

16 January 2019

English only

Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention**Seventeenth session**

Georgetown, Guyana, 28–30 January 2019

**The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
Gender Action Plan as a mechanism for improving the living
conditions of affected populations: first experiences and the
way forward***Summary*

This document contains information supplementary to document ICCD/CRIC (17)/4 for use by Parties for an informed interactive dialogue session on the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Gender Action Plan (GAP) as a tool for improving the living conditions of affected populations. First experiences and the way forward.

Section I introduces the GAP, highlighting both the benefits of its implementation and the importance of gender equality for achieving land degradation neutrality.


Under section II, the document presents an overview of the findings from the reports submitted by Parties regarding their experiences in engaging women and youth in promoting alternative livelihoods. Outcomes of the UNCCD GAP survey are set out in section III.

The conclusions presented in section IV call attention to key issues for consideration in the formulation of future actions to mainstream gender and empower women in the implementation of the Convention.

GE.19-00678(E)



* 1 9 0 0 6 7 8 *

Please recycle 

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Gender Action Plan as a mechanism for improving the living conditions of affected populations: first experiences and the way forward.....	1–24	3
A. Background.....	1–6	3
B. The benefits of implementing the UNCCD Gender Action Plan.....	7–10	4
C. The importance of implementing the Gender Action Plan and achieving gender equality for land degradation neutrality.....	11–24	6
II. Gender in the 2017–2018 reporting process.....	25–40	10
III. Outcomes of the UNCCD Gender Action Plan survey.....	41–53	12
IV. Conclusion.....	54–59	14

I. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification Gender Action Plan as a mechanism for improving the living conditions of affected populations: first experiences and the way forward

A. Background

1. Desertification/land degradation and drought (DLDD) and natural resource management are all closely connected to gender¹. To be effective, interventions, responses and solutions must be gender-responsive.

2. The text of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), approved in 1994, gives women a prominent role in the global efforts to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought. Although several decisions have been adopted in the past to mainstream gender,² in 2017, the Parties to the Convention adopted their first Gender Action Plan (GAP). The goal of the GAP is to support and enhance the implementation of gender-related decisions and mandates the Parties have agreed on since 1996, when the UNCCD entered into force. In particular, the GAP targets four key areas of action seen as essential to achieving the Convention's objectives as well as gender equality. The GAP enables the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework to be gender-responsive³ by improving the living conditions of populations affected by desertification⁴ and increasing community resilience to drought.⁵

3. Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a particular society, at a given time and place, considers appropriate for men and women and to the relationships between them.⁶ In most societies, there are significant differences between women and men with regard to their roles and responsibilities, daily activities, access to and control over resources, and decision-making opportunities.

4. Studies confirm that, in developing countries, rural women are more dependent on natural resources for survival than men because they are poorer than men given their more limited access to land rights, finance and credit, along with knowledge and technology. While women make up 43 per cent of the global agricultural workforce,⁷ less than 20 per

¹ United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (2017). Overview of gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the Convention: 1998–2018, p. 3: <<https://www.unccd.int/official-documents/cop-13-ordos-china-2017/iccdcop13crp1>>; Why Climate Change is not Gender Neutral: <<https://unfccc.int/news/climate-action-needs-gender-action>>.

² United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (2017). Overview of gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the Convention: 1998–2018, p. 3: <<https://www.unccd.int/official-documents/cop-13-ordos-china-2017/iccdcop13crp1>>.

³ Decision 7/COP.3, paragraph 3.

⁴ Strategic objective 2.3.

⁵ Strategic objective 3.2.

⁶ Gender Equality Glossary:

<<https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode=letter&hook=G&sortkey=&sortorder=&fullsearch=0&page=-1>>.

⁷ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2011). Women in agriculture: closing the gender gap for development. *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010–2011*, p. 7: <www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e04.pdf>.

cent of land holders worldwide are women⁸ and only 13 per cent of land users making major decisions on agricultural land are women.⁹ In sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, women hold only ten per cent of the credit made available for smallholder agriculture.¹⁰ Female farmers receive only five per cent of all agricultural extension services, and only 15 per cent of agricultural extension officers are women.¹¹ In many countries, women are only half as likely as men to use inputs such as fertilizers, biocides or improved seeds.¹² These gender gaps can lead to inequality and pervasive gender-based discrimination, which creates challenges in the successful implementation of the UNCCD.

5. As mentioned earlier, the GAP outlines four priority thematic areas to close the gender gap:

- (a) Participating in decisions taken during the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of initiatives to implement the UNCCD;
- (b) Integrating women's economic empowerment into UNCCD implementation activities to eradicate their extreme poverty;
- (c) Strengthening women's land rights and access to resources; and
- (d) Enhancing women's access to improved knowledge and technologies relating to the effective implementation of the UNCCD.

6. Potential interventions could be planned around the following GAP objectives:

- (a) To enhance women's role as agents of change by addressing the gender inequalities they face;
- (b) To build the capacities of women and girls to access the resources they need to improve their livelihoods, manage land sustainably and become resilient to drought;
- (c) To build the technical capacities of UNCCD stakeholders at all levels for the design and implementation of gender-responsive plans and programmes, including in LDN interventions;
- (d) To develop a baseline on gender-related issues in land degradation and desertification, and monitor, report and regularly review progress in the implementation and achievement of objectives; and
- (e) To mobilize adequate resources to achieve these objectives.

B. The benefits of implementing the UNCCD Gender Action Plan

7. There are clear advantages in closing the gender gap in the four GAP key areas of action: economic empowerment, land rights and access to resources, access to technology and knowledge, and participation in decision-making.

⁸ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2011). Women in agriculture: closing the gender gap for development. *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010–2011*, p. 37: <www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e04.pdf>.

⁹ United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (2017). Overview of gender mainstreaming in the implementation of the Convention: 1998–2018, p. 3: <<https://www.unccd.int/official-documents/cop-13-ordos-china-2017/iccdcop13crp1>>.

¹⁰ United Nations, Secretary-General's Report (2012). The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges, p. 9.

¹¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (n.d.). Agricultural Support System: <www.fao.org/docrep/005/y3969e/y3969e05.htm>.

¹² Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2015): Running out of time. The reduction of women's work burden in agricultural production, p. 18: <www.fao.org/3/a-i4741e.pdf>.

8. In all sectors, a variety of models and empirical studies suggest that improving gender equality results in significant economic dividends. Notable recent estimates suggest that economic gender equality could add as much as USD 12 trillion, or 11 per cent, to annual GDP in 2025. This is equivalent to the combined current GDP of Japan, Germany, and the United Kingdom.¹³ Other studies, based on a variety of methodologies, forecast similar potential gains.¹⁴ Currently, USD 160 trillion of wealth is lost globally because of differences in lifetime earnings between women and men, which amounts to an average USD 23,620 per person in the 141 countries studied.¹⁵

9. The benefits of secure land rights and access to productive resources, knowledge and technology are also well documented. A global study of 108 countries found that stronger property rights are associated with an increased average annual growth of per capita income of between six and fourteen per cent.¹⁶ In Nepal, 37 per cent of women who owned land had the final say on household decisions, compared to 20 per cent among women who did not own land.¹⁷ In Tanzania, women with strong land rights were three times more likely to work outside the farm, earning up to 3.8 times more, and were 1.35 times more likely to have their own savings.¹⁸ In Rwanda, women with formalized land rights were 19 per cent more likely to engage in soil conservation, compared to ten per cent among men.¹⁹ The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations estimates that if women around the world had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20 to 30 per cent and raise total agricultural output by two point five to four per cent,²⁰ which could save 100 to 150 million people from hunger.²¹ It has been estimated that the cost of the gender gap in agricultural productivity amounted to USD 100 million per year in Malawi, USD 105 million in Tanzania and USD 67 million in Uganda.²²

¹³ McKinsey Global Institute (2015). How advancing women's equality can add \$12 trillion to global growth, p. vii: <<https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/employment-and-growth/how-advancing-womens-equality-can-add-12-trillion-to-global-growth>>.

¹⁴ World Economic Forum (2017). *The Global Gender Gap Report 2017*, p. 27, with further references: <http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2017.pdf>.

¹⁵ The *Unrealized Potential: The High Cost of Gender Inequality in Earnings* study examines the economic cost of gender inequality in lost human capital. Instead of measuring losses from inequality as annual flows (the GDP approach), the study focuses on losses in human capital (the wealth approach). This is done by measuring lifetime losses in earnings. More precisely, human capital wealth is defined as the present value of the future earnings of today's labour force, considering individuals aged 15 and above. Wodon, Quentin/De la Brière, Bénédicte (2018). *Unrealized Potential: The High Cost of Gender Inequality in Earnings. The Cost of Gender Inequality*, p. 3: <<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/gender/publication/unrealized-potential-the-high-cost-of-gender-inequality-in-earnings>>.

¹⁶ Keefer, Philip/Knack, Stephen (2002). Polarization, politics and property rights: Links between inequality and growth, *Public Choice* 111: 127-154: <<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTINVTCLI/Resources/polarizationpropertyrightsandthelinksbetweeningequalityandgrowth.pdf>>.

¹⁷ USAid (2016): Land tenure and women's empowerment, p. 2: <https://www.land-links.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/USAID_Land_Tenure_Women_Land_Rights_Fact_Sheet.pdf>.

¹⁸ Peterman, A. (2011). Women's property rights and gendered policies: Implications for women's long-term welfare in rural Tanzania. *Journal of Development Studies*, 47(1). 1-30.

¹⁹ Ali, Daniel Ayalew et al. (2014). Environmental and gender impacts of land tenure regularization in Africa: Pilot evidence from Rwanda. *Journal of Development Economics*, vol 110, pp. 262-275 (274).

²⁰ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2011). Women in agriculture: closing the gender gap for development. *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010–2011*, p. 45: <<http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e04.pdf>>.

²¹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2011). Women in agriculture: closing the gender gap for development. *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010–2011*, p. 42: <<http://www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e04.pdf>>.

²² UN Women et al. (2015). The cost of the gender gap in agricultural productivity in Malawi, Tanzania, and Uganda, p. 5: <<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/847131467987832287/The-cost-of-the-gender-gap-in-agricultural-productivity-in-Malawi-Tanzania-and-Uganda>>.

10. Finding ways to lessen the heavy work burden – whether paid or unpaid – for women can also have a considerable positive impact on the overall well-being of individuals, families and communities.²³ To achieve this, unrestricted and equal access to appropriate technology and knowledge is essential, including better water management practices and technologies, fuel-efficient stoves and adequate farm tools. These can help considerably reduce the time spent by women and girls fetching water and firewood, thus improving school attendance for girls,²⁴ reducing firewood use by 40 to 60 percent and freeing up time for income-generating and recreational activities.²⁵ But women will only benefit if technological advancements increase productivity while reducing demands on their time – or at least not increasing them – and only if they can access at least some of the additional income generated from their increased productivity.²⁶ In Ethiopia, for example, the adoption of sustainable agricultural practices depends on the size of the household and increase in labour as the adoption of such techniques leads to an increased workload for women.²⁷ To be implemented successfully, sustainable land management (SLM) technologies should be tailored to women’s specific needs, such as limited time, financial constraints, literacy levels and physical stamina.

C. The importance of implementing the Gender Action Plan and achieving gender equality for land degradation neutrality

11. Gender equality is not only a human right but also a catalyst of environmental progress. The gender dimension must be integrated into land and environment related policies, strategies and action plans. This is particularly relevant to countries engaged in LDN target-setting as well as LDN project design and implementation.

12. Men and women relate to land differently and their unique perspectives are driven by varying roles, responsibilities, access to resources and control. Efforts to restore, rehabilitate or conserve landscapes are often knowledge- and labour-intensive and may ultimately increase women’s already-heavy workloads and reduce the time available for other activities (see case study below). Once the land is restored and becomes more productive, women’s control over it may also be challenged. Understanding the roles and responsibilities of men and women, along with power relations in land management, is a primary requirement to achieving effective outcomes when combating land degradation and implementing gender-responsive and sustainable LDN initiatives.²⁸

²³ UN Women et al. (2016). Technologies for Rural Women in Africa, p. 4/box 3:

<<http://africa.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/04/technologies-for-rural-women-in-africa>>.

²⁴ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2011). Women in agriculture: closing the gender gap for development. *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010–2011*, p. 56:

<www.fao.org/docrep/013/i2050e/i2050e04.pdf>.

²⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2015). Enhancing the potential of family farming for poverty reduction and food security through gender-sensitive rural advisory services, p. 39: <www.fao.org/3/a-i5120e.pdf>.

²⁶ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2015). Enhancing the potential of family farming for poverty reduction and food security through gender-sensitive rural advisory services, p. 23: <www.fao.org/3/a-i5120e.pdf>; UN Women et al. (2016). Technologies for Rural Women in Africa, p. 3:

<<http://africa.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/04/technologies-for-rural-women-in-africa>>.

²⁷ UN Women et al. (n.d.). Technologies for Rural women in Africa, Policy brief, p. 4:

<<http://africa.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/04/technologies-for-rural-women-in-africa#view>>.

²⁸ See the recommendations developed in the context of the Kenyan landscape restoration efforts. Ihalainen, M. (2018). Landscape Restoration in Kenya: Addressing gender equality, p.2-3: <<https://www.cifor.org/library/7012/>>.

Case study: gendered barriers to sustainable land management²⁹

13. This case study explores various barriers that men and women face when implementing SLM under the Nairobi Water Fund (NWF) in Kenya. The NWF is a public-private partnership based on the payment for ecosystem services scheme, under which farmers in the Upper Tana River basin receive compensation in goods and services for implementing SLM practices. These include constructing water pans to reduce water collection from the river in the dry season, building terraces to promote water infiltration and reduce soil erosion or planting grass strips to reduce erosion from grazing livestock. SLM also includes the promotion of agroforestry and a variety of riparian zone management practices. The research on gender barriers in implementing SLM has identified the following shortcomings that can hinder the success of the NWF:

(a) The land-use decisions in the region are normally made by men. Women are “assigned” small plots, usually to grow vegetables for household consumption, while men control the largest fields used for cash crops. Women’s limited control of land use restricts their ability to implement space-consuming SLM practices such as water pans. There is also no incentive for women to participate in SLM if they don’t have access to benefits such as water from the pans to irrigate women’s vegetable patches.

(b) In the studied region, women face greater financial constraints as men control the earnings from cash crops and tea – the money that can be used to hire labourers for water pan construction, for example. This is especially true for female-headed households, where labour constraints are greater and water pans must be constructed with hired labour.

(c) Women look after livestock in this region and they are responsible for planting grass seedlings for fodder. Women expressed concerns that while other resources were often readily supplied by the NWF, there has often been a long wait for grass seedlings. Some women had to engage suppliers outside the project to find planting material.

(d) Conflicting priorities among farmers and between farmers and the NWF have been a challenge. Riparian land management involves the setup of a buffer zone of vegetation along the Upper Tana River. Despite being the most fertile due to its proximity to the water, this zone is excluded from agricultural production and leaving it fallow is a sacrifice the farmers might not be willing to make.

(e) Despite technical assistance provided in the construction of water pans, farmers sometimes struggle with technical specifics. While extension workers offer help to many farmers in the region and try to be available on demand, this is not always possible. The absence of technical staff when farmers are ready to construct water pans delays the process.

(f) As the custom dictates that men control land assets, it is they whom NWF technicians tend to consult on where to place water pans. This can create disagreement between male and female users and cause delays in construction. However, when women are approached by project personnel to make decisions, they are not always willing to do so without men present.

²⁹ Case study taken from Nijbroek, Ravic/Wangui, Edna (2018). What women and men want: Considering gender for successful, sustainable land management programs: Lessons learned from the Nairobi Water Fund, , Global Landscapes Forum Brief 7: <https://www.globallandscapesforum.org/publication/what-women-and-men-want-considering-gender-for-successful-sustainable-land-management-programs-lessons-learned-from-the-nairobi-water-fund/>.

14. The Science-Policy Interface (SPI) of the UNCCD has developed recommendations to integrate gender considerations into the implementation of the Convention, including through LDN planning and execution, decision-making, stakeholder engagement and the preliminary LDN assessments. In particular, the SPI argues that excluding gender from the analysis of preliminary assessment data – for example, gender analysis, poorly selected or incomplete indicators, lack of advanced planning for the disaggregation of data by gender – can lead to incomplete or misleading findings.³⁰

15. These conclusions are backed up by numerous studies, which have found that promoting gender-responsive participation can enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of environmental interventions.³¹ In the past, gender-blind land and forest rehabilitation and conservation initiatives – including reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+) interventions – have contributed to greater gender inequalities, with women’s access to land and resources further restricted, women’s voice and agenda undermined and their work burden increased.³²

16. To expand on this example, despite social safeguards, marginalized groups – including women – are often unable to access REDD+ benefits.³³ In a global comparative study, women knew much less about REDD+ than men across REDD+ sites,³⁴ which confirms women’s lack of voice and influence in REDD+ community decision-making processes. A follow-up study three years later found that women in REDD+ intervention areas were more likely to report a reduction in overall subjective well-being than women outside the project areas. A regression analysis showed that living in a REDD+ village is clearly associated with decline in women’s subjective wellbeing.³⁵ Overall, REDD+ initiatives appear to be repeating past mistakes of conservation and development initiatives, paying insufficient attention to gender equality.³⁶

17. These results are highly relevant for LDN and clearly illustrate the need to learn from past errors and develop new approaches to the LDN design and implementation. In this respect, the Parties to the UNCCD have explicitly stated that land initiatives, including

³⁰Orr, B.J., et al. (2017). Scientific Conceptual Framework for Land Degradation Neutrality. A Report of the Science-Policy Interface. *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification* (UNCCD), p.74.

³¹Independent Evaluation Group–World Bank (2010). Gender and Development: An evaluation of World Bank support, 2002–08, p.xiii; Leisher, Craig et al. (2016). Does the gender composition of forest and fishery management groups affect resource governance and conservation outcomes? A systematic map, *Environmental Evidence*, 5:6, <<https://environmentalevidencejournal.biomedcentral.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s13750-016-0057-8>>.

³²Mukasa, Concepta et al. (2016). Strengthening women’s tenure rights and participation in community forestry, *Center for International Forestry Research* info brief 155, p.1: <<https://www.cifor.org/library/6249/>>; Ihalainen, M. (2018). Landscape Restoration in Kenya: Addressing gender equality, p.2: <<https://www.cifor.org/library/7012/>>.

³³In principle, this is valid for the large majority of ecological restoration projects today. Most of the projects are still completely gender-blind meaning that they do not consider gender to be an important factor in restoration practice. Broeckhoven, Nicky/Cliquet, An (2015). Gender and ecological restoration: time to connect the dots, *Restoration Ecology*, vol. 23, no. 6, pp. 729–736, p. 731; Paez Valencia, Ana Maria/Crossland, Mary (2018). Understanding landscape restoration options in Kenya: Risks and opportunities for advancing gender equality, *Global Landscapes Forum* brief 8, p.1: <<https://www.globallandscapesforum.org/publication/understanding-landscape-restoration-options-in-kenya-risks-and-opportunities-for-advancing-gender-equality/>>.

³⁴Larson, A.M. et al. (2015). The role of women in early REDD+ implementation: lessons for future engagement, *International Forest Review*, vol.17, (1), p. 49, <<https://www.cifor.org/library/5495/>>.

³⁵Larson, Anne M. et al. (2018). Gender lessons for climate initiatives: A comparative study of REDD+ impacts on subjective wellbeing, *World Development* 108, p.87: <<https://www.cifor.org/library/6863/>>.

³⁶Larson, Anne M. et al. (2018). Gender lessons for climate initiatives: A comparative study of REDD+ impacts on subjective wellbeing, *World Development* 108, p.98: <<https://www.cifor.org/library/6863/>>; Ramsay, Deanna (2017). COP 23 Special: Recognizing gender bias, restoring forests: <<https://forestsnews.cifor.org/52685/cop23-special-recognizing-gender-bias-restoring-forests?fnl=en>>.

transformative LDN projects and programmes, should promote gender-responsive approaches aligned with the GAP.³⁷

18. Gender responsiveness must go beyond the “do no harm” principle, meaning: identifying, understanding, negotiating and implementing LDN in ways that address gender gaps and overcome historical gender biases in policies and interventions related to LDN.

19. In particular, gender-responsive LDN is not a tick-box exercise. Rather, it aims to ensure that women – as well as men – are involved in setting goals and making decisions during the planning process to ensure that development and conservation efforts meet the priorities and needs of every community member and thus guarantee the most beneficial outcomes. LDN implementation activities should comprise explicit strategies that empower women and increase their control over assets such as land, income and technology while protecting their rights.

20. Of the 14 summary reports submitted by participating Parties in the initial LDN pilot target-setting project in 2014–15, only two – from Chad and Ethiopia – mentioned women or gender issues, though most of the pilot countries made an effort to ensure balanced gender representation in their working groups as part of preparations for the national LDN target-setting processes.³⁸ While this indicates a certain level of awareness around gender issues, it is also clear that the full integration of gender into LDN policies, programmes and projects is still a work in progress.

21. The good news is that designing a gender-responsive approach to LDN does not need to start from scratch.

22. In addition to the key points provided by the Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN, presented in the box below, the UNCCD secretariat joined forces with the Global Mechanism (GM), UN Women and the International Union for Conservation of Nature to provide support to countries in designing LDN transformative projects and programmes (TPP).

23. This included the setup of a gender help desk tasked with reviewing LDN national transformative project proposals to assess their gender responsiveness. The secretariat, the GM and its partners have also organized two workshops to strengthen the gender-responsiveness of LDN TPP. Around 100 participants received hands-on training on how to include the gender perspective in the LDN project cycle. Based on the workshop experiences and lessons learned, a guide to gender mainstreaming in LDN programming is under development for the use of Parties.

³⁷Decision 7/COP.13.

³⁸UN Women (2018): Towards a gender-responsive implementation of the United Nation Convention to Combat Desertification, Research report, p. 18.

Box

Scientific Conceptual Framework for LDN: recommendations for gender-responsive LDN practices

- Collect information on both genders and ask questions about specific individuals or groups and identify them by gender.
- Understand gender roles and social dynamics, with questions adapted to context (by those collecting and analyzing the data) and budget and plan for the collection of gender-disaggregated data.
- Involve a gender expert early in the process to define the research question and methodology.
- Make use of the Food and Agriculture Organization's Gender and Land Rights Database, which highlights major political, legal and cultural factors that influence the realization of women's land rights throughout the world.

Source: Orr, B.J., et al. (2017). Scientific Conceptual Framework for Land Degradation Neutrality. A Report of the Science-Policy Interface. *United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)*, p.73.

24. Finally, lessons learned from REDD+ implementation, case studies of gender-responsive land and water related initiatives,³⁹ the approach developed in the framework for a gender-responsive Forest Landscape Restoration⁴⁰ and the model of the national Climate Change Gender Action Plans⁴¹ could serve as good examples to develop a systematic gender-responsive path to LDN and the implementation of the Convention respectively.

II. Gender in the 2017–2018 reporting process

25. At the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the UNCCD, countries adopted the 2018–2030 Strategic Framework for implementing the Convention (decision 7/COP.13). In accordance with this, national reporting has been divided into two separate sections:

1. Parties reporting on five strategic objectives.
2. The voluntary implementation framework.

26. Though the GAP recommends using national reports to document the efforts made to address gender equality and women's empowerment in the implementation of the

³⁹ See Aguilar, L., et al. (2015). Roots for the future. The Landscape and Way Forward on Gender and Climate Change, chapter 7, pp. 384-466:

<<https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2015-039.pdf>>.

⁴⁰ Sijapati Basnett, Bimbika et al. (2017). Gender matters in Forest Landscape Restoration: A framework for design and evaluation, p. 9: <<https://www.cifor.org/library/6685/>>; International Union for Conservation of Nature (2017). Gender-responsive restoration guidelines. A closer look at gender in the Restoration Opportunities Assessment Methodology:

<<https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2017-009.pdf>>.

⁴¹ International Union for Conservation of Nature (2012). The Art of Implementation. Gender Strategies Transforming National and Regional Climate Change Decision Making, p. 11:

<https://portals.iucn.org/union/sites/union/files/doc/the_art_of_implementation.pdf>.

UNCCD,⁴² the late development of the GAP means that the 2017–2018 reporting process did not include any specific entry points for reporting the GAP or gender-related matters. A subsequent effort to highlight entry points for reporting on gender and the GAP⁴³ in the reporting manual including a related e-learning video proved to be insufficient.

27. As a result, information presented on gender or the GAP in the 2018–2019 reporting process is still restricted to national reports providing data on *experiences engaging women and youth in promoting alternative livelihoods*.

28. The results are presented below:

Implementation framework			
Action on the Ground/Promoting alternative livelihoods			
	Total reports	Number of country reports that provided information on practices implemented at country level to promote alternative livelihoods	Number of country reports that provided information on experiences engaging women and youth in promoting alternative livelihoods
Question Does your country promote an alternative livelihoods practice in the context of desertification, land degradation and drought?	140	88	57

29. The summary below combines the reported information in an attempt to highlight the nature and scope of activities undertaken on the ground.

30. Many country reports have acknowledged the important role that women and youth play in rural communities and outlined a variety of actions that provide women and youth with alternative livelihood options. Beekeeping, organic agriculture, backyard gardening, agroforestry tourism, non-timber forest products and growing artisan produce are among the initiatives intended to empower women, reduce the level of poverty and protect the environment.

31. Improved access to clean household energy with the introduction of modern cooking stoves, advanced biomass cook stoves and bio digesters has also been reported. Training programmes creating diversified livelihood opportunities for women and youth included weaving, carpentry, vegetable oil extraction, tie-dyeing, the Global System for Mobile communication (GSM) recharge card business, fish farming, soap-making, tailoring and briquetting.

32. Several countries presented projects in support of women’s entrepreneurship through improved access to credit schemes, savings groups or specific employment programmes with dedicated job quotas for women, youth and people with disabilities.

⁴²United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (2017). Gender Action Plan. Section monitoring and reporting: <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/documents/2018-01/GAP%20ENG%20%20low%20res_0.pdf>.

⁴³<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSFfuS0WAnA&list=PLYKtFP8Y-QClJcCwgUD31xfgDJOC_HvhC&t=0s&index=12>.

33. While the crucial role of women in rural communities has been highlighted, the reports confirm that women and youth face bigger challenges than men during decision-making processes due to language barriers and a lack of confidence and knowledge. Many countries highlighted women's co-ops as an effective mechanism for presenting group interests and exchanging expertise.

34. One country mentioned that male migration caused by limited job opportunities creates serious challenges for rural livelihoods.

35. One country experience highlighted that awareness-raising campaigns and local workshops on gender equity, climate change and food security yield remarkable results for gender equality and adaptation to land degradation and climate change, leading to the subsequent adjustment of territorial planning policies focused on diversified livelihood opportunities for women and men. This approach has been recommended as a model for future projects.

36. The fact that many countries address women's empowerment issues reflects awareness on the importance of these issues for the implementation of the Convention.

37. Country experience provides a number of interesting insights but as in-depth analysis largely depends on the quality of the narratives submitted, only a limited assessment of the efforts to address gender equality and women's empowerment is possible. In line with recommendations to improve the procedures for the communication of information to the Conference of the Parties (ICCD/CRIC(17)/8), the reporting templates should be adjusted to allow more structured submissions with clear guidelines and standards on project and programme reporting.

38. The results of the 2018–2019 reporting process do not provide sufficient detail to draw conclusions on the gender issues impeding the implementation of the Convention or gender-related drivers that contribute to DLDD. This makes it difficult to formulate tailored recommendations to make the implementation of the Convention more gender-responsive.

39. The 2018–2019 reporting templates are consistently found to be gender-blind. This constitutes a missed opportunity, particularly for strategic objective 2 (SO 2) which aims to monitor the improvement of living conditions among affected populations. Neither question SO2-1 on trends in populations living below the relative poverty line and income inequality in affected areas, nor question SO2-2 on trends in access to safe drinking water in affected areas requested data disaggregated by gender and age.

40. Reporting and analysis for SO2 in particular would benefit from access to data disaggregated by gender and age – a powerful tool for identifying quantifiable differences between women and men and girls and boys. Without this data, vital information on existing gender differences and gaps is missing, and opportunities to improve programme outcomes by adapting them to specific gender needs are overlooked.

III. Outcomes of the UNCCD Gender Action Plan survey

41. To solicit views from UNCCD stakeholders on the GAP and assess opportunities for its improvement, the secretariat initiated a survey, which was sent to all UNCCD Focal Points, civil society organizations and other stakeholders in May 2018. In mid-December 2018, 64 replies had been received.

42. The questionnaire contained 13 questions in total, the last six of which focused on the relevance of GAP principles,⁴⁴ priority actions,⁴⁵ partnerships and recommendations, as shown below:

No.	Survey question	Answered question	Skipped question
Question (Q) 6	Are there other principles you would recommend? Why?	34	30
Q7	In your opinion, are there other priorities that are highly relevant for your region (i.e. Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Central and Eastern Europe, Northern Mediterranean and the Western European and Others Group)?	30	34
Q8	Are there gender inequalities relating to men and boys that you have encountered that should be addressed under this gender action plan? If so, which?	24	40
Q9	Can the same priority areas apply to drought/sand and dust storms or are other priorities needed?	44	20
Q11	Which partners were the most effective in helping you to promote and achieve gender equality?	42	22
Q12	If you had only one recommendation to make this gender action plan more effective, what would it be?	32	32

43. The most fundamental issues raised by the survey are summarized below.

44. With regard to the *GAP principles (Q6)*, interested parties have highlighted that the most important factor is that women as well as men, boys and girls are involved and benefit equally from interventions on the ground. Equal participation and decision-making have been cited as pre-requisites for effective and sustainable interventions. It has been underlined that more attention needs to be paid to ensuring that gender is an integral part of future initiatives from design through to evaluation. One submission mentioned that the issue of physical abuse and violence caused by migration and displacement should receive more attention.

⁴⁴The Gender Action Plan key principles are defined as follows: 1. Interventions do not increase the burden for women but rather decrease it. 2. Women not only contribute to, but also benefit from, the interventions.

⁴⁵See page three in this document.

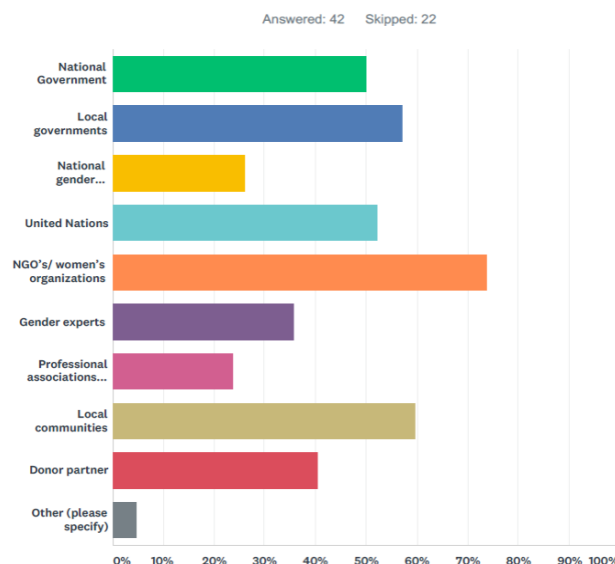
45. Concerning the *GAP priority areas for action (Q7)*, submissions indicated the importance of awareness-raising and education. Capacity-building and training on SLM techniques, green entrepreneurship and the promotion of traditional knowledge have been emphasized as valuable instruments to address the challenges of DLDD. Equal participation in decision-making at all levels, from local to national, have once again been evaluated as very important.

46. For *gender inequality experienced (Q8)*, submissions noted the marginalization of women and girls, domestic violence and abuse. Unequal access to land, resources and decision-making have also been reported. One submission highlighted the importance of assessing the cultural context to better understand gender inequality dynamics and develop suitable gender-related policy responses.

47. In answer to Q9, whether the *same GAP priority areas could apply to drought/sand and dust storms*, the majority of the answers have been positive,⁴⁶ though it has been indicated that they may depend on the area of intervention.

48. The answers to Q 11 are summarized below:

Q11 Which partners were the most effective in helping you to promote and achieve gender equality?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
National Government	50.00% 21
Local governments	57.14% 24
National gender machinery (a system of bodies, linkages, documents and regulations that are directed at achieving gender-related goals of a country)	26.19% 11
United Nations	52.38% 22
NGO's/ women's organizations	73.81% 31
Gender experts	35.71% 15
Professional associations/Foundations	23.81% 10
Local communities	59.52% 25
Donor partner	40.48% 17
Other (please specify)	4.76% 2
Total Respondents: 42	

⁴⁶Of the 44 submissions that answered this question, 37 said yes, 7 said no and 20 skipped the question.

49. Answers to Q12, *recommendations to make this gender action plan more effective*, highlighted the following:

50. A robust national enabling environment is necessary for gender mainstreaming. The development of a “Gender Responsive Strategy” that reflects national priorities to complement the UNCCD GAP would guarantee easier implementation and better results for gender mainstreaming.

51. Other submissions also recommended mainstreaming the GAP into national and local policies with the concerted action of all relevant international and national stakeholders as a necessary condition of a successful GAP implementation.

52. Parties have also recommended that the focus not be restricted to women but that men also be involved in all gender equality and women’s empowerment actions.

53. One response proposed developing a resource-mobilization strategy to implement the GAP. Another important recommendation discussed ways to collect better gender-related data, including capacity building.

IV. Conclusion

54. In terms of the UNCCD GAP, the received survey responses expressed satisfaction with the current UNCCD GAP. Many responses mirrored the challenges identified by the GAP, such as equal participation in decision-making and access to land, resources, knowledge and technology, which proves the strategic relevance of the GAP.

55. Yet the relevant strategies and implementation frameworks for addressing these issues must be addressed at country level. The creation of a supportive enabling environment at national level is essential to making the implementation of the Convention gender-responsive and transformative. An enabling environment is characterized by the implementation of policies and legal reforms that remove structural barriers such as inheritance or land tenure rights, challenge discriminatory norms such as gendered roles and stereotypes and facilitate the organization and collective voice and representation of women to set the terms of their full engagement. This once again emphasizes the vital role that Parties to the UNCCD must play in bringing about the change.

56. Finally, collaboration between DLDD specialists and gender equality experts should be fostered to enhance advocacy for gender mainstreaming and the gender-responsive implementation of the UNCCD. There is a particular need to engage national gender equality mechanisms, improve their capacity and secure necessary political support to ensure systematic gender mainstreaming into DLDD.

57. In order to avoid past mistakes and unlock the full potential of LDN, it must be gender-responsive from the very beginning. Thus, it is highly recommended that practical guidance, tools and policy guidance be developed and that on-going technical support for the integration of gender issues into LDN TPPs be provided.

58. In terms of gender-responsive data collection, monitoring, review and reporting, Parties may consider reviewing the current reporting tools, including the Performance Review and Assessment of Implementation System (PRAIS), to ensure gender-disaggregated data collection. Improved gender-disaggregated data is critical to a better understanding of the causes of gender gaps and a better design and evaluation of actions to address them. More and better data presented in user-friendly formats will help policymakers, advocates and researchers.

59. For consistent reporting on gender, it is further recommended that both reporting tools and the PRAIS contain specific requirements for Parties to report on progress relative

to the integration and impact of the UNCCD GAP. This could be done by integrating the GAP indicators⁴⁷ into UNCCD reporting.

⁴⁷The Gender Action Plan (GAP) priority areas are aligned with a Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target and respective indicators. GAP priority area one via SDG Target 5.5; Related Indicator 5.5.1: Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments; 5.5.2: Proportion of women in managerial positions. GAP priority area two via SDG Target 1.1; Related Indicator 1.1.1: Proportion of population below the international poverty line, by sex, age, employment status and geographical location (urban/rural). GAP priority area three via SDG Target 5.a: Related Indicator 5.a.1 (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure; 5.a.2 Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control GAP priority area four via SDG Target 4.7; Related Indicators 4.7.1 Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development, including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed at all levels in (a) national education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education; and (d) student Assessment; 5.b.1 Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex.