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Effective implementation of the Convention at national, subregional and regional level

Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues

Gender

Follow-up on policy frameworks and thematic issues: Gender

Note by the secretariat

Summary

By its decision 30/COP.13, the Conference of the Parties (COP) requested the secretariat to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Global Mechanism (GM) to take the initiative to seek cooperation partners to roll out the gender action plan (GAP) and to support Parties in piloting the GAP. Furthermore, the same decision requested the secretariat to facilitate consultations on the effectiveness of the GAP and report on the findings of their consultations and recommend possible amendments to the GAP for consideration at the fourteenth session of the COP.

This document provides a summary of the efforts of the secretariat, the GM and their partners to support countries in rolling out the GAP and outlines recommendations to further improve the action plan and its implementation.

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I. Background

1. The Gender Action Plan (GAP) of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was formed as an outcome of decision 30/COP.13 to support gender-responsive implementation of the UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategic Framework (the 2018–2030 Strategy) and to strengthen the implementation of the Advocacy Policy Framework on gender (decision 9/COP.10). The GAP has been the backbone of the implementation of gender-related activities undertaken by the secretariat and Global Mechanism (GM) since its adoption at the thirteenth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 13).

2. At COP 13, Parties requested the secretariat and the GM to partner with the Rio conventions, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) and other relevant United Nations entities, international organizations and development partners to roll out the action plan and support Parties in piloting the action plan, enhancing synergies and promoting women’s and girls’ empowerment in the implementation of the Convention. The same decision (30/COP.13) requested the secretariat: (a) facilitate consultations among Parties, UNCCD institutions and bodies, United Nations entities and other stakeholders, including civil society, subject to the availability of resources, prior to COP 14, on the effectiveness of the GAP based on piloting experiences; (b) report on the findings of its consultations to Parties and recommend possible amendments to the GAP for Parties’ consideration at COP 14 with view to further improving the action plan and its implementation; and (c) also report on the implementation of this decision at COP 14.

3. This document summarizes the main activities of and support provided by the secretariat, the GM and other partners.

II. Gender Action Plan implementation – Support for countries

4. The UNCCD 2018–2030 Strategy adopted at COP 13 paves the way for Parties and the secretariat to undertake concerted efforts to ensure its gender-responsive implementation. The adoption by the COP of the Future Strategic Framework (7/COP.13) mandates all UNCCD stakeholders and partners consider the need for gender-responsive policies and measures, strive for the full and effective participation of both men and women in planning, decision-making and implementation at all levels, and enhance the empowerment of women, girls and youth in the affected areas. The GAP will support the gender-responsive implementation of the 2018–2030 Strategy.

5. During the biennium, the secretariat and the GM, together with their main partners, UN Women, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the United Nations Development Programme Global Policy Centre on Resilient Ecosystems and Desertification (UNDP GC-RED) prioritized support for the implementation of critical elements of the proposed GAP to assist parties in their efforts to increase the share of women benefitting from the implementation of land degradation neutrality (LDN) and drought and risk mitigation efforts.¹

A. Land degradation neutrality

6. To support countries in their efforts to develop a more systematic gender-responsive path to LDN, the GM and the secretariat established a partnership with UN Women and the IUCN to assist countries in designing gender-responsive LDN transformative projects and programmes (LDN TPP).

¹ As per the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) results framework for 2018–2021, strategic objective 2: To improve the living conditions of affected populations/2018–2021 main outcome: gender issues are increasingly taken into account in plans to address desertification/land degradation and drought, decision 1/COP.13.

7. The GM, in collaboration with the secretariat and reviewed by experts serving on the Science-Policy Interface (SPI), developed a checklist for LDN TPP² to support country-level project developers and their technical and financial partners in designing effective and gender-responsive LDN TPP. Its strong emphasis on gender issues was evaluated by the independent terminal evaluation of the LDN Target Setting Programme (LDN TSP)³ as having the potential “to have substantive influence on the design of TPP – and hence on the implementation of LDN – particularly considering the Global Environment Facility (GEF) is using the checklist to inform its funding decisions”.⁴

8. The GM, together with UN Women and the IUCN, provided technical advice and policy guidance on integrating gender issues into the implementation of the UNCCD.⁵ Three technical workshops on gender mainstreaming in LDN programming were organized in St. Lucia on the subregional LDN transformative project in the Caribbean,⁶ the Philippines⁷ and Zambia.⁸ As of May 2019, more than 100 national focal points (NFPs), including civil society organizations and women’s farming groups, received training on how to include the gender perspective in the LDN project cycle.

9. Further regional level workshops are planned in Africa in partnership with the African Development Bank Group and in Asia in partnership with the Asian Forest Cooperation Organization.

10. The Manual to Support the Integration of Gender Equality in LDN Project Development that reflects the experiences and lessons learned during the workshops, developed by UN Women in partnership with the IUCN and UNCCD, will be launched at COP 14. This manual provides step-by-step guidance to Parties on integrating gender issues and promoting gender equality in the design of transformative LDN projects.

11. Finally, to systematically mainstream the gender dimension in LDN and address the various dimensions of gender in potential LDN TPP, a series of policy briefs were developed, including one on gender and LDN and other thematic policy briefs on forests, biodiversity, water, agriculture etc. with a strong gender perspective.

12. Furthermore, a gender help desk was established in order to review LDN TPP proposals and national drought plans⁹ to strengthen gender responsiveness. As of May 2019, five countries and one region had received advice and guidance via the gender help desk on how to mainstream gender in their LDN project proposals.

² <<https://knowledge.unccd.int/sites/default/files/2018-09/LDN%20TPP%20checklist%20final%20draft%20040918.pdf>>.

³ UNCCD/IUCN (2019): Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Project. Report of the terminal evaluation, <<https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2019-04/LDNTSP-EvalReport%20final.pdf>>.

⁴ UNCCD/IUCN (2019): Land Degradation Neutrality Target Setting Project. Report of the terminal evaluation, p. 22, <<https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2019-04/LDNTSP-EvalReport%20final.pdf>>.

⁵ As per the UNCCD results framework for 2018–2021/2018–2019, strategic objective 2: to improve the living conditions of affected populations, 2018–2019 main outputs, technical advice, policy guidance and partnerships on integrating gender issues and promoting gender equality in UNCCD implementation and design of transformative LDN projects, decision 1/COP.13.

⁶ September 2018.

⁷ October 2018.

⁸ May 2019.

⁹ The national drought plans are developed in the context of the drought initiative, decision 29/COP.13.

B. Drought

13. In line with decision 1/COP.13,¹⁰ the secretariat, the GM and its partners supported the drought initiative (decision 29/COP.13) with technical advice related to gender and drought issues. A guiding paper highlighting gender entry points in the model national drought plan,¹¹ was prepared in order to assist the respective country consultants in developing gender-responsive national drought plans. Four countries were offered further support by the gender help desk that reviewed and commented on submitted national drought plans.

14. In addition, the UNDP GC-RED is currently supporting three countries in piloting the development of a gender-responsive national drought plan.

C. Sand and dust storms

15. A first step towards gender mainstreaming in sand and dust storms (SDS)¹² was undertaken by the secretariat together with UN Women. The Compendium of Information and Guidance on Assessing and Addressing the Risks Posed by Sand and Dust Storms was reviewed to ensure that gender considerations are addressed throughout the compendium. This Compendium will be available at COP 14.

D. United Nations System-Wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women for implementation of the United Nations system-wide policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women¹³

16. With the enrolment in United Nations System-Wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP), the secretariat made a considerable step in strengthening its accountability around gender equality. The UN-SWAP, managed by UN Women, is the first unified accountability framework in the United Nations Common system designed to accelerate and support strengthened gender mainstreaming and gender equality and the empowerment of women in all functions of United Nations system entities. The secretariat submitted its first ever UN-SWAP report in January 2019 which is expected to provide¹⁴ an assessment on the status of gender mainstreaming in the UNCCD, indicating potential areas for improvement.

III. Capacity-building and awareness-raising for Gender Action Plan implementation

A. Capacity-building

17. In line with the overall results of the Survey on Knowledge and Training Needs for Mainstreaming Gender in the Rio Conventions,¹⁵ conducted among NFPs and other stakeholders of the respective conventions that clearly indicated a major need for training on gender issues in the design and management of projects, on gender and environment and on

¹⁰ See footnote 1.

¹¹ UNCCD (2018): Guidelines and Background Documents for Development of National Drought Plan, p. 66-79: <<https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/relevant-links/2018-06/model%20drought%20plan.pdf>>.

¹² Decision 31/COP.13.

¹³ United Nations system-wide policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women (CEB/2006/2).

¹⁴ The results of the United Nations System-Wide Action Plan 2018 reporting round were not available at the time of the editorial.

¹⁵ UNCCD/United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) (2017): Survey on Knowledge and Training Needs for Mainstreaming Gender in the Rio Conventions, overall survey results, unpublished.

gender in the development and evaluation of policies, the secretariat and its partners organized and contributed to a range of capacity-building and awareness-raising activities.

1. Open online course on gender and environment

18. Led by the GEF and Small Grants Programme in partnership with the GEF Gender Partnership, involving the IUCN, UN Women, the UNDP, the United Nations Environment Programme and the secretariats of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements, including the Convention on Biological Diversity, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNCCD and the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions (BRS), an Open Online Course on Gender and Environment¹⁶ was developed.

19. Module four of the course, entitled Gender and Land Degradation, shows how land degradation is closely linked to social factors, stressing the importance of taking gender into account in order to effectively address this challenge and promote sustainable development. It presents relevant international/national instruments and suggestions for action, including the promotion of women's agency. Users are provided with the knowledge and tools to mainstream gender and to be effective changemakers for sustainable development. It offers facts and figures, information on key linkages between gender and the environment, and global international frameworks related to gender and environment. As of May 2019, more than 300 users had successfully completed module four with a certificate.

2. Gender matters for a land degradation neutrality training course

20. To increase the capacity of UNCCD NFPs and other interested stakeholders *vis a vis* gender mainstreaming skill for better management of LDN TPP, UN Women, the IUCN and the secretariat organized a training course at the seventeenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC 17) with the financial support of the Soil Leadership Academy and the Ankara Initiative. The training provided participants with a concrete step-by-step approach, including hints and guidelines for developing successful projects from a gender-based perspective to strengthen the gender-responsiveness of LDN TTP, thereby contributing to both the informed implementation of the UNCCD GAP and the Sustainable Development Goals. The following topics were addressed: Unit 1: Introduction to gender mainstreaming; Unit 2: Gender-related legal frameworks and environment; Unit 3: Gender and environment (including gender and LDN); Unit 4: Gender mainstreaming in the project cycle; Unit 5: Gender requirements for the GEF and the Green Climate Fund; Unit 6: Synergies in implementing the gender-related mandates in the three Rio Conventions; Unit 7: UNCCD GAP. In total 12 participants¹⁷ participated in the well-received and successful training.

B. Awareness-raising activities

21. In this biennium, the priorities of the secretariat, the GM and its partners focused on gender mainstreaming and offering related support to Parties with awareness-raising activities conducted.

22. During the General Debate of the 73rd session of the United Nations General Assembly on 27 September 2018, a high-level ministerial breakfast event entitled "Adapting to climate change, empowering women through the sustainable management of natural resources" was organized. The event was co-sponsored by the Permanent Missions of Finland and Tanzania in partnership with UN Women, the UNCCD and others.

¹⁶ The course is free of charge and can be accessed at: <<https://www.uncclearn.org/open-online-course-gender-and-environment>>.

¹⁷ The relatively "low" number of participants was due to the general low participation in the seventeenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention and because four training sessions were held in parallel.

23. Two opinion pieces by the UNCCD Executive Secretary dedicated to gender equality were published. In her article, Monique Barbut¹⁸ focused on the importance of gender equality and how the UNCCD GAP could support countries in addressing gender issues in the UNCCD process. On International Women's Day on 8 March, the new UNCCD Executive Secretary Ibrahim Thiaw highlighted that science and technology can offer rural women new opportunities to tackle the daily challenges, but real progress can only be achieved by creating an enabling environment to access these options through secure land rights, financing and education.¹⁹

24. The UNCCD also joined other United Nations Bonn organizations in celebrating International Women's Day on 8 March 2019. This year's celebrations put innovation by women and girls, for women and girls, at the heart of efforts to remove barriers to gender equality, accelerate progress for women's empowerment and improve social protection systems.

25. For the UNCCD's 25th anniversary and as part of the implementation of its GAP, the secretariat launched a campaign during the month of March to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. In the first half of March, the secretariat published stories on the empowerment of women and girls, particularly as described in the GAP.²⁰

IV. Reporting on the implementation of the Gender Action Plan

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 UNCCD,²¹ the late development of the GAP means that the 2017–2018 reporting process did not include any specific entry points for reporting on the GAP or gender-related matters. A subsequent effort to highlight entry points for reporting on gender and the GAP²² in the reporting manual including a related e-learning video proved insufficient. As a result, information presented on gender or the GAP in the 2018–2019 reporting process was still restricted to national reports providing data on experiences engaging women and youth in promoting alternative livelihoods.²³

V. Consultation on the Gender Action Plan at the seventeenth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention

27. In line with decision 30/COP 13, the secretariat facilitated consultations among Parties, UNCCD institutions and bodies, United Nations entities and other stakeholders, including civil society on the effectiveness of the GAP.

¹⁸ Barbut, Monique (2018): We Must Talk to Each Other to Solve Gender Inequality: <<http://www.ipsnews.net/2018/03/must-talk-solve-gender-inequality/>>.

¹⁹ Thiaw, Ibrahim: (2019): Smart Tech Will Only Work for Women When the Fundamentals for Its Uptake Are in Place: <<http://www.ipsnews.net/2019/03/smart-tech-will-work-women-fundamentals-uptake-place/>>.

²⁰ <<https://www.unccd.int/actions/actions-around-world>>.

²¹ UNCCD (2017). Gender Action Plan (GAP). Section monitoring and reporting: <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/documents/2018-01/GAP%20ENG%20%20low%20res_0.pdf>.

²² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSFfuS0WAnA&list=PLYKtFP8Y-QCJcCwgUD31xfgDJOC_HvhC&t=0s&index=12>.

²³ A summary of the 2017–2018 reporting process results for gender is contained in document ICCD/CRIC(17)/CRP.1: <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2019-01/ICCD_CRIC%2817%29_CRP.1-1900678E.pdf>.

28. The consultation entitled: “The UNCCD GAP as a tool to improve the living conditions of affected populations. First experiences and the way forward”, including related documentation,²⁴ provided an opportune moment to provide feedback and/or share first experiences of GAP implementation and draw on the expertise of partners and Parties to refine approaches going forward.

29. During the discussion,²⁵ Parties reiterated that the GAP is a good starting point for actions to mainstream gender and further supported the enhancement of capacity-building and advocacy to strengthen the implementation of the GAP by developing, *inter alia*, practical guidance, tools and policy guidance, especially, but not limited to, LDN TSP and LDN TPP. Parties also emphasized the need to create a supportive enabling environment at national level to make the implementation of the Convention gender-responsive and transformative, and recommended the implementation of policies and legal reforms that remove structural barriers and discriminatory norms; actions that facilitate the organization, collective voice and representation of women in leadership and decision-making and provide women with secure land rights. To bolster gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation of the GAP, Parties suggested reviewing the reporting templates, including the performance review and assessment of implementation system (PRAIS) to allow Parties to report on progress related to the integration and impact of the GAP.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

30. During the 2017–2018 biennium, the GAP provided useful guidance and context for the activity of the secretariat on gender-related issues.

31. For the GAP to deliver meaningful results and to make the implementation of the Convention gender-responsive and transformative, the creation of a supportive enabling environment at national level is essential. An enabling environment is characterized by the implementation of policies and legal reforms that remove structural barriers which prevent women and men from participating in and benefiting from interventions, thereby achieving gender equality. This emphasizes that governments are key actors in bringing about change.

32. In terms of making the implementation of the Convention more gender-responsive and to *translate* the GAP into national action, it is critical that a close fit be achieved between the goals and priority actions identified by the GAP and actual action on the ground. In line with this, Parties have explicitly stated that land initiatives should promote gender-responsive approaches aligned with the GAP.²⁶ However, this requires that, ahead of time, linkages between gender, land degradation-related challenges and the GAP are understood, the principles of gender mainstreaming are known, and that related tools such as gender analysis, the development of gender-disaggregated indicators, the elaboration of gender-responsive measures etc. are applied and implemented in a systematic manner.

33. Specifically related to the above, the gender help desk and technical workshops provided valuable support to countries as well as unveiling profound gender mainstreaming knowledge gaps at national and regional level.

34. The observations made in the context of LDN can extrapolated to drought and gender mainstreaming. Initial experience gained in the review of some national drought plans highlighted the need for more assistance. National drought management policies are highly gender-relevant because the effect of slow-onset disasters on men and women

²⁴ ICCD/CRIC (17)/CRP.1. The document was prepared by the UNCCD secretariat to contribute to an informed discussion: <https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2019-01/ICCD_CRIC%2817%29_CRP.1-1900678E.pdf>.

²⁵ The detailed outcome of the consultation is contained in document ICCD/CRIC(17)/9: <<https://www.unccd.int/sites/default/files/sessions/documents/2019-04/cric9%20-%20advance.pdf>>.

²⁶ Decision 3/COP.13.

vary. These differences need to be reflected in all three pillars²⁷ of the national drought plan.

35. To monitor and evaluate the success of the GAP, the UNCCD reporting process should be reviewed to better detect and understand the causes of gender gaps that hamper the implementation of the convention and to design actions to address them.

36. To help country Parties achieve their gender-related objectives, it is crucial that the secretariat, the GM and appropriate UNCCD institutions and bodies, including the SPI, systematically mainstream gender throughout their work cycle by considering gender-based differences when looking at any environmental and/or social phenomenon, policy or process to ensure that that men and women benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated.

37. With this conclusion, the COP may wish to consider the following elements at its fourteenth session:

(a) Highlighting the important role of an enabling environment at the national level to make the implementation of the Convention gender-responsive and transformative, including by:

(i) Implementing policies and legal reforms that remove structural barriers such as unequal inheritance or land tenure rights, discriminatory norms and gendered roles and stereotypes; allowing all members of society to participate in and benefit from the implementation of the Convention;

(ii) Facilitating the organization, collective voice and representation of women in leadership and decision-making;

(iii) Promoting consultative processes that engage women from the local to national levels to promote country ownership of the plans and programmes;

(iv) Coordinating and integrating gender needs within other plans and in project design from their inception; and

(v) Providing secure land tenure for women;

(b) Continuing to support UNCCD country Parties on gender mainstreaming and the implementation of the GAP by:

(i) Offering extra support for gender-responsive LDN TPP and drought national plans via the gender help desk and training; and

(ii) Organizing, preferably on a regional level, gender-related capacity-building workshops to support gender mainstreaming, including tools such as gender analysis, the development of gender-disaggregated indicators, including data collection, the elaboration of gender responsive measures etc.;

(c) Ensuring the continued collaboration and partnership building of the secretariat and the GM with the Rio conventions, UN Women, United Nations entities, international organizations and other relevant organizations to:

(i) Strengthen awareness-raising and the implementation of the GAP;

(ii) Support Parties both in implementing the action plan and in enhancing synergies and promoting women's and girls' empowerment in the implementation of the Convention; and

(iii) Explore further ways of improving the GAP and developing further tools and guidelines for the use of Parties on the thematic areas of the GAP and on the gender-responsive implementation of the Convention;

²⁷ Drought monitoring and early warning systems; 2) Vulnerability and risk assessment and 3) Drought preparedness, mitigation and response.

(d) Exploring the modalities of the current reporting mechanism such as templates and tools, including the PRAIS, in cooperation with relevant partners to allow:

(i) The collection of gender-disaggregated data where applicable and available;

(ii) The inclusion of a specific section for Parties to report on progress made in the implementation of the GAP in the reporting templates and the PRAIS;

(iii) The integration of the GAP indicators²⁸ in UNCCD reporting;

(iv) The development of guidelines and capacity-building that support Parties in their GAP-related reporting obligation under the Convention; and

(e) The strengthening of gender-related capacity in both the secretariat and the GM by:

(i) Providing additional human resources capacity to enhance the support for the implementation of the GAP; and

(ii) Also providing training to all staff on gender mainstreaming methods, tools and techniques on a regular basis to enhance systematic gender mainstreaming in all work areas and to support the implementation of the UN-SWAP for Mainstreaming Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

²⁸ The 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.