adoption of the UNCCD. We hope that the document will assist any efforts to undertake a 10-year review of the progress achieved. As well, we wish that it has provided incentives to strengthen activities to ensure that men and women will have the same opportunities in the implementation of the UNCCD.

Annexes

Annex 1 - Acronyms and Terms

Agenda 21	One of the major outcomes of the Earth Summit (UNCED, 1992) outlining how to ensure economic, social, and environmental sustainability in a number of different fields.- www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/agenda21/index.htm
AHWG	Ad Hoc Working Group on the review of implementation of the UNCCD – established to review reports regarding UNCCD implementation submitted by country Parties and other Partners such as UN agencies. The AHWG was followed by the permanent subsidiary body CRIC established at COP5.
CBD	UN Convention on Biodiversity – www.cbd.org
CBO	Community based Organization
CCD	See UNCCD
CETP	Community Exchange and Training Program. Established by the GM to provide a framework for systematic exchanges between local communities - www.gm-unccd.org/FIELD/Multi/GM/CETPeng.pdf
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency - www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/index-e.htm
Convention	Refers here to a formal and legally binding multilateral agreement with a broad number of Parties
COP	Conference of the Parties - The highest authority for the Convention constituted by those countries that have ratified the Convention and as such are Parties of the Convention. Does also refer to the regularly held sessions of the COP – e.g. COP 1 meaning the first session of the COP.
CRIC	Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention. Established by COP 5 in 2001 as a subsidiary body to review reports prepared by countries and other partners such as UN agencies on the implementation of the UNCCD.
CST	Committee of Science and Technology Subsidiary body of the COP established by the UNCCD to provide information and advise on scientific and technological aspects related to combating desertification and mitigating drought.- www.unccd.int/cop/cst/menu.php
Desertification	The UNCCD defines desertification as “land degradation in arid, semi-arid, and dry subhumid areas resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities.” The Convention furthermore defines land degradation as the economic and biological loss from resulting from drylands. So put simply, desertification is loss of opportunities in the drylands.
EU	European Union
ECO	Bulletin produced by RIOD and the NGO community for distribution to all participants daily during the sessions of the INCD and COP
ENB	Earth Negotiation Bulletin issued by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD). Independent reporting service

	providing information on multilateral environment and development negotiations. - www.iisd.ca/enbvol/enb-background.htm
Gender	Gender is generally defined in terms of the rules and roles that society assigns for men and women. As such society “constructs” attitudes, behaviors, and expectations for males and females.
Gender Equality	Men and Women have the same possibilities to develop their personal abilities and make choices without any limitations. Needs, values, and aspirations of Women and Men are valued equally
G77	Governmental Group formed in 1969 to harmonize negotiating positions of developing countries within the UN system. Now representing 135 countries. – www.g77.org
GoE	Group of Experts established under the CST
GM	Global Mechanism – established within the UNCCD to facilitate mobilization of financial and technical resources for the implementation of the UNCCD. – www.gm-unccd.int
GRULAC	Regional Group in the framework of the UN comprising Latin America and the Caribbean States
IADB	Inter-American Development Bank
IDRC	International Development Research Centre. Established in 1970 as a public corporation of the Government of Canada focusing on developing countries. - www.idrc.ca
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development. UN Agency. - www.ifad.org
IISD	International Institute for Sustainable Development. Canadian private organization promoting follow-up to the UNCED through analysis, knowledge networks, and reporting from negotiation processes. www.iisd.ca
INCD	Inter-Governmental Negotiation Committee on Desertification Committee established by the UN General Assembly in response to Agenda 21’s call for the preparation of a UN Convention to Combat Desertification and Drought. INCD was organized in January 1993 and had five substantial sessions before the adoption of the final text of the UNCCD on June 17, 1994. During the interim period between the adoption of the UNCCD and its entry into force (December 1996) with the ratification of 50 countries the INCD met six times.
JUSCANZ	Geo-political grouping In the context of UN of non-European industrialized States: Japan, USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Often joined by Chile, Mexico, Norway, Switzerland, and South Korea (JUSSCANNZ)
Major Groups	Terms used in Agenda 21 to describe groups considered of crucial importance for achieving sustainable development: Women, Children and Youth, Indigenous People, Non-governmental Organizations, Local Authorities, Workers and Trade Unions, Business and Industry, Scientific and Technological Communities, and Farmers.
MEA	Multilateral Environmental Agreement Agreement between states on issues considered of international environmental concern. The agreements can either be a non-legally binding as for instance a declaration or legally-binding as a ratified convention.
NAP	National Action Program – key operational mechanism for the UNCCD.
NGO	Non-governmental Organization

OAU	Organization of African Union – unites 53 Africa States – now AU: African Union. - www.africa-union.org
ODS	Open Dialogue Session between NGOs and Delegates within the context of the Conferences of Parties of the UNCCD
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development – Governmental organization established in 1961 to promote the interests of industrialized countries. OECD now unites 30 countries often referred to as developed countries (EU countries (incl. 4 new members Poland, Slovak Republic, Czech Republic, and Hungary), North America, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico, South Korea, Norway, Iceland, Switzerland, and Turkey). – www.oecd.org
Parties	Countries that have ratified or accessed (e.g. legally adopted) an international agreement such as the UNCCD
PACD	Global Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, UNCOD 1977. - http://infoserver.ciesin.org/docs/002-478/002-478.html
Regional Groups	Within the UN context, countries are traditionally organized into five regional groups: Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean (GRULAC) and Western Europe and Others (WEOG). The main function of the regional groups is nomination and of candidates for election of Bureaux for which there a regional distribution normally is sought.
RIOD	Réseau International des ONG sur la Désertification – International NGO Desertification Network. – www.riodccd.org
SADC	Southern African Development Community. Intergovernmental Organization representing 14 countries in Southern Africa. – www.sadc.int
Side Event	An open event during major conferences to address specific issues of relevance of the overall conference program often debated in more thoroughly for instance through panel discussions.
Stakeholders	Groups or individuals with a special interest/stake in a policy or decision.
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. – www.unfccc.int
UNCCD	UN Convention to Combating Desertification and Drought. – www.unccd.int
UNCED	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (often referred to as the Earth Summit or the Rio Conference). - www.un.org/geninfo/bp/enviro.html
UNCOD	UN Conference on Desertification held in Nairobi 1977. - http://infoserver.ciesin.org/docs/002-478/002-478.html
UNDP	UN Development Programme. – www.undp.org
UNEP	UN Environment Programme. – www.unep.org
UNSO	UNDP Office to Combat Desertification and Drought – now Dryland Development Center, DDC. - www.undp.org/drylands
WEOG	In the UN context one of the Regional Group comprising Western European and Other States. The “others” being Australia, Canada, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, and US.
WSSD	World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002 (also referred to as the Johannesburg Summit). - www.johannesburgsummit.org

Annex 2 – INCD, COP, CST, and CRIC sessions

INCD 1	May/June	1993	Nairobi
INCD 2	September	1993	Geneva
INCD 3	January	1994	New York
INCD 4	March	1994	Geneva
INCD 5	June	1994	Paris
INCD 6	January	1995	New York
INCD 7	August	1995	Nairobi
INCD 8	February	1996	Geneva
INCD 9	September	1996	New York
INCD 10	January	1997	New York
INCD 10bis	August	1997	Geneva
COP/CST 1	October	1997	Rome
COP/CST 2	December	1998	Dakar
COP/CST 3	November	1999	Recife
COP/CST 4	December	2000	Bonn
COP/CST 5	October	2001	Geneva
COP/CST 6	August/September	2003	Havana
COP/CST 7	To be announced	2005	To be announced
AHWG	April/May	2001	Bonn
CRIC 1	November	2002	Rome
CRIC 2	September	2003	Havana
CRIC 3	Fall	2004	To be announced

Annex 3 – Suggestions for Further Reading

In addition to the web-links we have presented throughout the document, including references in Annex 1 on acronyms and terms, we recommend the following publications on the gender, women, and dryland development:

Blanco Lobo, Montserrat and Velásquez Gutiérrez Margarita “De Aciertos y Desiertos – Equidad de Género en Ecosistemas de Tierra Seca” 2003, IUCN and HIVOS.

M. Laudazi “Gender and Sustainable Development in the Drylands: An Analysis of Field Experiences”, 2003, FAO. www.fao.org/DOCREP/005/J0086E/J0086E00.HTM

Kirjavainen, Leena M. and Riikka Rajalahti, Riikka “Gender Issues in Dryland Rehabilitation in Forest Programmes”, Paper presented at the Workshop on Dryland Rehabilitation, in Khartoum, Sudan, during October 27 November 4, 2000.
<http://honeybee.helsinki.fi/tropic/workshop/kirjavainen.htm>

CSD NGO Women's Caucus. Position papers, resources, links, activities towards Earth Summit 2002. www.earthsummit2002.org/wcaucus/csdngo.htm .

Poverty-Environment Gender Linkages. Off-Print of the DAC Journal 2001, Volume 2, No 4 www.oecd.org/dataoecd/47/46/1960506.pdf

UNSO Position papers, background notes, guidelines and studies for the program “Strengthening the Role of Women in the CCD”. www.undp.org/seed/unsowomen.