



WOMEN 2030 GLOBAL SHADOW REPORT

GENDER EQUALITY ON THE GROUND

**Feminist findings
and recommendations
for achieving
Agenda 2030**



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BACKGROUND ON WOMEN 2030 AND THE GLOBAL SHADOW REPORT

This report is part of the [WOMEN2030 programme](#) that is funded by the European Commission and implemented by a coalition of Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF), Global Forest Coalition (GFC), Women Environmental Programme Africa (WEP), and Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD) and many partners worldwide. Women2030 aims to strengthen capacities of women's rights organizations to advance local, national and regional gender-responsive sustainable development policies. Building on Agenda 2030 and climate agreements, participation in policy development, monitoring, mobilizing citizens' support and demonstrating best practices are core activities of this programme.

Over the past five years (2016-2020) Women2030 country partners have produced 38 shadow reports to government's Voluntary National Reviews on the state of the implementation of the SDGs. The reports are based on desk research, multi-stakeholders' consultations and participatory gender assessments involving 2,414 people across 20 countries, based on a bottom-up methodology captured in the [Women2030 gender impact assessment and monitoring tool](#).

The country reports provide an evidence-base for monitoring government action and progress on women's rights and are used as advocacy tools in different policy processes including the High Level Political Forum and Commission on the Status of Women. Four regional reports covering Africa, Asia Pacific, Latin America and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia were produced by the coalition partners. This global shadow report provides a synthesis of the findings of the national and regional reports and the experiences of Women2030 over the past years.

Recognizing the diversity in country reports in terms of focus and data availability, the report highlights key feminist priorities, progress and structural barriers across countries, as well as best practices and opportunities for change. The findings from the shadow reports were complemented with additional desk research and consultation with Women2030 coalition partners, including appraisal of recent trends such as COVID-19. A systemic, feminist and intersectional lens has helped to analyse systemic barriers and dynamics of power, inclusion and exclusion that are crucial to address when working to achieve the SDGs - and SDG 5 in particular.

The Women2030 partners are proud to share this work with you and keen to work together towards a gender just sustainable world.



ACRONYMS

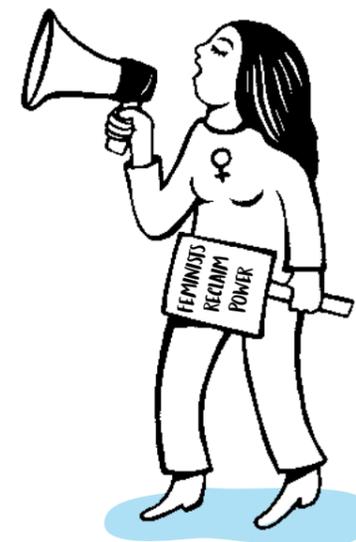
APWLD	Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
COP	Conference of Parties
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
EECCA	Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia
HLPF	High Level Political Forum
ILO	International Labour Organisation
GFC	Global Forest Coalition
LAC	Latin America and Caribbean
NDC	National Determined Contribution
RCEM	Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
VAW	Violence Against Women
VNR	Voluntary National Report
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WECF	Women Engage for a Common Future
WEF	World Economic Forum
WEP	Women Environmental Programme
WMG	Women's Major Group



Photo credit: Annabelle Avril / WECF

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1. KEY FINDINGS AND DEMANDS FOR A FEMINIST AGENDA 2030

Despite major commitments and important progress made, women's universal human rights are still far from a reality today. Agenda 2030 provides an important opportunity and responsibility for governments to take action and make sure everyone can live a healthy, fulfilling and dignified life. Women's rights movements have been key drivers behind gender equality successes up to date and will be fundamental in achieving the goals in the years to come. Based on years of research and experiences, Women2030 and partners from across the globe find an urgent need to refocus and ensure that feminist priorities and solutions are central to any effort to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030.

We call on governments, international organisations and civil society to support a feminist vision and approach to Agenda 2030. We invite women's rights groups to join us in feminist advocacy to hold governments accountable and build evidence-based solutions. And we encourage governments, UN organisations and donors to ensure an enabling environment and facilitate the crucial role of feminist movements. Only together we can achieve a gender just sustainable world.

A feminist Agenda 2030 is...

- **Systemic:** A systems lens and approach is needed to **tackle structural barriers to gender equality and sustainable development**. Patriarchal, authoritarian, economic and social norms, beliefs, structures and systems perpetuate inequality, human rights violations and environmental destruction - all disproportionately affecting women. Without women's rights there will be no sustainable development. And there will be no gender equality on a dead planet or in an economically unjust world. The SDGs are interdependent and require **coherent action** towards gender just systems change.
- **Inclusive:** Recognition and support of women's needs, crucial roles, experiences and expertise is fundamental to achieving gender-just sustainable development. This calls for an enabling environment with spaces for **meaningful participation** of all women in decision-making, transparent policy processes building on strong **gender-differentiated data**, as well as learning from and **supporting women's self-organising, advocacy and local development alternatives** - especially in times of shrinking civic space.
- **Accountable:** Whilst most governments are taking action, there are many implementation challenges and progress is slow. Voluntary National Reporting is useful but insufficient to ensure necessary gender specific measures are taken to achieve the SDGs. Governments and UN institutions need to ensure **budgets and capacities are in place and strengthen monitoring and accountability mechanisms at all levels**. This calls for reconfirmed commitment to a gender just and human-rights based Agenda 2030 and integration with existing international obligations on human and women's rights, climate and environment. While women and communities continue to claim their rights as rights-holders, governments must meet their responsibilities as duty-bearers. HLPF reforms are an important opportunity to strengthen harmonisation and anchor accountabilities.

Photo credit: Brandon Wu/ActionAid

... to address key feminist priorities:

- i. **End discrimination against women and girls in all their diversity.** Women still lose out in almost every realm of life. Too many are still excluded every day. Legal reforms to end discrimination need to go hand in hand with gender specific and intersectional policies and practices that take into account the needs and voices of all - particularly also indigenous and migrant women, those living in rural areas and gender diverse people.
- ii. **Ensure economic justice for all.** Women's economic opportunities and rights continue to be undermined by lack of gender responsive public services, decent work, equal pay and living wage, sharing of unpaid care burden and control over (natural) resources. Years of prioritising economic growth over human rights and the environment has led to growing inequalities and environmental damage that hit women hardest. Only by eliminating harmful tax, trade and investment policies that currently lead to tax avoidance and illicit financial flows, land grabs and violations of labour rights, and by adopting policies that redistribute wealth, power and resources and recognize women's needs and roles as economic agents, can we move towards a gender just economy.
- iii. **Take urgent gender just climate and forest conservation action.** This is only possible with women's meaningful participation in decision-making, building on international agreements and gender work plans. It requires strengthening gender expertise at all levels of policy making and building on knowledge and best practices of women and communities. Locally owned, women-led and climate resilient solutions, such as agroecological food production, are to be supported. There is an urgent need to end policies and practices that undermine climate solutions and conservation efforts including subsidies for fossil fuels and promotion of industrial plantations and infrastructure that drive deforestation and biodiversity loss.
- iv. **Guarantee women's equal participation, voice and leadership in decision-making** at all levels and spheres: from the household to the nation and in political, economic and all other realms. As women's political empowerment is considered to be the biggest gender disparity in the latest WEF (2020) report strong evidence-based measures including quota are much needed.
- v. **End violence against women and girls and ensure bodily autonomy**, which continues to be a major obstacle to women's rights and even a strategy of oppression despite legal reforms in many countries. This includes addressing all forms of violence - domestic, structural, political and economic - and harmful practices, as well as the underlying systems and norms that allow for this to happen. It also requires active support and protection of women human rights defenders and their organisations, who are facing major risks to their health and lives today.

For women's rights groups there is a great need and opportunity to work together and strengthen movements for joint feminist analysis and evidence-based advocacy. Only through meaningful participation can governments be held accountable for addressing systemic barriers and turning important commitments into action and results for women in all their diversity. There are good experiences with developing inclusive platforms at regional level, where feminist and other movements work together in demanding for just, sustainable and equitable development. Global feminist platforms play important roles in building joint analysis and recommendations, such as the Women's Major Group's [HLPF 2020 position paper](#). Together we can build on the work of feminists and movements around the world to ensure a feminist Agenda 2030 based on meaningful participation of all people at all levels.

2. INTRODUCTION: WHY WE NEED A FEMINIST VISION ON AGENDA 2030



“We encounter daily the patriarchy that denies women the right to participate in decision-making. As indigenous women we face double marginalisation. Advocating for gender equality has given us strength to counter the challenges.”

(Naiyan Kiplagat)

Women's rights organisations and social movements, from the grassroots to the global level, have historically played major roles in advancing gender equality and sustainable inclusive development. Despite often facing strong obstacles and resistance to their work, they continue to be key drivers for positive change and much needed government accountability (IUCN 2020). Beyond assessing governments implementation efforts and progress, understanding the structural barriers that women face and the roles they play in monitoring, scrutinizing and supporting SDG implementation is crucial therefore.

One of few opportunity for civil society to promote accountability and implementation of the SDGs is in the context of the annual High Level Political Forum (HLPF) and country's Voluntary National Reporting (VNR). The 2020 theme *“Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”* is appropriate as the need for accelerated and transformative pathways might never have been more clear. Not only have we seen a major backlash on women's rights and sustainable development in many countries and in global spaces over the past few years. So far, 2020 has raised the stakes even higher.

Major forest fires in Australia, the Amazon and many places across the globe have brought to light how climate change, deforestation and underlying political and economic choices are putting our planet and people at risk. When COVID-19 became a global pandemic killing hundreds of thousands of people and affecting millions more due to illness, lockdown measures and economic downturn, we witnessed the fragility and inequality of our health systems, economy and society. Whilst women are frontline responders due to their overrepresentation in care and social work, their economic positions and high exposure to domestic violence result in **serious risks**. “No masks will protect us from the violence”, said 21 year old Argentinian Dolores Iglesias whose **mother and sister were murdered in their homes during lockdown**. Meanwhile COVID-19 seems to have provided another excuse for some governments to **further restrict democratic process, civic space and human rights** - including the right to protest against anti-black police violence and racism as visible in the current Black-LivesMatter movement.

Both these crises show the interdependent nature - and failure - of economy, ecology, health and wellbeing and the need for a systemic response. They also show the importance

of ensuring gender-specific and intersectional analysis and approaches in policy making to make sure groups most at risk are included and heard. **Women's rights organisations** are actively calling on governments to uphold women's rights and sustainable development commitments in the context of this crisis, whilst **showing how it can be done**.

Recent events have also put further restrictions on civil society participation in key international processes, including the HLPF, climate negotiations and Beijing+25 Generation Equality process. Women2030 partners and feminist groups call on governments and UN to take additional measures for meaningful participation and to be open to CSOs inputs, evidence and scrutiny of VNRs.

This global shadow report is an important effort in this regard. It provides bottom-up and evidence-based civil society perspectives on SDG and gender equality progress with a focus on key feminist priorities, structural barriers and opportunities for change. The report ends with feminist recommendations and a call to action for governments, international organisations, women's rights movements and other civil society to make sure we achieve Agenda 2030 for all.



3. INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY ON SDGs AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

“Women and girls, everywhere, must have equal rights and opportunity, and be able to live free of violence and discrimination. Women's equality and empowerment is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, but also integral to all dimensions of inclusive and sustainable development. In short, all the SDGs depend on the achievement of Goal 5.”

(UN Women)

The importance of women's human rights and gender equality is recognized by governments, UN agencies, civil society and many others across the globe. Governments have made commitments to address the obstacles and unequal opportunities that women face in living a healthy, dignified and fulfilling life. More recently, the importance of a holistic sustainable development approach to well-being of people and planet has also emerged, with the UN recognizing that *“ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.”*

The Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, that were agreed by 193 governments in the UN General Assembly in 2015, provide a major opportunity to *“achieve a better and more sustainable future for all”* whilst *“leaving no one behind”*. They are also an important call to action on gender equality and women's rights as a crucial condition to achieving all other goals.



This means that existing women's rights frameworks and government commitments, which are the result of many decades of hard work by women's rights movements from across the globe, are an important basis for achieving Agenda 2030.

- The first is the 1979 **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**, considered to be the first international convention in which States committed to measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all its forms based on the principle of equality between women and men.
- The 1993 **World Conference on Human Rights** was important because it put an end to the gender-neutral view of human rights.
- In 1995 an unprecedented 17,000 participants and 30,000 activists came together for the **Fourth World Conference on Women** and agreed on the **Beijing Platform for Action**, a major milestone with commitments in 12 areas that are regularly reviewed since. 2020 is an important year in celebrating **Beijing 25th anniversary** and accelerating progress through reporting, events and the **Generation Equality campaign of UN Women**.

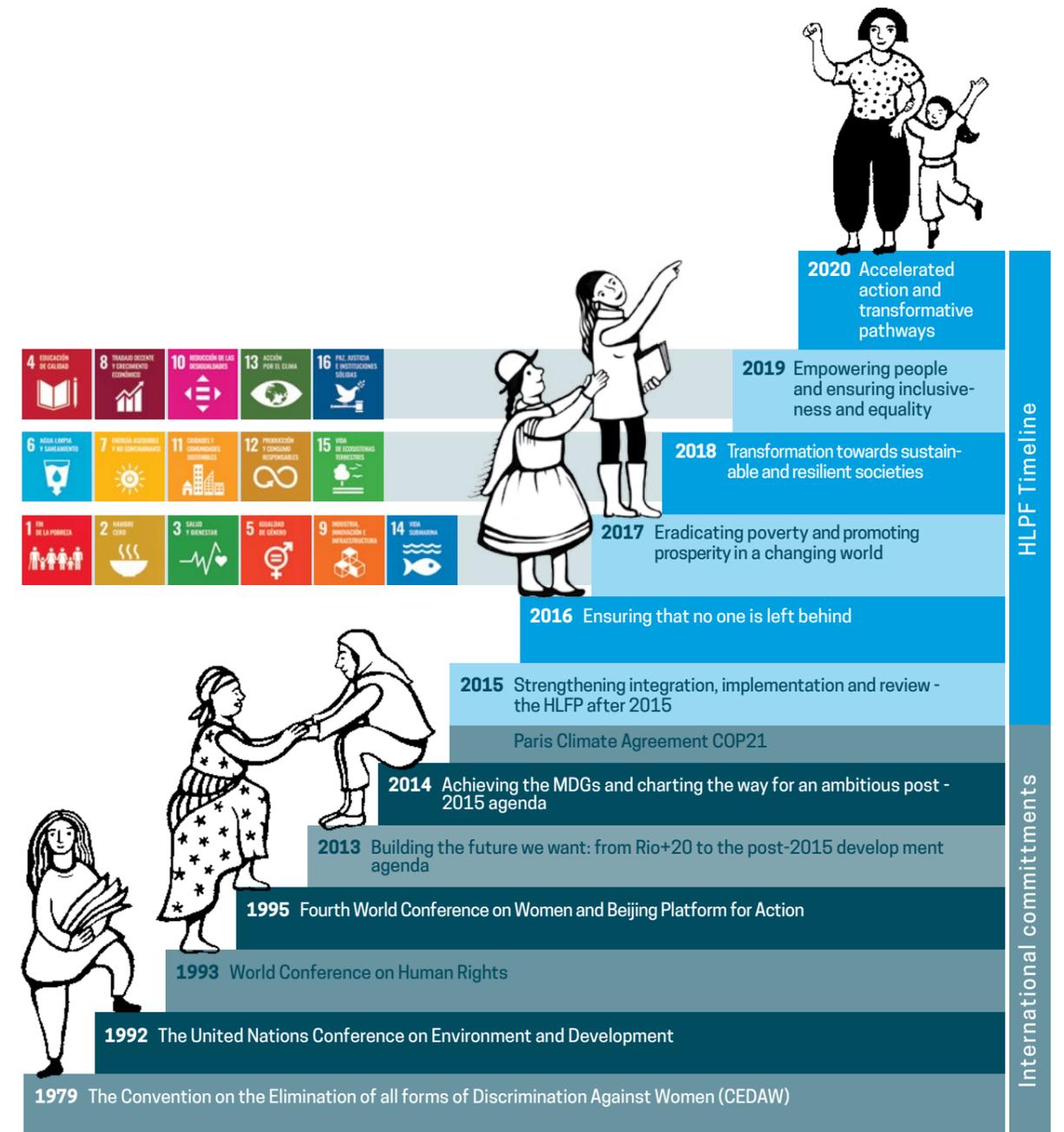
The annual **UN Commission on the Status of Women** is an important moment for governments to take stock and "agree on further actions to accelerate progress and promote women's enjoyment of their rights in political, economic, and social fields". The outcome documents are a basis for strengthening national action and international cooperation on gender equality in key thematic areas like labour rights (session 63/2019) and for particular groups, such as women in rural areas (session 62/2018). It is one of the few intergovernmental spaces that includes civil society, although there are **growing concerns** over **travel** and other restrictions to meaningful participation.



Photo credit: Annabelle Avril / WECF

Other international commitments that are crucial to achieving the SDGs and gender equality include the **Paris Climate Agreement (2015)** and **Lima Work Programme and Action Plan on Climate and Gender**, as well as the **Convention on Biological Diversity (1992)** and **Gender Plan of Action**. In addition, governments have made important commitments on most topics covered by the Agenda 2030, including ILO labour rights conventions on **gender equality** and **violence in the workplace**, FAO guidelines on **land tenure** and **the right to food**, UN resolutions on **women, peace and security** and **UN Guiding Principles on business and human rights**.

Key commitments over time



Together these developments provide a framework for states to build just, democratic and sustainable societies (ECLAC, 2019). Our assessment shows that **international agreements generate important momentum for government action**. Most countries and regions have adopted strategies, policies and plans for sustainable development and women's rights:

- The African Union's [Agenda 2063 for inclusive growth and sustainable development](#), which includes aspirations to 'achieve gender equality in all spheres of life', [Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Strategy](#) and [Maputo Protocol](#) on Human and People's Rights. African governments have taken important measures in response, such as Ghana that has affirmative action, gender responsive budgeting and mainstreaming strategies in place (WEP 2020).
- In Latin America governments have taken women's rights efforts in response to CEDAW and Beijing, with the most decisive progress in the context of Agenda 2030. This is particularly visible in gender equality policies and legal frameworks. At the regional level there are important institutions and conventions on women's rights and all countries assessed include gender equality in their National Development Plans, with some, such as Brazil, explicitly referring to all people regardless of colour, ethnicity, religion or beliefs (GCF 2020).
- Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia reports significant progress in the adoption of instruments that promote and protect the human rights of women. All countries assessed have taken steps to set-up infrastructure, include sustainability and gender in national development plans and introduce specific legislation, for example in the area of violence against women. The desire to join the European Union is an important driver for some (WECF 2020).
- In Asia-Pacific the [Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism](#) (RCEM) has been particularly important in harnessing grassroots voices in SDGs processes, driving government's efforts and accountability, and enhancing pro-peoples regional cooperation to achieve Agenda 2030. Whilst countries such as Vietnam have included the SDGs as a priority in their national development plans since 2017 and engaged (some) CSOs in the process, many governments still seem reluctant to dedicate budget, monitor progress and make required policy changes on sustainable development and women's rights (APWLD 2020).

Whilst the speed and levels of actual implementation varies widely, the conclusion for the EECCA region that "mainstreaming of gender equality within institutions and legislation, policies and programmes has not yet been reached" (WECF 2020: 9) seems relevant to all regions. The table in appendix 1 gives an overview of commitments and progress of countries assessed for this report. All have committed to CEDAW, Beijing, the SDGs and the Paris Climate agreement, whilst progress on human development and gender inequality indicators widely differs but is slow for many.

Every year governments meet at the **High Level Political Forum** to discuss SDG progress and partnerships. Governments are encouraged to report on their efforts via **Voluntary National Reviews (VNR)** 'in order to accelerate the implementation of Agenda 2030'. Most countries have done so by now, whilst some, like Bolivia, have not. Levels of transparency and CSO consultation for national reporting vary widely. This makes it difficult for civil soci-

ety, other governments and the International community to assess their efforts, learn and scrutinize. Women2030 experience shows the importance of women and CSOs in monitoring, shadow reporting and critically constructive dialogue in ensuring quality VNRs.

Fostering women's and civil society shadow reporting and VNR engagement

Women2030 partners have encouraged governments to consult with civil society and have self-organised CSO-government dialogues on SDG 5. In Serbia, for example, WECF partner Environmental Ambassadors for Sustainable Development organised a women's consultation to complement the government's public hearing and online consultation for the 2019 VNR. They also developed a shadow report highlighting sector specific strategies and laws to improve that was discussed locally and at the HLPF in New York.

In Nigeria, the director of WEP, Priscilla Achapka, was nominated to be the coordinator of SDGs in the Ministry of Environment and successfully ensured participation of CSOs and inclusion of their perspectives in the production of the [Nigerian VNR](#). This experience has opened doors for a greater participation and support of women in politics as well as in civil society. Nigeria's VNR was published in 2017, including contributions and best practices of CSOs in the context of Agenda 2030 and their statement on the final VNR.



Media programme for female aspirants in Nigeria on Greetings Fm tagged Gender Mandate

Photo credit: WEP

4. FEMINIST AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS PRIORITIES: WHERE DO WE STAND?

"I believe very much that it is possible to achieve gender equality. Gender equality is not just our right, but also an important condition for a more prosperous, sustainable and peaceful Tajikistan, and the world as a whole."

(Safarbi Davlatova)



So where do we stand on the SDGs and women's rights in practice? This chapter will give a snapshot of progress and challenges based on available national data, as well as the gender assessments done by Women2030 partners giving important insights into perceptions and needs of different groups. These assessments also defined the following five feminist priorities.

1. Ending discrimination against women and girls in all their diversity



- SDG target 5.C
- SDG target 16.B
- SDG target 10.2

Ending discrimination is a key condition for tackling inequalities, ensuring women's rights and all feminist priorities defined in this report. It requires action in all areas of life and society: legal, social, cultural, economic, political. The country studies find an **urgent need to ensure inclusion and protection of the rights and needs of all women, girls and gender-diverse people**. Gender, ethnicity, geographical location, education and other - often overlapping - social categories highly determine people's opportunities and outcomes in life. This is a clear sign of discrimination and a lack of adequate measures and intersectional approaches¹ to address this.

Women living in rural and remote areas and women of indigenous or migrant descent are often particularly disadvantaged. Indigenous women in Latin America and Asia report being excluded from decision-making, such as in Thailand where they are often invisible, not recognized and highly dependent on men. Women in rural areas of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, such as those living in the mountains in Tajikistan, report having few options to participate and less access to productive resources and social services than men and women in urban areas. Roma women often face discrimination and even report lack of access to formal IDs and - as a consequence - housing in North Macedonia (WECF 2020).

1. Intersectionality here is defined based Kimberlé Crenshaw's vision adopted by WECF as "One does not only experience the world from the perspective of patriarchy, but through an interplay of various discriminating power structures. The interplay of discrimination due to race, education, sexuality, ability, class, age, language, culture, gender and ethnicity determines a person's opportunities and how they interact with society." <https://www.wecf.org/>

In Latin America it is particularly visible how **historical, deeply marked social constructs define ethnic, geographical and racial differences**, making ILO Convention 169 on indigenous and tribal peoples particularly relevant but unfortunately little upheld. A striking example is the fact that the Gender Equity Quotas Act that stipulates women's rights to public office is not respected in rural Colombia, because women are seen as 'incapable' (GFC 2020: 26). In Chile, Mapuche indigenous groups report that when looking at national budgets: **"We do not exist for the system"** (GFC 2020: 15).

All countries show important advances on women's rights in the legal sphere, but large gaps in legislation and implementation. This is also what the UN finds: in 2018 almost a third of countries have gaps in legal frameworks on public life and more than a quarter have legal gaps on violence against women, employment and marriage and family, respectively. Customary laws and practices can be a barrier to women's rights if based on traditions and norms that place men above women. This is particularly visible in marital law. Women's marital status can have major impacts on their position and opportunities, including their access to education, economic resources and inheritance rights. In many of the countries assessed customary laws continue to restrict women's freedom and lives. In Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia this includes laws on marriage, inheritance, divorce and custody of children, as well as specific practices such as child marriage, sex selection at birth and polygamy.

Marital law in Kyrgyzstan

41% of Kyrgyz women who are married have not registered their union, while only 3% of men have not. This is explained by customary laws, such as early marriage, unregistered civil marriage (including religious marriage), limited or no access to education and inheritance practices. These laws govern women's access to economic resources and continue to dictate women's lives. They cause women to stay in unwanted marriages, so as not to lose their rights in the household or child custody. Additionally, men often register property on their parent's or unmarried sibling's name, to circumvent any rights their wife may have upon divorce. (WECF 2020; 15 as based on Alga 2017).



Photo credit: Vlad Ushakov

In many African countries customary and religious norms and rules remain particularly strong, especially in rural areas. Human rights based constitutions and statutory laws enacted to tackle issues such as female genital mutilation and child marriage face obstacles in practice – as found in Chad for example (Lead Tchad 2019). In Benin traditional judges continue to apply customary law, influenced by sociocultural norms, that disadvantages women, young people and those with disabilities (AMAF 2018). The same goes for land and property in many countries where these are in the hands of 'whoever is head of the family', by custom men (GFC 2020). It is important to consider however that customary laws are not static and can also provide opportunities if gender norms and legal loopholes are addressed.

II. Economic justice for all

"In the Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, a bull works 1,064 hours, a man 1,212 hours, and a woman 3,845 hours in a year on a one-hectare farm - a figure from FAO that illustrates women's significant contribution to agricultural production. In India or the South Asian narrative, women's work doubles as they not only contribute heavily on the field but also take care of the household, thus making them more profit generators than the men. Yet the share of land, profit and income is low in comparison with men"

(All Indian Women's Conference 2017: 20).

A longstanding feminist priority, economic inequalities and injustices remain a major challenge across the globe. Economies have grown, but costs and benefits have not been shared equally and women continue to lose out. They often have less economic opportunities, income, wealth, recognition and decision-making power than men. The latest gender parity report of the World Economic Forum even finds we are moving backwards and that at this rate **the economic gender gap will take 257 years to close** (WEF 2020). Different discriminations reinforce each other and will be assessed in this section looking at a) access to gender responsive public services, b) decent work and equal pay, c) recognition and sharing of unpaid care work and d) access to and control over resources. We find that efforts on women's economic empowerment will not succeed unless underlying structural barriers including fiscal, tax, investment and trade policies and practices are addressed.

a. Access to gender responsive public services



● SDG target 1.4

Many people worldwide still lack access to basic public services such as water, energy, education and health. Whether the result of lack of government resources, infrastructure or gender responsive approaches, women and girls are the most impacted by the lack of quality services. They are often more dependent on these as a result of particular gendered needs and the roles they are expected to fulfil. This is well illustrated by the issue of access to clean, safe water, which 2.1 billion people around the world don't have (UNICEF 2017). As **women and girls are responsible for water collection in 80% of households without access to water on premises²**, this means they are particularly affected and have to spend more time on these tasks.

2. According to data from 61 developing countries <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2019/progress-on-the-sdgs-the-gender-snapshot-2019-two-page-spreads-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5814>

The country studies clearly show these challenges and highlight the lack of access to quality water and sanitation as a key feminist priority to be addressed. In Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia almost all gender assessments find lack of adequate sanitation in schools - with large consequences. People who menstruate have no option but to skip school, hence affecting their access to education. In North Macedonia, more than 90% of girls are dissatisfied with access to sanitation in school (WECF 2020). Official statistics and SDG tracking on women's access to public services such as water and sanitation is non-existent in many countries. This is likely to have impact on budget allocation as well.

Women contributing to policy change on WASH in North Macedonia

In North Macedonia WECF's partner Journalist for Human Rights conducted a gender-responsive assessment on access to water and sanitation and presented this in national consultations. This resulted in improvements of national planning of school toilets and menstrual health management, as well as the direct creation of additional public school toilets in Skopje. In addition, with other CSOs in the country, they have contributed to the change of a controversial law on abortion by the Ministry of Health.



Women2030 gender assessments find **high levels of dissatisfaction on living conditions** across all continents, such as in Africa. In Uganda as many as 50% of people report being dissatisfied (ARUWA 2020) and women in Benin are said to experience less than 40% of the well-being compared to men (AMAF 2018:5). In Nigeria respondents mention that they lack access to potable water, live in slums and make less than 1 USD per day (WEP 2020).

“The conditions of women in most African countries have either not improved significantly in the last 5 years or have worsened. Women Environmental Programme and Women2030 partners carried out an assessment to get the perception of women about their living conditions in some of the countries we work in Africa. A majority of women in both urban, peri-urban and rural areas reported their conditions of living in areas of housing, water, sanitation, energy, land and economic situation as bad or very bad.”

(WEP 2020)

Improving access to education has been one of the success stories of the Millennium Development Goals, which also shows from the country assessments. There is particular progress in Africa, with strong improvements on gender parity in primary schools in Benin for example, although secondary education lacks behind. Questions on accessibility, especially for girls in rural and remote areas, teacher salaries and quality of education also remain. Illiteracy is still a major barrier for many, particularly affecting rural women as reported in Chad. Some governments support vocational training, but the focus on women and their priorities, such as agriculture, is often limited.

b. Recognizing, reducing and redistributing unpaid care and domestic work



● SDG target 5.4

The SDG target on unpaid care and domestic work is an important recognition that the disproportionate burden that women face is a key barrier in economic empowerment. The fact that globally, women devote roughly 3 times as many hours a day to unpaid care and domestic work as men³ shows that there is still a lot of work to do. Persistent gender norms, role patterns and lack of policies and services mean women still do most of the cooking, the cleaning, the caring for children, elderly and sick, as well as collection of water, firewood and subsistence farming in many countries. As a consequence they have less time for other areas of life including leisure, education and paid work, whilst health and mental impacts are seldom assessed.

Whilst “there is no country in the world where women and men spend the same amount of time on unpaid work” (WEF 2020), there are important differences between regions and countries and particularly between rural and (peri-) urban areas. In all country gender assessments women were found to spend more time on unpaid domestic work than men, with the highest scores being consistently in rural areas.

In Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia the impacts of strong gender stereotypes and unequal care burden on women’s economic position is particularly clear. Family care responsibilities are considered to be the primary cause of the labour participation gap between men and women. This is illustrated in many of the countries. “[In Serbia] 80% of people who give up their jobs for “family reasons” are women. 98% of those who work in households, without other paid activity on the side are women. Moreover, 79% of single-parent families are made up of mother and children.” (WECF 2020:12).

3. <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2019/progress-on-the-sdgs-the-gender-snapshot-2019-two-page-spreads-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5814>

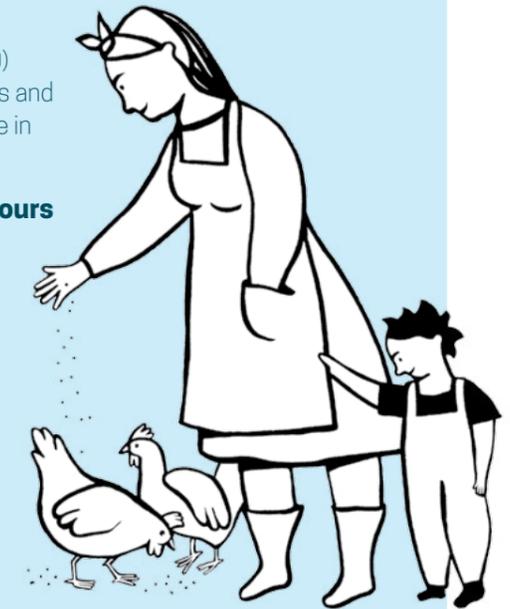
In **Vietnam**, women surveyed spend **5 hours a day** on unpaid carework, which is **2,5 hours more than men** as ‘men make house, women make home’. The numbers are particularly high for women in remote and mountainous areas, ethnic minorities and elderly women (CGFED 2019).

In **Uganda**, women in rural areas indicate spending **4,5 hours more** time on unpaid care work (ARUWA 2020) - which could be related to the absence of public services and strong gender norms in rural areas, including women’s role in subsistence farming.

In **Latin America**, results show an average of **10-15 hours** on care and domestic work for women, compared to **1-6 hours** for men (GFC 2020).

Even in countries that score generally well on other gender indicators, such as **Tunisia** and **Albania**, women spend significantly more time on unpaid care work. Consequently, Albanian women in peri-urban areas report spending **4,2 hours** less leisure time than men (Women in Development 2018).

A significant factor in the amount of care work women face is migration: as men tend to migrate more for work, with numbers up to **90%** found in **Tajikistan**, women are left behind with all household and family responsibilities (Youth Ecological Club 2017).



This work generally goes unrecognized and unrewarded, even if many women indicate they value their domestic and care work and care for the family and the community (GFC 2020). Despite the major contribution to society and economy most countries lack data on women’s unpaid care work and do not account for this labour in their national statistics⁴. This also means governments lack crucial gender inequality data and an important basis for ensuring public policies, services and infrastructure that works for women and addresses unpaid care work, such as paternity leave and child care (OECD 2019). It is striking that the Georgian government chose to omit target 5.4 “recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work” (WECF 2020).

The gender assessments confirm strong gender norms in all societies as many respondents, both men and women, believe domestic work is the responsibility of women. The Latin American assessment shows men’s reluctance to sharing household chores more equitably, although unemployed men in (peri-) urban areas feel more compelled to take on reproductive roles (GFC 2020: 24). Many women, however, and increasingly also men, do emphasise the need to address this imbalance. Over 60% of women respondents in Georgia name equal distribution of domestic labour among the most important challenges to gender equality. In Albania women demand improved childcare and in Armenia they call for better work-life balance (WECF 2020). It is clear that unpaid care work is a major obstacle for women’s economic justice to be addressed.

4. The economic contribution of UCW is roughly estimated by the ILO at \$10 trillion per year, around 13 per cent of global GDP, yet it is not recognised as “work” that is a vital input into economic growth. <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/womens-unpaid-care-work-has-been-unmeasured-and-undervalued-for-too-long> Yet “only 83 countries have ever conducted time-use surveys, and only 24% of those were conducted after 2010” (OECD 2019).

c. Decent work, equal pay and opportunities



- SDG target 5.5
- SDG target 8.5
- SDG target 10.4

Despite growing discourse on 'women's economic empowerment', women's participation in the labour market is still much lower than that of men, with 55% of women (aged 15-64) engaged as opposed to 78% of men (WEF 2020). This also results from women's unpaid care and other family work not being accounted for in national statistics, showing up as 'unemployed', 'not working' or 'not contributing economically' (GFC 2020). **Across the globe women have less opportunities for good jobs and often end up in precarious, low paid jobs.**

Sectors with high percentage of women workers show lower wages and appreciation, as also found in Latin America: "All jobs that are feminized have a lower market value" (VientoSur 2020:9). Even when women do manage to get jobs similar to men, they are likely to be paid less for the same work. No country in the world has yet achieved gender parity in wages. The difference in income is even higher. As women also face more obstacles in entrepreneurship globally averages indicate women earning half the income of men (WEF 2020). Equal pay is often mentioned as a priority, such as in Tunisia's gender assessment.

All Women2030 countries report significant gender differences in economic opportunities.

In **Tajikistan** women are not only less mobile and have high unpaid care burdens as men tend to migrate for work, but report **additional obstacles** in finding formal employment and low wages.

Low figures are also found across Africa, including in the public sector: in **Chad** women hold only **13%** of public jobs (Lead Tchad 2019).

In **Paraguay, Bolivia** and **Colombia** women earn **30-50%** less than men depending on the sector and level of education - with those working in construction and those with lower educational levels showing higher gaps. Also women with university degrees in Colombia earn only **81 pesos** for every **100** a man makes (GFC 2020).

Indigenous women are often even worse off, as **Mapuche** women in **Chile** face **double discrimination** and report feelings of shame when searching salaried jobs in urban areas.



Whilst women's cooperatives and labour unions are increasingly organising themselves, government policies often lack behind. **Gender sensitive labour laws and protection of women's specific labour rights are lacking in many countries**⁵. Even where policies are in place structural barriers and power relations often prevent women to exercise their rights. Many Asian countries, such as Vietnam, report increased labour market participation but often low skill and low pay, with minimum wages not being upheld and many safety issues. Female garment workers in Bangladesh, who produce clothes for many of the world's large brands, earned an average of 98 USD per month in 2018, which is less than a quarter of estimated living wage. They also face poor working conditions, long hours, little freedom to unionize, as well as violence in the workplace (APWLD 2020).

Women are particularly likely to be engaged in informal work, with numbers ranging from 50% to 70% - for women under 30 - in Asia and the Pacific in this poorly paid and precarious employment (ILO 2018). A similar picture emerges in many African countries. In Liberia for example "74% of all female workers are informal laborers, facing challenges such as a lack of access to credit and banking services, limited financial literacy and business training, and few social protections or childcare options"⁶.

The increase of urban labour participation, informal work and the challenges that come with this do not stand alone but are the result of economic trends and policies pursued. Many, especially younger women and men, for example, decide to move to the city despite bad labour conditions as opportunities in rural areas are increasingly scarce. And in Chile Mapuche women who have traditionally lived off the land are forced to sell their labour to extractive companies at low wages and with high risks for health and safety (VientoSur 2020). It is important therefore to address structural barriers that push and pull women into precarious labour positions.

d. Access to and control over resources



- SDG target 1.4
- SDG target 5.A
- SDG target 2.3

"If we women do not fight, we will have no land to live on, and we will go to live on the edge of the cities where we will be hungry and probably have to eat from the garbage. What are we going to do without seed, what are we going to plant? The land is not finished, the money is."

(Norma Amarilla, Santory community, Paraguay; GFC 2020: 20).

Access to and control over financial and natural resources is an important precondition for economic empowerment, social status and political voice. Secure land tenure and access to land, water and forests is particularly relevant for women as they play important roles in agriculture, food production and water collection and thus depend on these resources for their livelihoods. Yet, women - and indigenous women in particular - continue to face strong discrimination when it comes to their natural resource rights, which is reinforced by growing

5. See for example ILO brief on Asia and the Pacific https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_534371.pdf, showing that many governments have ratified ILO conventions on equal remuneration (100) and Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (111), but very few other gender equality conventions, such as on maternity protection (183) or domestic workers (189).

6. <https://www.cfr.org/interactive/womens-participation-in-global-economy/case-studies/liberia>

pressures on land, water and forests worldwide. Globally, 38.7% of employed women are working in agriculture, forests and fisheries, but only 13.8% of land holders are women⁷.

It is not surprising therefore that land rights comes up as a key priority in many of the country reports as a key barrier to women's empowerment. In all countries assessed women own or hold significantly less land than men, ranging from 8% in Colombia to 35% in some communities in Chile (GFC 2020). Many women live and work on their parents or husband's property. Where women do own land, it is often smaller in size. "[Women peasants] work on small pieces of land that are practically their gardens... in general, land tenure is not in the hands of women" (Alicia Muñoz; Viento Sur 2020: 11).

There are striking differences between women and men in their perceptions on decision-making power in relation to resources. Mapuche men in Chile believe there are no issues as women and men have the same rights within collective ownership structures, whilst only 60% of women feel they actually have control over land. On average in all LAC gender assessments more than 65% of men claim that women make decisions about family land management, which contrasts the limited role that women see for themselves (GFC 2020).

"Women initially had little access to and control over resources. For example, the farm was only in the name of the husband, this situation was quite unfair because it did not let the woman participate in the production, adaptation, and management of the farm. Worse yet, if the husband profited economically from the farm, this money was just for him, nothing for the wife or children, but thanks to some changes in the law, this situation improved a little."

(Woman in Lebrija women's group in Colombia; GFC 2020:17)

The good news is that many countries across all regions are introducing laws and policies to improve land tenure of women - often building on international standards. In Nepal pressure from women's rights movements led to government measures to promote women's access to and control over land and property including joint registration of land and tax exemptions when land is owned by women. In India, equal inheritance rights and the implementation of the 2006 Forest Rights Act have enabled some communities to get collective rights to community forests and resources, as well as joint titling for men and women, recognised (APWLD 2020). A range of African governments have taken measures on women's land rights, such as in Togo where the land and state code was reviewed (WEP 2020).

The big challenge in many countries is implementation of these policies. This requires addressing norms and customs that undermine women's resource rights, as illustrated by the role of traditional judges and gendered beliefs in Benin and Chad (WEP 2020). Tackling discrimination is not enough however. In most countries Women2030 partners observe high rates of large scale land investments in agriculture, unsustainable livestock production, soy production, extractives and infrastructure to have major impacts on women's access to and control over land and their livelihoods. In Bangladesh, already resource poor, religious and ethnic minorities are particularly affected, as in the case of the Rampal Coal Power plant leading to large scale displacement without adequate consultation or compensation (APWLD 2020). In Paraguay large scale soy plantations for export to Europe are putting large pressure on land and small scale farmers and women in particular (GFC 2020).

7. <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2019/progress-on-the-sdgs-the-gender-snapshot-2019-two-page-spreads-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5814>

Land rights and livelihoods key to achieving sustainable development for Kenya's indigenous women⁸

Indigenous women's groups in Marsabit, West Pokot and Narok Counties in Kenya are protecting their community's land and livelihoods from the challenges they face. Through training and skill sharing amongst themselves, the women's groups are exchanging ideas for income-generation, tackling women's participation in local decision-making and overcoming food security challenges. Through self-organising in their communities they are paving their own path towards realising their land rights and women-led, community-based livelihoods. Already looking ahead, they are working beyond their own communities to enhance networking and communications with other women's groups further afield. Their objective is to strengthen the women's movement at the local level and to influence development agendas in their counties to include women's priorities. They call for strengthening women's advocacy networks at local and county level, with links to national level advocacy networks, ensuring that women's voices can be heard at all levels of decision-making.



Photo credit: Lucy Mulerke/Indigenous Information Network

8. <https://globalforestcoalition.org/kenya-hlpf-photo-essay/>

The lack of protection of natural resource rights goes hand in hand with **women's major roles in agriculture and food systems often being overlooked and receiving little support**. Despite their historical roles and increasing feminisation of agriculture – e.g. as a result of male out migration - female management of farms remains low (GFC 2020; WECF 2020). **The exclusion of women from decision-making** on land, food and agriculture leads to government policies and agricultural programmes that do not take into account their needs. This is particularly problematic as **women farmers often have different preferences than men**. They tend to adopt more environmentally sustainable practices and have a stronger focus on agroecology, climate resilience and nutrition. In Thailand, for example, indigenous communities and women are not consulted in agricultural policies. The result is that the government focuses on contract farming, cash crops, chemicals and commercial seeds, which do not align with indigenous women's interest in subsistence farming, forest conservation, organic agriculture and preserving plant and animal genetic resources (Foundation for Women 2017). Peasant women in Latin America show to be more reluctant to accept state and private enterprise agricultural programmes focused on industrial operations with the use of agro-toxic pesticides that force farmers to take out loans, risking large debts and loss of property (GFC 2020).

III. Gender-just climate action and forest conservation



It is widely recognized that **women are differently and disproportionately affected by climate change, deforestation and environmental degradation** as a result of their particular gendered needs, roles and position in society. In many countries women are highly dependent on their environment but face insecure land tenure and access, whilst being excluded from important decision-making processes. This impedes their power, economic opportunities as well as their resilience to climate change and environmental shocks.

Women2030 shadow reports confirm this picture. In Latin America, women and communities are faced with **the multiple impacts of deforestation** that is driven by the expansion of industrial soybean monocultures and livestock farming as well as mega projects such as mining and dams. As a result they face land grabs, loss of Indigenous peoples' territories, biodiversity loss, poverty, lack of access to food and gender-based violence. Whilst biodiversity conservation efforts face major funding gaps, many biodiversity-destroying industries receive subsidies and incentives⁹, despite **internationally agreed targets** to prevent this. **Desertification** is a real issue in large parts of Africa, as shown from the drying up of lake Chad, affecting agriculture, livestock and fishing activities of women and their communities (WEP 2020). **Lack of access to clean energy** is posing respiratory and other health challenges to women cooking on traditional biomass, causing many women to die of pollution from cooking¹⁰. Women in various EECCA countries face limited access to water and health impacts from chemical waste (WECF 2020).

9. Why the Green Climate Fund must reject Arbaro's plantations: <https://globalforestcoalition.org/gcf-arbaro-fund/>; Encouraging deforestation for livestock products: <https://globalforestcoalition.org/perverse-incentives-deforestation-for-livestock>

10. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/household-air-pollution-and-health>

Women are not only differently affected, they also play important roles in mitigation and adaptation to climate change and in community conservation of forests and biodiversity. Women's decisive participation in biodiversity conservation and governance - especially at community level - shows from gender assessments in Colombia, Bolivia and Chile. Men often even rate women's influence higher than women themselves do, although women's leadership roles are contested by some (GFC 2020). In Colombia women are considered to be guardians of nature, as illustrated by the case study below on their active roles in agroecology.

The women of the Peasant and Community Reserves Collective of Santander, Colombia: A real achievement in protecting land and creating alternatives for *buen vivir*

The women of the Peasant and Community Reserves Collective of Santander, Colombia, are making a vital contribution to community conservation as a real solution to the climate crisis. Through their energy and creativity they demonstrate that it is possible to conserve forests and achieve food sovereignty and diversity in production. The Reserves Collective is a set of associations and rural families in Santander created in 2008 that is based on community management of land. These are peasant communities with strong cultural bonds and traditional knowledge that coexist with the Andean forest. Several decades of armed conflict in Colombia have had a grave impact on communities and particularly women, who have had to assume responsibility for families and food production, as well as remaining in and protecting their territories. For them, it is clear that peace should not only be achieved between armed groups, but also in terms of more harmonious and less aggressive relations with nature. Through their collective work they provide examples of how to improve their economy and food sovereignty. They demonstrate that these forms of women-led self-organizing help to prepare their families to face new challenges, such as the pandemic that is causing hunger and homelessness among the marginalized populations of Latin America.



Photo credit: Fundaexpresión

Nonetheless, women are often excluded from decision-making and many climate and conservation policies and initiatives do not take into account their needs and preferences.

They have lower representation in international climate negotiations, although [feminist calls](#) to give women equal voice in decision-making are gaining traction. Countries such as Bolivia, Colombia, Ghana, Nigeria and India explicitly commit to gender mainstreaming in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). In Nigeria, Women2030 partner WEP has worked with the Federal Ministry of Environment to develop a gender and climate change action plan. Often, however, implementation plans are unclear and coordination is a challenge. In India, for example, national commitments on gender and climate do not translate to implementation plans of states, who are responsible for climate action (All India Women Conference 2017).

The picture seems even starker in the area of conservation. In Armenia women's key role in agriculture, herbs and wood collection for energy has not translated into decision-making power, which - especially in the context of illegal logging, has strong implications for sustainable ecosystems, poverty and gender equality. In Latin America **biodiversity policies lack gender focus** and in some cases SDG 15 implementation plans and reporting are even completely absent. *"While it is recognized that women play a decisive role in the conservation and management of biodiversity and forest ecosystems, their participation in spaces of decision-making and consultation is limited, especially at the national level. Women's exclusion from these spaces makes it easier for extractive activities to continue destroying forests and biodiversity."* (GFC 2020: 33)

This is particularly problematic as in all regions women's rights organisations express strong concerns about unsustainable agricultural practices, logging and extractive activities destroying forests, biodiversity, and local ecosystems. Indonesia is well known for the fast rate at which natural rainforests and wildlife habitats have been replaced by oil palm plantations both through legal concessions as well as in protected areas (FKM BKA YWU 2019). Government support of these sectors is undermining sustainable development, as well as women's rights. A recent analysis of SDG implementation in Asia found goals on sustainable consumption and production and climate action moving backwards (ESCAP 2020b). Even well intended policies can end up being harmful when women's voices are not taken into account. Benin's anti-logging laws did not take into account the dependence of women and communities on the forest, resulting in significant negative impacts on their access to energy and livelihoods (AMAF 2018:3). It is clear that all countries still have a long way to go to achieve climate and biodiversity ambitions and that women and their organisations play an important role in pushing this agenda.



Pattani Women in Thailand Resist Coal Power Plant and influence climate talks

In Southern Thailand, with the support of Women2030 partners Climate Watch Thailand, local women in Pattani were able to build their capacities and deepen their understanding of the effects of the proposed coal power plant in the Gulf of Thailand and the climate crisis on their lives and livelihoods. The innovative participatory tool they used to identify priority goals and indicators in the community on issues of environment and climate change was so powerful that the Thailand government proposed to adopt the method.

The increased capacity and initiatives have propelled them to come together to form a local women's movement for climate justice, the 'Deep South Pattani Women Watching Climate', to resist the proposed coal power plant. The long and powerful struggles of several peoples' movements, including the Deep South Pattani Women Watching Climate, led to the suspension of the proposed coal power plant. However, the Thai Government is now shifting to gas as an alternative, and women's movements are determined to continue their struggle and realise energy democracy that puts people and the planet at the centre. The women also participated in international climate talks and developed their own campaign, feeling empowered to own the knowledge and speak out among men and in media.



Photo credit: Climate Watch Thailand

IV. Equal voice: political participation, leadership and decision-making



- SDG target 5.5
- SDG target 16.7

Many decisions are taken every day in which women's voices are not heard, from the household to the community and from the boardroom to the political arena. This is not only a violation of their human rights and opportunities to shape their own lives, but - as we saw in earlier sections - also results in less relevant and effective decisions, actions and policies. Only by including all different needs and perspectives one can aim to 'leave no one behind'. Women's full and effective participation and equal leadership opportunities start with addressing discrimination and obstacles at all levels and all realms of life and society.

Globally, women represent around **one quarter of national parliamentarians** with strong differences between countries. Similar percentages are found for local level representation in elected bodies. In the past 50 years, 85 states have had no female head of state. WEF (2020) finds the **political empowerment gap to be the largest gender disparity**. There are big differences within regions, with Africa showing some of the highest (Rwanda, Tunisia) and the lowest (Chad, Togo, Burkina Faso) female political representation in the world (UNECA 2019). Policies matter. Global data show that "when legislated gender quotas are adopted, significantly higher proportions of women are elected at both national and local levels."¹¹

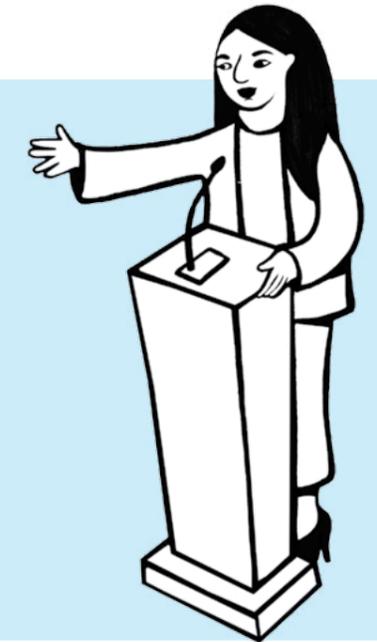
Most Women2030 country studies do show an **increase in national level representation**, especially where quota are introduced such as Moldova, Uganda and all Latin American countries. The difference between women listed and those elected, however, still shows a clear bias in practice. And despite women in Uganda representing 35% of MPs, their capacity to influence actual decisions is still considered limited (UNECA 2019). **Some countries score particularly poor**. In Armenia only 9,9% of parliamentarians is female. In Georgia this is 15% and no local governors are female, yet a recent bill to address this was rejected (WECF 2020). In Paraguay women's national political representation was 11% in 2017 (GFC 2020).

The role of women's rights organisations in pushing this agenda is clear. In Nigeria the '100 women lobby group' and civil society groups, including Women2030 partners, play an important role in advocating further advancement. There is a 35% minimum threshold for female politicians, a Nigerian Women's Trust Fund support to female political aspirants and empowerment offices at state level and in rural areas (WEP 2020).

The country gender assessments show strong differences between national and local representation. There are few female mayors and women in rural areas face particular challenges and exclusion. Good examples of policies and quota at local level include Indian village level governments (although implementation lacks behind) and Moldova, who not only introduced quota but also training at the local level - including targeted programmes for women often most disadvantaged such as Roma. **Perception of women's influence on decisions also vary between national, local and household level**. In the EECCA region people feel women have more influence at national than at local level. In Latin America it is the other way around. In Paraguay 40% of men and 50% of women think that women have influence at local level, whilst

11. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg5>

Albania is considered one of the biggest improvers on gender equality by WEF (2020), as well as in this study's findings: "During the 2017 Albanian election, women comprised **40%** of the candidates, and **28%** of elected parliamentarians. With an increase of **10%** compared to 2013, this share of female representatives is the highest achieved in Albania to date. It was also the first time that the Deputy Prime Minister elected was a woman. Senida Mesi, however, only kept the position for little more than a year." (WECF 2020:10). In Bolivia, women's parliamentary positions increased from **27,6%** to **45,5%** between 2010 and 2015 (CIPCA 2020). **Tunisia**, which builds on a long history of women's empowerment, shows women's relevant roles in decision-making especially since the democratic transition (WEP Tunisia). In Ghana almost half of ambassadors are women (WEP 2020).



only 18% of men and 35% of women think this is the case at national level. In Bolivia 78% of men feel women influence local decisions vis-à-vis 35% for national decision-making, whilst women estimate their influence slightly higher. On average 65% of Latin American men claim that women make decisions about management of family land, which is in high contrast with rural women who view their opportunities to participate in decision making as limited. In the political sphere women judge their own influence higher than men do (GFC 2020).

There are **important structural trends** at play that affect voice and leadership opportunities for women, including sexism, harassment and violent threats to female politicians as seen in Ghana (WEP 2020) and the political violence that women face in Latin America. In 2018, the world was shocked by the murder of Marielle Franco in Brazil, a council women and women's rights and LGBTI activist - whose case unfortunately does not stand alone (GFC 2020). Despite these challenges women are increasingly standing up for their rights and political beliefs and playing important roles as women human rights defenders.

V. Ending violence against women and ensuring women's bodily autonomy



- SDG target 5.2
- SDG target 5.3
- SDG target 5.6
- SDG target 3.7

Living a life free of violence is a fundamental human right, but... "Millions of women and girls around the world are assaulted, beaten, raped, mutilated or even murdered in what constitutes appalling violations of their human rights."

(former UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon).

More than a third of women in the world have faced some form of physical or sexual violence in their lives¹². In 2017, globally, 137 women a day were murdered by their partner or a family member. Femicide is on the rise in Latin America, with an increase of 30,7% in Brazil between 2007-2017 (FBSP 2019). Increasingly, women engaging in politics and those standing up for their rights face threats, violence or even risk being murdered. It is estimated that there are 650 million women and girls in the world today who were married before age 18 and at least 200 million women and girls have undergone female genital mutilation¹³. Most often the violence is gender based: it is because they are a woman or girl, trans or gender diverse. Women with disabilities and other groups facing intersecting discrimination are particularly at risk.

The country shadow reports reflect this **high prevalence of violence against women (VAW)**, from Vietnam to Colombia. **This is despite a growing number of laws and policies aiming to tackle VAW** in countries like Togo, Burkina Faso, India and most Latin American countries. In Chad women report ongoing high physical, sexual and psychological violence, notwithstanding the government's Gender-Based Violence strategy enacted from 2014. Whilst the increased visibility and women's reporting of violence in itself is a positive trend, the high numbers and the major consequences this has on women's lives call for stronger, urgent and structural measures. In fact, **violence against women came up as a key priority in many of the gender assessments**, including in Tunisia, Chad, Albania and all Latin American countries where **in some communities a majority of men ranked this as the number one issue to address**. In Thailand there are particular concerns about the lack of involvement of indigenous women in SDG 5 and VAW policy making, despite the urgent need to address the violence and the fears they face in reporting.

Domestic violence against women is widespread and also often considered acceptable by a significant share of people, including women. In Serbia women make up about 80% of people facing domestic violence. In Georgia almost a quarter of women and one third of men believe wife-beating is justifiable under certain circumstances (WECF 2020). In Uganda this is almost half of people, which contributes to underreporting as well (ARUWA 2020). The recent COVID-19 measures have put a magnifying glass on the risks women face in their own homes.

Violence against women is often structural - with economic, political, cultural dimensions and roles of states, military and the private sector. The country and regional studies find particular state violence, conflict and militarisation and oppression in the face of extractives investments. Colombia, a country with a long history of conflict and oppression of rural and indigenous communities **reported 98.583 female victims** of gender based violence in the first 10 months of 2019. **Women Human Rights Defenders are strongly at risk**, with 109 activists killed in Colombia in 2019 alone (Front Line Defenders 2019). Latin American feminists highlight the link between the appropriation and exploitation of nature and women, especially of indigenous, African or peasant descent, through the domination of their territories on the one hand and their bodies on the other (GFC 2020). Across the continent it is felt that despite international commitments and national legal frameworks:

12. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>

13. Based on 30 countries with representative data on prevalence <https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ending-violence-against-women/facts-and-figures>

“States do not generate the appropriate tools to understand, record, and much less prevent and eradicate violence against women marginalized by their ethnic, social, and cultural backgrounds. Rather, it is one of the largest producers and reproducers of patriarchal violence through all its structures and apparatus [such as the judiciary and police or gendarmerie]”

(translated from Red Chilena, 2019:2)

Women's bodily autonomy is a fundamental condition for gender equality, yet many women still have limited say over their own bodies. Lack of sexual health and reproductive rights protection, policies, infrastructure and sexual education has severe consequences for women's life choices, health and wellbeing. Moldova and Georgia even report obstetrical violence and malpractice (WECF 2020). Africa, which is said to have the highest number of sexual violence against women in the world (ACLEED 2019) shows high prevalence of harmful traditional practices. Forced (child) marriage, trafficking of young women and girls and early childbearing - often linked to high school dropout as the Uganda shadow report shows - are still prevalent across the region. **UNICEF figures** show that female genital mutilation is particularly high in countries like Chad (38%), Liberia (44%) and Burkina Faso (76%).



Photo credit: Annabelle Avril / WECF

5: STRUCTURAL BARRIERS TO A GENDER-JUST IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SDGS

Despite commitments, several areas of important progress and many years of women's rights movements calling for stronger action, the previous chapter has illustrated that both policy and practice are still way behind on ambitions, in some cases even getting worse. Why is this the case? The shadow reports of Women2030 partners reveal a range of structural and interrelated barriers to women's rights and sustainable development. These same barriers particularly affect women's rights groups and civil society organisations and put serious constraints to a gender-just implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Reflecting both historical and more recent trends, structural barriers are found at all levels, from the personal to society and government and from the local to the global. It shows that there is a **lack of systemic analysis and approach** that is so crucial to achieving Agenda 2030. This requires understanding and addressing unequal power structures, including visible (e.g. policies), invisible (e.g. beliefs) and hidden (e.g. networks) power.¹⁴

i. Harmful patriarchal norms, beliefs and practices hold women back

Persistent and harmful gender norms and stereotypes, resulting in discrimination and exclusion of women and other marginalised groups are key barriers to change. Even in 'better performing countries' patriarchal beliefs and practices continue to affect how women are viewed, how their work is recognized and how much their voice is valued - that is: lower than that of men. This results in exclusion, less opportunities and less power. They are expected to - and therefore often do - live different lives, play different roles and have different preferences. As country studies show, gender stereotypes and cultural barriers manifest at all levels, limiting women's meaningful participation, affecting policy priorities, budget allocation, strategies and (effectiveness) of implementation.

The issue of VAW illustrates this well as legal reforms have proven insufficient as long as widely held norms continue to define practices and the acceptance of these: from wife beating to sexual harassment to female genital mutilation. Combined with racist, colonial, classist and other persistent beliefs, we find that women with indigenous, migrant, rural or in any way diverse background continue to face multiple discriminations. From Thailand to Chile, the contributions of indigenous women to sustainable agriculture tend to be overlooked and their voices not heard.

Decision making spaces continue to be dominated by men, which is linked to "social ostracism of women in public space and fear of public ridicule" (WEP 2020) as well as blatant structural and political violence when women do dare to speak out. Being an important indicator and strategy of patriarchy, the threats and violence that women human rights defenders and female politicians face in increasingly conservative and authoritarian contexts, are particularly worrisome.

ii. Prioritising growth over people and planet exacerbates gender inequality

Whilst most UN reports recognize the need to tackle harmful gender norms, what is often not acknowledged is the major impact that neoliberal economic policies and paradigms have on women's rights and gender-just sustainable development. The strong focus on economic growth, foreign direct investments, free trade, privatisation and austerity over the last decades has had major implications on social and economic inequalities, including between women and men.

14. <https://www.powercube.net/analyse-power/forms-of-power/how-forms-work-together/>

Asia and the Pacific region, for example, show how some of the fastest growing economies remain home to the largest number of the world's poor and nearly half a billion undernourished people. Seventy percent of the population in this region lives in countries where inequality has grown over recent years and both wealth inequality and gender inequality are real obstacle to achieving Agenda 2030 (ESCAP 2020b). This has gone hand in hand with strong austerity measures, as well as expansion of tax exemptions, bilateral and regional trade agreements and other policies promoting foreign direct investment, free trade and the position of large powerful companies in the region (APWLD 2020; McKinsey 2020).

The Philippine government is party to 25 bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements, leading the government to adopt laws and policies to further liberalize the economy. The result is an export-oriented, import-dependent trade policy and a perpetual trade deficit reaching US\$41.4 billion in 2018. By offering investment and fiscal incentives to foreign companies, such as tax holidays and duty free import and export of raw materials in special economic zones, the country has opened up natural resources and land ownership, public utilities, mass media and services – including those that women are heavily dependent on for their basic needs. Liberalisation of trade in services can result in higher burden of unpaid work and deepening of women's poverty. Most industry is low-value add and with the Philippines listed among the world's worst' countries to work there are large challenges in terms of labour rights. (APWLD 2020; Centre for Women's Resources 2019)

Prioritising economic growth over environment and human rights has come at the cost of both planet and people - and women in particular. The reliance on, and subsidizing of, fossil fuels and unsustainable industries has contributed to climate change and pressures on biodiversity and forests. Combined with weak governance and lack of regulation or enforcement, deforestation, land and water grabbing are reported across all regions, from Armenia to Indonesia, Bangladesh and much of Latin America. In fact, the [Land Matrix](#) estimates that globally 26.7 million hectares of agricultural land have been transferred into the hands of foreign investors since the year 2000 and extractives continue to be on the rise.

Stopping this extractive model of development from undermining women's abilities to access and control the resources they rely on, is highlighted as a key priority in all country assessments. Meanwhile, more environmentally sustainable, and women-driven practices and activities such as agroecology and community conservation receive little attention, recognition and support. And those sectors with high shares of women workers, such as garment industries, continue to get away with low pay, unsafe and insecure labour conditions.

“They are only interested in soy”: how peasant and indigenous women in Paraguay respond to the twin threats of industrial agriculture and climate change¹⁵

Peasant and indigenous communities in Paraguay are caught between a state-sponsored agribusiness industry that steals land and poisons the air, soil and water, and a climate emergency that puts even more pressure on their already fragile ability to feed themselves. With minimal external support but maximum threats to land security, community health and food sovereignty, peasant and indigenous communities are organising to reclaim control of their lives. Women are at the forefront of this resistance, strengthening their organisations to tackle gender-based discrimination whilst working together to protect their food sovereignty, indigenous seeds, natural medicinal resources and traditional, ancestral knowledge. Faced with the twin threats of advancing monocultures and climate emergency, they are building their own resilience from the soil up.



Photo credit: Lisa Meyer/Heñói

However, even as concerns over inequality and the environment grow, many international institutions and governments continue to promote the same recipes. Economic interests and corporate (hidden) power play an important role in this. Even the Global Sustainable Development Report, which recognizes that we need “urgent transitioning away from patterns of economic growth, production and consumption that perpetuate deprivations, generate inequalities and deplete the global environmental commons” (UN 2019: xxiv), fails to sufficiently address the problems with current tax, fiscal and investment policies and public private partnerships.

15. <https://globalforestcoalition.org/paraguay-cas-photo-essay/>

Without tackling illicit financial flows and tax avoidance, however, **governments continue to lack resources to invest in gender responsive public services**, with major implications on living standards and gender equality¹⁶. The country studies illustrate how this impacts women, who already face large obstacles in accessing services such as health, water and education. The recent COVID-19 crisis has put a spotlight on the risks of low public expenditure on health care, lack of social protection and gender responsive, inclusive approaches to policy making more generally.

iii. Authoritarianism and shrinking civic space undermine women's voices

In many countries, we see powerful economic interests go hand in hand with **growing repression, shrinking civic space, authoritarianism and even militarisation**. Whilst this is not a new trend the accompanied shift to the right has clear implications for women's rights discourse and agenda's. This includes reversing policies that support women's SRHR, labour rights and climate action, as well as restricting the space and work of women's rights organisations, social movements and civil society. As women's rights groups already face major obstacles due to patriarchal beliefs, lack of funding, access and support, the implications of further squeezing the space and opportunities to influence decision-making cannot be overestimated.

CIVICUS (2019) reports decline in civic space across all regions, which is reflected in the high level of threats and aggression of human rights defenders, and women and environmental human rights defenders in particular. Contexts with high levels of conflict and militarisation - as is often found around mining sites - are particularly risky for women. Recent attempts to abuse the COVID-19 crisis and curb down on protests show the urgency to reverse these trends, yet even more progressive governments are reluctant to speak out.

It is important to realise also that the challenges with **civic space and limited public participation are also relevant in relatively well functioning democracies**. Whilst some governments have taken positive initiatives to include civil society and citizens in SDG implementation, the shadow reports also show that meaningful civil society consultation by policy makers is scarce. It is through active organising that most Women2030 partners have managed to engage their governments in a dialogue on gender and the SDGs. Other opportunities to influence negotiations, policies and voluntary reporting have been limited so far. It turns out to be particularly challenging to make sure all voices are included, as consultations often take place in the capital and are thus less accessible for people from remote areas, including indigenous and minority groups that already face higher levels of exclusion.

In order to meaningfully participate, **awareness of the SDGs, access to information, capacities and resources are all crucial**. Country studies show that many people are not aware of their government commitments and plans in relation to Agenda 2030. Good gender differentiated data on SDG progress is missing in almost all countries. This makes it difficult for civil society to monitor, scrutinize as well as support governments in their efforts. It also increases the risk of consultation processes being symbolic or tokenistic. The lack of (public) funding, support and an enabling environment for feminist movements has been extensively documented and criticized over the past years¹⁷. Smaller and grassroots women's rights organisations are facing particular obstacles in accessing funding and decision-making spaces, despite their fundamental roles in achieving the SDGs.

16. <https://www.un.org/esa/ffd/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/CRP19-The-Role-of-Taxation-and-Domestic-Resource-Mobilization-in-the-Implementation-of-the-Sustainable-Development-Goals.pdf>

17. E.g. by AWID <https://www.awid.org/news-and-analysis/why-we-need-feminist-funding-ecosystem>

iv. Lack of accountability and other implementation barriers hamper Agenda 2030

Whilst many governments have taken positive steps towards the SDGs, there are important **challenges in implementation that result in lack of progress**. On the one hand these can be a result of **lack of political will and accountability**. Considering the voluntary nature of the SDGs and the political and economic paradigms described above, many governments are reluctant to prioritise sustainable development and gender equality - even if they say they do. The only mechanism currently available is the Voluntary National Review process, which governments are free to do when and how they want to. On the other hand there can be more **practical constraints including lack of capacity, resources and infrastructure**.

Whatever the reasons, similar challenges are found across most country assessments: **insufficient budget allocation** for the SDGs and gender in particular shows to be one of the greatest obstacles to implementation in different countries. India did not allocate any specific gender budget in the first years. The reports on Nepal and several African countries show how civil society and communities are filling social protection and environmental funding gaps.

This goes hand in hand with a **lack of capacity, knowledge and awareness** on gender, gender just policy making and gender sensitive budgeting and a tendency to place gender focal points at lower levels in hierarchies. Combined with the **lack of gender specific data and meaningful inclusion of diverse voices** in policy making, this leads to gender blind and often incoherent policies and approaches. Without strong data and evidence it makes it difficult for governments to know what measures to take. And without CSO involvement and women's direct representation of voices their needs and demands are easily overlooked or even explicitly ignored.

This is not only a loss for women. Gender blind and incoherent policies are not only less effective, but can have severe negative consequences. We saw this in Benin, where women and communities lost their livelihoods as a result of anti-logging measures that could have benefitted all if designed adequately. And in Armenia where sanitation and SDG 6 policies lack gender reference and insufficient sanitary facilities in schools lead to barriers for girls to education. Coordination and gender mainstreaming - especially in areas traditionally overlooked when it comes to women's rights, such as climate, environment and taxes - are important steps in overcoming barriers to gender just implementation of the SDGs.

Since the launch of Agenda 2030 feminist groups have been calling for a systemic approach, including tackling of structural barriers and breaking the silo's - such as the current disconnect between the SDGs and longstanding human rights obligations and mechanisms. With the HLPF reform ongoing, there is renewed opportunity to strengthen harmonisation and accountability. And to learn from the long experience of feminists and grassroots organisations and communities, whose structural, ecosystem and intersectional approaches show another way is possible.

6. OPPORTUNITIES AND GOOD PRACTICES FOR GENDER JUST SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Women's rights, feminist and other civil society organisations have built a wealth of knowledge and experience that can help achieve the SDGs and gender equality. This chapter provides a snapshot of opportunities, learnings and good practices that #Women2030 and partners have observed and supported over the past years. The successes of women and their communities when self-organising, building local alternatives and engaging in joint evidence-based advocacy show the relevance – and urgent need – of supporting and facilitating women's own initiatives in the framework of Agenda 2030. Opening up spaces and adopting innovative and inclusive approaches to cooperation and funding by governments and others, such as flexible sub-granting, prove to be particularly effective in strengthening women's movements to do this work¹⁸.

i. Women's self-organising and movement building crucial to change

Women's groups and movements play major roles in effectuating change at all levels. From the local farmers cooperatives strengthening their bargaining power and advocating for their land rights to women's conservation groups raising awareness on the need for forest protection: it starts with women getting informed and organising themselves. The cases throughout this report show the importance of knowing one's rights and the opportunities for change, such as government national development plans and SDG commitments. Both governments and civil society have a role to play in supporting women and their communities to strengthen their knowledge, leadership skills and other capacities and resources needed to organise themselves. Networking and movement building are particularly effective in building solidarity, cross-learning and amplifying women's voices in advancing gender just solutions.



Photo credit: Annabelle Avril / WECF

18. <https://www.awid.org/publications/toward-feminist-funding-ecosystem-framework-and-practical-guide>

Women-led solutions to forest degradation in Ghana – leadership, empowerment and sustainable livelihoods

Women2030 partner The Development Institute has been working with women’s rights groups in the Upper Guinean Forest of West Africa in eastern Ghana. Central to this work is **valuing the role that women play in forest conservation and enhancing it through women’s leadership and empowerment, education and skill-sharing, and protecting livelihoods that are rooted in sustainable agricultural practices.** Alongside biodiversity protection and income generation, the women’s association has been building women’s leadership capacity, particularly in relation to natural resource governance. One of the ways they have achieved this is through community radio, hosting talk shows on women’s empowerment and environmental issues and becoming a well-respected voice in the community. Women in the association now have the confidence to express themselves in community meetings and to approach decision-makers to advocate for their needs and rights. The women of Kpoeta are successfully restoring and protecting forests while also feeding their families and earning a living from their land. Each reinforces the other. **They achieve this through self-organisation and despite the challenges they face, such as low levels of political representation and literacy.**



Photo credit: The development institute

19. <https://globalforestcoalition.org/forest-cover-61/#fc6111>

ii. Global problems, local solutions: women’s gender just sustainable alternatives

Many of the global challenges of today are not new. Rather they have intensified with growing pressures on social, economic and ecological systems. Women and communities across the globe have long found local, small scale solutions to the challenges they face and built their own gender just sustainable alternatives. These have often been ignored or dismissed, but are increasingly documented and recognized as opportunities to learn from, build on and actively support. Civil society, policy makers and donors have an important role in providing spaces to share best practices between the women who lead these initiatives and providing funding, technical support and policies to upscale.

Women’s rights and traditional knowledge are crucial for conserving biodiversity in Kyrgyzstan²⁰

Women in Kyrgyzstan face numerous threats, from economic and political marginalisation and forms of gender-based violence such as bride theft, to mining and infrastructure developments that impact on their health and ability to grow food. With virtually no representation in local government and little power in household decision-making, civil society and women’s groups must organise themselves to overcome the challenges they face. Key to their success is rooting the struggle for women’s rights in ecological conservation and the sharing of traditional knowledge. In the remote region of eastern Kyrgyzstan known as Issyk Kul Oblast, the village of Darkhan sits a few kilometres away from the giant Kumtor gold mine. To counter the many impacts of the mine on local life and to increase their climate resilience, women activists in the village have planted over 500 native trees and fruit bushes. Planting takes time and care, but the women of Darkhan know that their efforts will benefit the whole community. By reducing winds and soil degradation and preserving native species, they are protecting the community’s ability to feed and care for itself.



Photo credit: Vlad Ushakov

20. <https://globalforestcoalition.org/womens-rights-kyrgyzstan/>

The Gender Just Climate Solutions Award: the importance of recognizing women’s environmental work in Southern Africa²¹

“Ever since we won the Gender Just Climate Solutions award in 2015 our work as GenderCC – Southern Africa has continued to be validated and giving us much recognition in our country. We have now gained the respect and the accolades of the policy makers in our country such that we are always consulted in order to make inputs on gender-responsive climate change policies. The mentoring workshops helped in learning new things and tools each year that assist me in doing our work differently and in scaling up our gender-just climate Initiatives.”

GenderCC Southern Africa won the award in the category ‘non-technical solutions’, dealing with capacity-building and social improvements. Their grassroots women’s initiative focused on uplifting women out of poverty by empowering them to manage and use natural resources for sustainable livelihoods and climate resilience. The improved access to water and energy for the rural communities led to the formation of successful agricultural cooperatives.



Photo credit: Annabelle Avril / WECF

Documenting good practices has generated insights into **key building blocks for inclusive and sustainable solutions** that are highly relevant to a gender just implementation of the SDGs. The cases above show that women and communities did not only build sustainable livelihoods and contributed to conservation, but also strengthened their knowledge, leadership skills and resilience which are crucial in times of fast changes to the environment and climate.

21. <https://www.wecf.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/2015-Gender-CC-South-Africa.pdf>

iii. Joint feminist and evidence-based advocacy for government accountability

“We work in a society that has long discriminated against women. Changing cultural practices and behaviour takes time. To keep us going we focus on the goal of indigenous women’s empowerment and on the women that inspire us daily!”

(Margaret Nguratiang)

Much of the work of Women2030 and partners has focused on strengthening inclusion and policy engagement of women and women’s rights organisations in decision-making. From the very local to the national, regional and global: raising awareness of rights and policy processes, investing in capacities, tools and initiatives to monitor and analyse progress and challenges and strengthen the networks and spaces for joint advocacy have all proven to be key. Many people were not aware of the SDGs and the possibilities to play a role in their communities’ or country’s future development. Tools for participatory gender assessments and shadow reporting were effective in supporting partners. Throughout the programme they felt empowered and their actions visibly contributed to awareness of their community, policy makers, improved policies and practice changes.

Women’s capacities for feminist analysis and joint advocacy in Asia Pacific

In Mongolia the Center for Human Rights and Development and MONFEMNET supported capacities of local women in 11 provinces to identify their own SDG targets on the eradication of poverty and unemployment. They also led working groups with members from Community-Based Organisations and state officials at local and national level, including on the government VNR presentation in the HLPF 2019.

Through the course of the project, a National CSOs Network on SDGs was formed with CHRD as the focal point to coordinate with the National Voluntary National Review Secretariat at the National Development Agency, demonstrating the power of cross-constituency movement building and feminist leadership towards a collective civil society call for development justice.

In Indonesia, APWLD’s partner Forum Komunikasi Masyarakat – Berkebutuhan Khusus Aceh (FKM BKA YWU), Women with Disabilities and Persons with Disabilities were able to form advocacy groups, allowing women with disabilities to engage in development planning for the first time. They succeeded in pushing the government to issue several regional policies and regulations promoting the rights of women and people with disabilities in the region, on decent work in Banda Aceh, on disaster risk reduction in Aceh Besar, and on disabled-friendly buildings in Banda Aceh. Getting the first-ever consultation for women in local development planning is a major step in Banda Aceh, a region known to be very conservative when it comes to women’s rights.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND FEMINIST RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACHIEVING AGENDA 2030

Five years of feminist organising, capacity development and joint evidence-based advocacy as Women2030 have led to a wealth of research, analysis, experience and good practices. This report aimed to synthesise the insights on SDG and gender equality progress focusing on five feminist priorities, as well as the structural barriers and opportunities for change.

We believe Agenda 2030 provides an important opportunity and responsibility for governments to take action and make sure everyone can live a healthy, fulfilling and dignified life. There is an urgent need to refocus and make sure feminist priorities and solutions are central to any effort to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. We call on governments, international organisations and civil society to support a feminist Agenda 2030 that is systemic, coherent, inclusive and human rights based. This agenda builds on the following findings in this report:

- International commitments on women's human rights and the Sustainable Development Goals have generated momentum for governments to take much needed action. All governments assessed have set up some level of infrastructure for implementation and have integrated the SDGs into their national development plan. Many are adopting gender strategies or new laws on specific issues such as violence against women or land rights. There are, however, big differences in speed, levels and quality of SDG implementation across countries and regions. Women2030 as well as most recent UN assessments find a lack of progress as policies, budgets, implementation measures and actual improvements on the ground are not living up to the urgent needs our societies face.
- Implementation challenges start with a lack of awareness, capacity and quality data on gender and its relation to other SDGs. This makes it difficult for governments to ensure evidence-based and coherent policy making. Limited spaces, coordination and resources for participation of women's rights groups and CSOs hamper their role in monitoring, scrutinizing and contributing to governments efforts. Aside from some good examples of national dialogues and CSO consultation around Voluntary National Reviews, this means that inclusiveness, quality and accountability of policy processes still often falls short. VNRs - if done well - are a useful but still insufficient tool to encourage and hold governments to account for their commitments. Existing human rights frameworks could help fill that gap and anchor government roles as duty-bearers but are not currently integrated into SDG processes.
- Most importantly, persistent structural barriers to gender just development are not being addressed. Despite the interdependent nature of the SDGs and the strong recognition that gender equality (SDG 5) is central to achieving Agenda 2030, a systemic lens and coherent approach is missing. Women2030 partners and feminist movements across the globe observe similar challenges and conclude: There will be no gender equality on a dead planet or in an economic system that perpetuates inequalities. Economic, climate and environmental justice are crucial to achieving women's rights and gender equality - and vice versa. It is positive that many nowadays recognize the need to tackle patriarchal and harmful gender norms. These continue to form major barriers to women's diverse opportunities and position in society even where laws are changed. As conservative and authoritarian forces grow and pose new risks to gender equality, sustainable development and the important work of feminist organisations and women human rights defenders, the need to join hands and systematically tackle injustice and inequalities becomes ever more urgent.



- The result is that despite important progress in some areas and countries, women's universal human rights are still far from a reality today. Country gender assessments report challenges in policies and practice on all five feminist priorities.
 - i. Women and gender diverse people continue to be discriminated at all levels, especially those from indigenous, migrant, rural and other 'minority' backgrounds. Marital and customary laws continue to favour men over women and undermine progress and opportunities in all areas of political, economic and public life.
 - ii. Despite popular discourse on the importance of women's economic empowerment, most countries do not have gender just economic policies in place. This results in lack of access to gender responsive public services, violations of labour rights, decent work and living wage standards, high unpaid care work burden and limited access to and control over financial and natural resources. Many examples in this report show the impact of prioritising economic growth, foreign direct investment and free trade over human rights and the environment on inequalities and environmental destruction. And how this particularly affects women, whose roles and needs - including as economic agents - are often not recognized and supported.
 - iii. Climate action and forest conservation efforts fall short in most countries, with particular consequences for women that depend on natural resources for their livelihoods. Women play key roles in protecting biodiversity and promoting sustainable practices such as community conservation and agro-ecological food production, yet policies in these areas continue to be gender blind. International gender action plans provide important momentum for governments to include women in decision-making - if held accountable.
 - iv. Women's political representation is slowly increasing in many of the countries assessed, especially where quota and support programmes for female politicians are introduced. Patriarchal norms and gender bias, however, continue to hamper women's voice and leadership and the latest Gender Parity report (WEF 2020) highlights women's political empowerment as the biggest gender disparity.
 - v. Violence against women, harmful practices and lack of bodily autonomy continue to be major obstacles to women's rights despite legal reforms in many countries. The structural nature and the use of violence and threat as a strategy to silence women is ever more visible with women human rights defenders under attack.

We can conclude that **implementation efforts need to be upscaled and governments need to be held accountable on their commitments to the SDGs as well as on their human and women's rights obligations.** The good news is there are many good practices and lessons to build upon as governments, UN institutions and CSOs work together for a gender just future. Women2030 experiences show the relevance of women's self-organising and movement building for local, sustainable and gender-just alternatives. We also see that joint feminist and evidence-based advocacy works. Supporting the work of women's rights organisations contributes to better policies and practices, whilst allowing women to build their capacities, resilience and leadership for achieving the SDGs.

We call on everyone to endorse a feminist Agenda 2030 that is:

- **Systemic:** A systems lens and approach is needed to **tackle structural barriers to gender equality and sustainable development.** Patriarchal, authoritarian, economic and social norms, beliefs, structures and systems perpetuate inequality, human rights violations and environmental destruction - all disproportionately affecting women. Without women's rights there will be no sustainable development. And there will be no gender equality on a dead planet or in an economically unjust world. The SDGs are interdependent and require coherent action towards gender just systems change.
- **Inclusive:** Recognition and support of women's needs, crucial roles, experiences and expertise is fundamental to achieving gender-just sustainable development. This calls for an enabling environment **with spaces for meaningful participation** of all women in decision-making, transparent policy processes building on **strong gender-differentiated data, as well as learning from and supporting women's self-organising,** advocacy and local development alternatives - especially in times of shrinking civic space.
- **Accountable and human-rights based:** Whilst most governments are taking action, there are many implementation challenges and progress is slow. Voluntary National Reporting is useful but insufficient to ensure necessary gender specific measures are taken to achieve the SDGs. Governments and UN institutions need to ensure **budgets and capacities are in place and strengthen monitoring and accountability mechanisms at all levels.** This calls for reconfirmed commitment to a gender just and human-rights based Agenda 2030 and integration with existing international obligations on human and women's rights, climate and environment. While women and communities continue to claim their rights as rights-holders, governments must meet their responsibilities as duty-bearers. HLPF reforms are an important opportunity to strengthen harmonisation and hold governments to account.

We particularly call on governments and UN institutions to:

- i. **End discrimination against women and girls in all their diversity** by addressing harmful marital, customary and other laws, practices and underlying norms and beliefs, as well as adopting gender specific and intersectional approaches. Targeted efforts are needed to recognize and include those facing intersecting discriminations, such as women of indigenous and rural descent.
- ii. **Ensure economic justice for all** by moving away from a pure growth focus and trade, investment and tax policies that harm women and moving towards a gender just economy that reprioritises the human rights and well-being of people and their environment. This requires governments to **recognize and support women's roles and contributions to the economy, redistribute burden and benefits and address the structural barriers they face by:**
 - Investing in **gender responsive public services** such as water and sanitation and quality education based on strong gender specific and intersectional needs assessments. Halt austerity measures and privatisation of services that lead to exclusion of women and other marginalised groups. Instead, ensure sufficient public funding by addressing harmful tax, trade and investment policies that allow for illicit financial flow, trade mispricing, tax avoidance and undermine domestic resource mobilisation. Establish a global and regional tax body forum to address the ongoing tax race to the bottom.

- **Recognizing, reducing and redistributing women's unpaid care and domestic work burden** by promoting awareness and dialogue on gender norms and family care responsibilities (e.g. with educational programmes, campaigns, time keeping diaries), ensuring public services and adopting measures to encourage paternal leave and affordable childcare.
- **Ensuring equal opportunities, decent work, safety and equal pay and living wage for all women** active in the labour market. Enact gender sensitive labour laws in line with international agreements and actively monitor and address violations. Support women to unionise and invest in social protection measures, including for the many women in informal occupations currently excluded from legal coverage and facing high poverty risks.
- **Strengthen women's crucial contribution to agriculture and food security** with tailor made support to women smallholder farmers (e.g. extension services, access to finance, cooperatives) and tackle policies that negatively affect them such as promotion of industrial agriculture and biofuels.
- **Protecting and promote women's access to and control over land and natural resources** by implementing gender sensitive land tenure laws and policies in line with international standards on equal land rights between women and men, as well as indigenous and communal property rights. Prevent land grabs, biodiversity loss and deforestation through discouraging large scale land transfers and upholding the right to free prior and Informed consent.
- **Restoring the primacy of human rights over trade and investment promotion**, including by adopting ex-ante and periodic human rights impact assessments of trade and investment agreements and strengthening regulation of private sector investments in line with international corporate accountability standards.

iii. Take urgent gender just climate action and forest conservation efforts:

- **Ensuring equal and meaningful participation and leadership of women in climate and forest conservation decision-making** at all levels in line with UNFCCC and CBD Gender Work Programmes and Action Plans. Governments and UN bodies should work with women's rights and feminist organisations to fully integrate gender considerations in international and national climate and biodiversity policies and programmes. This requires building gender expertise on conducting gender analysis, gender budgeting, and collecting of sex and gender disaggregated data to respond to the needs and priorities of women in climate, biodiversity and forest policy making.
- It also requires **building on the existing knowledge and best practices of grassroots and Indigenous women and their communities, recognizing and supporting their contributions and solutions** to climate mitigation and adaptation, forest conservation and restoration. This includes the locally owned, women-led and climate resilient best practices such as small scale agroecological, forest and energy solutions shared in this report. To ensure gender responsive direct access to climate and biodiversity finance capacity building of women's rights and feminist groups and simplified procedures are crucial.

- And finally, **urgently ending harmful policies and practices that undermine climate solutions and forest and biodiversity conservation efforts** including subsidies on fossil fuels and investment promotion in extractives, large-scale agricultural monocultures, unsustainable livestock production and consumption and damaging infrastructure.
 - **Guarantee women's equal participation, leadership and voice in decision-making** at all levels and spheres, building on measures that are proven to be effective such as quota mandating women's representation, programmes to support women's political leadership capacities and coaching and campaigns to address harmful gender bias and stereotypes.
- iv. **End violence against women and girls and ensure bodily autonomy** by not only adopting but actively implementing laws and policies to prevent VAW and promote access to justice for survivors, as well as addressing underlying gender norms and lack of accountability mechanisms at all levels, including in state bodies. In the face of growing backlash it is urgent for governments to **support women's rights organisations in raising awareness** on the structural violence that women face and provide active protection of women human rights defenders.

We invite women's rights groups, feminist movements and other civil society groups to work together and strengthen movement building, joint feminist analysis and evidence-based advocacy. The Sustainable Development Goals provide an important opportunity and need to strengthen existing and create new spaces for inclusion of key constituencies. Only through meaningful participation can governments be held accountable for addressing systemic barriers and turning important commitments into action and results for women in all their diversity. Strengthening local and national SDG monitoring and engagement, demanding inclusive spaces for women in all their diversity and access to key information and gender differentiated data is key. We can learn from experiences of inclusive platform development at regional level, such as the RCEM, as well as the joint analysis and recommendations of global feminist platforms such as the Women's Major Group's [HLPF 2020 position paper](#). Together we can build on the work of feminists and movements around the world to ensure a feminist Agenda 2030 based on meaningful participation of all people at all levels.



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COUNTRY COMMITMENTS AND PROGRESS ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Country (by region)	CEDAW ratification	BEIJING Declaration and Platform for Action	SDG Voluntary National Report	Paris Climate Agreement: first NDC	Human Development Index (2018) ²²	Gender Inequality Index (2018) ²³
BENIN	1992	1995	2018	2018	0.520	0.613 (148)
BURKINA FASO	1987	1995	2019	2016	0.434	0.612 (147)
CAMEROON	1994	1995	2019	2016	0.563	0.566 (140)
CHAD	1995	1995	2019	2017	0.401	0.701 (160)
GHANA	1986	1995	2019	2016	0.596	0.541 (133)
LIBERIA	1984	1995	**	2018	0.465	0.651 (155)
NIGERIA	1985	1995	2017	2017	0.534	-
TOGO	1983	1995	2018	2017	0.513	0.566 (140)
TUNISIA	1985	1995	2019	2017	0.739	0.300 (63)
UGANDA	1985	1995	2020	2016	0.528	0.531 (127)
BANGLADESH	1984	1995	2017	2016	0.614	0.536 (129)
CAMBODIA	1992	1995	2019	2017	0.581	0.474 (114)
FIJI	1995	1995	2019	2016	0.724	0.357 (78)
INDIA	1993	1995	2017	2016	0.647	0.501 (122)
INDONESIA	1984	1995	2019	2016	0.707	0.451 (101)
MALAYSIA	1995	1995	2017	2016	0.804	0.274 (58)
MONGOLIA	1981	1995	2019	2016	0.735	0.322 (71)
NEPAL	1991	1995	2017	2016	0.579	0.476 (115)
PAKISTAN	1996	1995	2019	2016	-	0.547 (136)
PHILIPPINES	1981	1995	2019	2017	0.712	0.425 (98)
SRI LANKA	1981	1995	2018	2016	0.780	0.380 (86)
THAILAND	1985	1995	2017	2016	0.765	0.377 (84)
VANUATU	1995	1995	2019	2016	0.597	-
VIET NAM	1982	1995	2018	2016	0.693	0.314 (68)
ALBANIA	1994	1995	2018	2016	0.791	0.234 (51)
ARMENIA	1993	1995	2018	2017	0.760	0.259 (57)
GEORGIA	1994	1995	2016	2017	0.786	0.351 (75)
KYRGYZSTAN	1997	1995	2020	2020	0.674	0.381 (87)
MOLDOVA	1994	1995	2020	2017	0.711	0.228 (50)
NORTH MACEDONIA	1994	1995	2020	2018	0.759	0.145 (36)
SERBIA	2001		2019	2017	0.799	0.161 (37)
TAJIKISTAN	1993	1995	2017	2017	0.656	0.377 (84)
BOLIVIA	1990	1995	**	2016	0.703	0.446 (101)
BRAZIL	1984	1995	2017	2016	0.761	0.386 (89)
CHILE	1989*	1995	2019	2017	0.847	0.288 (62)
COLOMBIA	1982	1995	2019	2018	0.761	0.411 (94)
PARAGUAY	1987	1995	2018	2016	0.724	0.482 (117)

* but only after 18 years, in December 2019, is the optional protocol approved / ** not available yet

22. UNDP index and figures. Almost all showing slight improvements compared to 2015.

23. UNDP index and figures, ranking from most equal (1) to least (160).



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The Women2030 coalition

