Towards gender mainstreaming in environmental policies

“A gender sustainable development perspective should be infused with a commitment to change the cultural values and sexual division of labour, to attain, in the near future, a state where men and women share power and labour in the management and control of fragile ecosystems.”

Mariam Abramovay and Gail Lerner (Abramovay and Lerner, 1996, p.11)

The present publication has explored the differing roles, responsibilities, positions and perspectives that women and men have in relation to natural resource use and management, with an emphasis on biological diversity, dryland systems and water resources. Based on this analysis, the present chapter offers a strategic model for gender mainstreaming in institutions dealing with environment and sustainable development. Depending on the level of present involvement in gender issues, a mixed strategy can be defined to focus on specific areas.

The strategic approach outlined here primarily addresses institutional stakeholders: Governments, international agencies, non-governmental organizations, businesses and academia. As described in chapter II, gender mainstreaming in environmental policies is an issue for both women and men. Therefore, the strategy deliberately addresses men, and makes them – together with women – responsible for a gender approach in environmental work. Also, the focus on gender must exist not only on an abstract and global level, but must evolve within a specific local context, taking into account other elements of social differentiation such as class, caste, religion and age (Davids and Van Driel, 2002).
Embarking on a gender-mainstreaming strategy calls for simultaneous steps in several fundamental domains:

- Knowledge and understanding of the issue and validation of women’s contributions to sustainable development
- At the institutional level, adequate political will combined with concrete actions
- Assurances of women’s rights, and that they benefit from environmental goods and services
- Full participation of women at all levels, particularly in decision-making
- Improvement of the socio-economic position of women
- Women’s empowerment
- Identifying the impact of the macrocontext on women and their environment

The following proposals, grouped under these seven basic categories, are designed to help gender mainstreaming move forward. They include profiles of relevant strategies tried by other organizations. Also, many instruments for implementation are already available, such as the 1998 OECD/DAC Guidelines for Gender Equality, but their use in environmental policies to date has been patchy.

**A. Understanding the issue**

**Analysis**

- Execute - at institutional, programme and project level - gender analysis, gender budget studies and gender impact analysis on natural resources conservation and management, and translate these into action. Research on gender can be easily integrated into a socio-economic analysis or baseline survey.
- Use and apply sex-disaggregated data, criteria and indicators in planning, monitoring and evaluation.
Knowledge
■ Ensure that women’s knowledge is preserved. Prevent and avoid pirating and commercialization of local and traditional knowledge.
■ Support the systematic documentation of traditional health and agrobiodiversity knowledge, and the bottom-up development of locally owned, traditional environmental knowledge.
■ Document women’s knowledge and survival strategies in dryland areas and their expertise in integrated water management.

Expertise
■ Strengthen expertise on gender and environment and build a roster of specialists; seek to develop a network of research institutions and individuals that spans many disciplines.

B. Institutional Policies

Policies
■ Many international and national commitments and policies have been agreed in the area of women and the environment; a first step would be to implement these.

Box 23: Gender analysis implies:
■ Assessment of the roles and needs of women and men, including gender-based labour division.
■ Understanding gender-differentiated systems for access to resources, labour, uses, rights and the distribution of benefits and products.
■ Focusing on gender relations, not just on women (looking at differences, inequalities, power imbalances, differential access to resources between women and men).
■ Knowing that gender is a factor that influences how people respond both individually and collectively.
■ Perceiving the gender dimensions of institutions at all levels in society.
■ In each context, ideally using participatory methodologies.

Source: UNDP, 2002-c
Promote gender mainstreaming in the policies and operations of all natural resource management institutions, and ensure that women’s and men’s concerns and experiences are fully integrated.

Ensure that all agenda items in policy dialogues incorporate gender equality and equity considerations.

Devise accountability mechanisms on gender issues for heads of departments.

Appoint gender specialists and gender focal points at managerial levels and in the various departments of environmental organizations.

Establish a gender task force in the organization.

Make monitoring and evaluation systems gender-specific, collect gender-specific data, and apply social accounting and gender auditing.

**Box 24: Gender mainstreaming implies:**

- Taking into account the attitudes, roles and responsibilities of women and men, recognizing that the sexes and different social classes do not have the same access to and control over resources, and that work, benefits and impacts may vary widely across social and gender groups.
- Considering the needs, roles, capacities, benefits and burdens of women and men, rich and poor, young and old.

**Source:** UNDP, 2002-c

**Recognition and sensitization**

- Promote the recognition of gender-differentiated roles, skills and practices in the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources (biodiversity, drylands, water resources, etc.), keeping in mind that these roles vary from place to place and change over time.
- Recognize that women and men have different types of vulnerabilities, strategies and responsibilities in environmental change and impact mitigation; integrate gender issues in vulnerability and risk analysis.
- Sensitize the decision-makers working on biodiversity, water and land about gender issues.
- Enhance awareness-raising on women’s roles in biodiversity use, desertification control and integrated water management through
development of case studies and other information materials.

- Foster gender sensitivity through training courses in the natural resources sector and beyond.

**Programmes and projects**

- Ensure gender-sensitive project planning, implementation, monitoring and reporting (see box 25).
- Apply the UNEP Gender Sensitivity Guidelines (http://www.unep.org/Project_Manual/51.asp) for project formulation, approval, monitoring and evaluation (see box 26).

**Box 25: An initiative or project should:**

- Incorporate the insights from a gender analysis into project design
- Give importance and recognition to women’s responsibilities, roles and contributions.
- Identify concrete, gender-relevant objectives, and make links to key expected results and initiatives.
- Develop gender-sensitive indicators for monitoring and evaluation.

*Source: UNDP, 2002-c*

**Box 26: The UNEP gender checklist:**

- How can the project build on and strengthen the UNEP commitment to advancing the role of women in environmental decision-making?
- What specific ways can be proposed for encouraging and enabling women and men to participate and benefit equally from the project goals?
- Are there (categories of) women and/or men likely to be disadvantaged by the project? If so, what remedial measures can be taken?
- Are there opportunities under the project to increase women’s ability to take charge of their own lives, and to take collective action to solve environmental problems?

*Source: UNEP, 1997*
Gender balance and equality

■ Rectify the gender bias in staffing in organizations and programmes dealing with conservation and sustainable development through an active recruitment policy.
■ Increase the proportion of women in the secretariats and delegations of multilateral agreements on environmental issues.
■ Ensure equality between women and men in carrying out those agreements and facilitate continuous attention to gender sensitive approaches in all aspects of implementation.
■ Promote gender equality in natural resource management at national and regional levels, particularly in developing and implementing national and regional action plans.

C. Women’s rights and benefits

■ Guarantee women’s rights, independent access and entitlements to biological resources.
■ Ensure women’s access to and control of resources, particularly land and water resources, through land reform and legislative measures.
■ Ensure the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from natural resources, and the right to compensation for environmental goods and services, while protecting the interests of local women and men.

Box 27: Indicators of gender sensitivity

■ Men and women participate equally in planning and implementing the project.
■ Women and men benefit equally from its interventions.
■ If women have a subordinate role in the context of the issue being addressed, the project advances women’s status and decision-making power.
■ Men and women are sensitized to gender concerns.
■ Where relevant, all data is collected and analysed on a sex-disaggregated basis.

Source: UNEP, 1997
Apply the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) to issues related to women’s access to natural resources, including land.

D. Participation

- Ensure full and active participation of women together with gender equity in natural resource management, research, planning and decision-making at all levels. In this context also consider active participation of different social classes.
- Promote the use of participatory methodologies (Guijt, 1996).
- Address issues of power.
- Mobilize additional resources to support women’s full involvement in natural resource planning and management.
- Ensure that benefits from interventions accrue to both women and men.

Box 28: Involving both women and men

With an emphasis on increasing women’s participation at decision-making levels, participatory measures need to address:

- Power imbalances within communities
- Intra-household and intra-family relations
- The various constraints on participation
- Varying abilities to participate
- Perceived benefits of participation

Source: UNDP, 2002-c

E. Technical and financial support

- Assist women in their role as local natural resource managers and identify strategies to help rural women achieve sustainable livelihoods.
- Allocate adequate technical and financial resources to support women directly in natural resource management and the control of environmental degradation, and ensure sustainability of finances.
Enhance women’s access to education, extension services, training, finances and appropriate technologies.
Create more jobs for women but also account for their nature and terms, including whether they offer sustainable livelihoods.
Link natural resource programmes and policies to economic initiatives and poverty eradication, and use a cross-cutting and internally consistent approach.

F. Empowerment

Create environments that empower women and engage them as full partners in efforts to preserve land, water and natural resources.
Empower women as resource managers through capacity-building of individuals and organizations, and increased access to educational opportunities.
Improve women’s access to information, management processes, training and legal systems.
Support, strengthen and involve women’s organizations and networks working on environmental issues. Facilitate a dialogue with these organizations and gender experts.
Promote leadership and guarantee political participation of women in decision-making. Engage young women in leadership-building and leadership practices.
Raise women’s visibility in positions of authority and decision-making at all levels.
Box 29: A world of women’s activism

Around the globe, the women’s movement and many non-governmental organizations have mobilized around gender and livelihood issues. Many groups have identified environmental topics as a priority and have energetically sought to boost gender and environment issues to the top of the political agenda. In the process, they have acquired a wide range of expertise, including their experiences on the ground, and become important sources of information for policy-making and implementation. They are major agents of change.

At the international level, the Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) continues to be a strong advocate for women in sustainable development, facilitating women as a major group in the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development. WEDO was one of the initiators of the Women’s Action Agenda 21 for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and of its updated version, Women’s Action Agenda for a Healthy and Peaceful Planet 2015, for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg (see case J below). The Gender and Water Alliance looks specifically at water-related subjects; the International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy (ENERGIA) advocates around energy; and Diverse Women for Diversity specializes in agro-biodiversity. GROOTS organizes grassroots women’s organizations from around the world on livelihood issues, while the International Network of Indigenous Women is a strong voice on biodiversity and environment-related issues. In 2002, the international network Women Leaders for the Environment was launched, bringing together women Ministers of environment and other leaders.

Regionally, prominent groups include Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF), the Platform on Land and Water Rights in Southern Africa and the Gender and Environment Network in Latin America and the Caribbean. Innumerable national and local organizations have flourished as well. Involvement of these civil society organizations is needed at all levels and in all phases of development.
G. The macrocontext

- Analyse the impacts of macrolevel policies and institutions, including trade liberalization and privatization, on gender differentiation in environment and sustainable development.
- International agencies and organizations – including the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank – should be held accountable if they fail to secure women’s access to natural resources and environmental services, including land, water and biodiversity.
- Promote institutional changes that guarantee a pro-poor approach in terms of the results and impacts of international institutions.

Conclusion: taking up the challenge
The seven steps listed in the present chapter map out aspects of a strategy for instilling a gender perspective in environmental and sustainable development organizations, policies and management. In all those cases, a major requirement is full support at the managerial level and committed political will. Box 1 shows how UNEP itself has taken these up while case K below looks at the efforts of the World Conservation Union (IUCN). Case L below shows how the Heinrich Böll Foundation in East Africa links its gender, environment and peace programmes.
CaseJ: Women’s action agenda for a healthy and peaceful planet 2015

By Minu Hemmati

Women from around the world took a comprehensive global platform to the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The impact of their energy, spirit and ideas was clear: Activists used the platform to successfully lobby for an array of references to women throughout the official conference agreement (Agenda 21), as well as for an entire chapter devoted to gender – “Global Action for Women towards Sustainable and Equitable Development”.

Over 1,500 women from 83 countries formulated the platform, which was popularly known as Women’s Action Agenda 21, after gathering at the First Women’s World Congress for a Healthy Planet in November 1991, in Miami, Florida, United States of America. The document spelled out women’s positions on governance, the environment, militarism, the global economy, poverty, land rights and food security, women’s rights, reproductive health, science and technology, and education. Over the next decade, at the subsequent series of United Nations world conferences on development, Women’s Action Agenda 21 continued to spark activism. It helped galvanize women worldwide to push for their priorities in international institutions, Governments, the private sector and civil society.

In the lead-up to the 2002 United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, the Agenda was updated and revitalized. The new Women’s Action Agenda for a Healthy and Peaceful Planet 2015 articulates a vision for the future, building on the diverse experiences of thousands of women striving to bring the Rio agreements to life. For two years before the Johannesburg Summit, an international working group of activists reached out to women in all regions of the world to revise the platform.

Discussions took place at five regional meetings and electronic consultations tapped into women’s networks and organizations with expertise on particular themes. Crossing issues, cultures and nations, the breadth of the consultation underscored the collaboration that has always been at the heart of the international women’s movement. The drafting process was facilitated by the Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) and the Network for Human Development (REDEH).

When the Women’s Action Agenda for a Peaceful and Healthy Planet 2015
emerged at the end of this process, it included key recommendations to international institutions, Governments, and others in the following areas:

**A. Peace and human rights**

Sustainability presupposes human security, protection of all human rights and actions to address the ecological, social, economic and political causes of conflict, violence and terror. Women suffer disproportionately from conflicts and violence and can play a major role in conflict resolution and peace-building. Actions are needed at all levels – global, regional, national, local and within households.

**B. Globalization for sustainability**

Left unchecked, economic globalization driven by liberalized market forces widens gaps between rich and poor, spreads poverty, fosters waves of violence and crime and degrades the environment. The Agenda addresses the gender implications of economic, financial and trade policies, working conditions in the informal sector and wage inequities in the formal sector.

**C. Access to and control of resources**

Biological diversity is threatened by the irreversible destruction of natural habitats and the endangerment of species caused by unsustainable production and consumption patterns. The major contributions of women to biodiversity management should be acknowledged and their access and property rights guaranteed.

**D. Environmental security and health**

Worldwide, the environmental security of rural and urban communities is at risk. In many cases, women and men face differing susceptibilities to various environmental hazards, while access to basic health services, including reproductive health services, is unequal. Women’s rights to (reproductive) health and security need to be secured.

**E. Governance for sustainable development**

The result of weak Governments and the unprecedented rise of transnational corporations has been the concentration of power in the hands of a few, mostly men in industrialized countries. And governance is not gender-neutral – women’s participation remains woefully low. Achieving sustainable development, however, requires full and equitable participation of all stakeholders and citizens at all levels of decision-making, along with accountability, transparency, inclusiveness, the rule of law and equality.
Case K : Mainstreaming gender at IUCN

By Lorena Aguilar (IUCN)

The World Conservation Union, known popularly as IUCN, was founded in 1948 and brings together 78 States, 112 Government agencies, 735 NGOs, 35 affiliates and some 10,000 scientists and experts from 181 countries in a unique worldwide partnership. Its mission is to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable. IUCN has approximately 1,000 staff, most of whom are located in its 42 regional and country offices. About 100 work at its headquarters in Gland, Switzerland.

A timeline of actions

1984: The IUCN sixteenth General Assembly in Madrid makes recommendations concerning women and the environment; establishment of a working group promoting the involvement of women at all levels of the organization.

1986-1987: In 1986, the Conference on Conservation and Development: Implementing the World Conservation Strategy is held in Ottawa, at which IUCN is requested “to promote a supplement on women, environment and sustainable development” to the Strategy. The Working Group on Women and Environment is created, which leads to the launch of the Population and Sustainable Development Programme in 1987.

1988-1989: Following the recommendations of the 1988 General Assembly, in Costa Rica, the Programme on Women and Natural Resource Management is devised. It aims to develop more effective conservation programmes by drawing attention to the roles of women as well as men.


The first efforts by IUCN to incorporate gender issues within its operations began in 1984. However, it did not define this process until 1996, when it became clear that for the Union to promote more equitable societies, it itself needed organizational change.

The first World Conservation Congress, held in Montreal, Canada that same year, requested the Director General “to integrate a gender perspective across the IUCN Programme” and “continue the work of the Policy Committee of the Council to formulate a gender programme and policy for the Union” (resolution 1.5). In 1998,
the IUCN Council adopted a Gender Policy Statement and Action Plan. It states that “IUCN’s commitment to gender equality and equity is Union wide and is an integral part of all policies, programmes and projects”.

This commitment resurfaced at the second World Conservation Congress, held in Amman in 2000: the Congress approved resolution 2.28, in which it called on the Director General to ensure that “gender equity is mainstreamed in all of the Secretariat’s actions, projects and initiatives” and that “the Gender Equity Policy that was approved by the Council is applied in all Secretariat Component Programmes, projects or initiatives”.

A series of concrete actions then followed to accelerate the pace of change. IUCN appointed a high-level gender adviser, assigned a budget for the topic, created gender networks of focal points in all its regions, defined responsibilities in relation to the gender policy for all personnel, elaborated criteria for the approval of new proposals and started the development of specific and practical methodologies for mainstreaming gender into conservation initiatives.

**New methodologies for new challenges**
IUCN now understands that gender equality and equity are matters of fundamental human rights and social justice, and also a precondition for sustainable development. As a result, the organization has assumed the challenge of developing both theoretical and methodological approaches to gender across its activities. A series of publications has been issued and used to train more than 10,000 people around the world (www.genderandenvironment.org). They include:

**The Towards Equity Series.** Provides tools and instruments for integrating a gender equity perspective at every level of the project cycle. Nine modules deal with issues such as the elaboration of proposals, appraisals, planning, management of projects and creation of indicators from a gender perspective (Aguilar, 1999; Aguilar et al., 2000; Alfaro Quesada, 2002a and 2002b; Blanco and Rodriguez, 2000; Escalante, 2000; Rodríguez et al., 2000; Rodríguez Villalobos, 2000; Zaldaña, 2000).

**The Unavoidable Current: Gender Policies for the Environmental Sector in Mesoamerica.** Offers a theoretical and philosophical vision for a conceptual framework to establish gender equity policies in the Ministries of environment of Mesoamerica. It includes seven case studies with corresponding policies and action plans, along with methodologies and guidelines for developing gender equity policies in the environmental sector (Aguilar, 2002).

**In Search of the Lost Gender: Equity in Protected Areas.** A conceptual and
methodological proposal that provides instruments and recommendations to promote gender equity in protected areas. The document facilitates planning, management and administration, and is designed to assist in seeking greater social equity (Aguilar et al., 2002).

**About Fishermen, Fisherwomen, Oceans and Tides: A Gender Perspective in Marine-Coastal Zones.** Features tools and recommendations for tackling gender, conservation and sustainable use initiatives in marine coastal zones (Aguilar and Castañeda, 2000).

**De Aciertos y Desiertos: Equidad de Género en Ecosistemas de Tierra Seca** (On Right Moves and Deserts: Gender Equity in Dryland Ecosystems (in Spanish)). Contains a methodological proposal on training technical personnel in dryland development initiatives (Lobo and Gutiérrez, 2003).

**La Fuerza de la Corriente: Gestión de cuencas hydrográficas con equidad de género** (The Force of the Current: Management of River Basins with Gender Equity (in Spanish)). Draws together instruments and recommendations for the management and conservation of watersheds from a gender perspective (Siles and Soares, 2003).

While the development of different gender methodologies has been an important step for IUCN, one of the lessons learned is that mainstreaming gender, as an organizational strategy, depends on the skills, knowledge and commitment of the staff involved in management and implementation. “Evaporation” of policy commitments is widespread and policies do not always translate into practical strategies or follow-through. Cultivating appropriate understanding, commitment and capacity, as well as addressing issues of gender inequities and inequalities within an organization, is a process of long-term organizational change. Appropriate capacity-building activities need to be explicitly included in policies, programmes and project frameworks.

However, it is also evident that the steps which IUCN has taken are paying off. Following a period of intensive training, various offices throughout the world are now adopting gender methodologies and producing their plans of action for gender mainstreaming. A new generation of projects considers women an integral part of the management of natural resources. For the first time, technical assistance flows towards women’s groups, and equity, are seen as a fundamental part of sustainable development.

The complete IUCN Gender Policy is available at http://iucn.org/themes/spgeng/Policy/GenderPolicyE.html.
Case L: East Africa: empowerment of women

By Aseghedch Ghirmazion (Heinrich Böll Foundation Africa)

The programme of the Heinrich Böll Foundation in East Africa and the Horn of Africa primarily strives for the civic and legal empowerment of women in the region, while the main emphasis of its North-South Dialogue Programme is discourse that advances peace.

Together, gender, the environment and peace present a very distinct interrelationship. Women are the major actors in the environment, and thus their role in environmental management cannot be overemphasized. Conflict causes major destruction of the natural world, hurting women the most and hindering their crucial roles as environmental managers.

In the region covered, a particular concern is land rights. Women tend to enjoy use rights as wives and mothers, but lack transfer rights to varying degrees as a result of customs that reserve these for men. They therefore have no legal rights over the land that they work on and use for their daily supply of fuel, water and food. This has a great impact on economic progress because women, despite being the users and managers of natural resources, are unable to make decisions on expansion and development.

Logically, women should be targeted for any environmental management initiative. Yet entrenched discrimination hinders the impact of sensitization efforts; whereas the international scene has recognized women’s essential contributions to economic development, on the ground their activities are still deemed informal and without measurable economic significance.

Conflict normally takes the form of a struggle over who will control resources. Given the environmental degradation that results, any environmental management programme should place conflict-resolution mechanisms at the fore. In the face of war, women and children suffer enormously, forced to adjust to a life of uncertainty that is characterized by harassment, social and cultural decay and lack of access to services such as water, food and shelter. They may also be cut off from their natural environment, which, especially in rural areas, is detrimental to their very survival and that of their households.

Making these and other links between gender, environmental management and peace, the Foundation’s regional office, in Nairobi, now encourages initiatives
that integrate the three issues. In Somaliland, for example, a network of 32 women’s organizations is promoting women’s empowerment and peace-building alongside environmental management training and practices. Women are involved in every stage of planning and implementation of projects, and the network also supports women political aspirants. In Uganda, Isis – Women’s International Cross-Cultural Exchange offers women opportunities to build their skills and to network, while in Ethiopia the Foundation supports a monthly gender forum which raises development, environmental, political, social and legal issues with gender implications.

The Foundation also collaborates with Governments, especially on policy development and implementation. A special conference reviewed constitutions in Africa, for example, aiming to devise strategies to ensure equal rights for women under the law. In its work across the region, the foundation has analysed the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) initiative, focusing on the gender, environmental and economic dimensions. It backs gender mainstreaming in regional political and economic groupings in general.

All these activities are guided by the understanding that thoroughly integrating gender into environmental management will lead to lasting environmental sustainability. Women need to be recognized as key players in environmental processes, and should be involved in every stage of decision-making.