

A MANUAL FOR
GENDER-RESPONSIVE
LAND DEGRADATION NEUTRALITY
TRANSFORMATIVE PROJECTS
AND PROGRAMMES



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UN WOMEN, GLOBAL MECHANISM OF THE UNCCD AND IUCN



THE GLOBAL
MECHANISM
United Nations Convention
to Combat Desertification



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INTRODUCTION

Climate- and human-induced land degradation endangers the future survival of our planet. A new focus on achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) seeks to spark and grow transformative efforts to avoid, reduce and reverse land degradation through gender- and socially-equitable means. As of July 2019, 122 countries of the 169 countries directly affected by desertification, land degradation or drought pledged to achieve land degradation neutrality at the national or sub-national level.¹ More than 82 countries have already set LDN targets towards halting land degradation by 2030, and 44 of the 70 countries regularly hit by drought are setting up drought management plans to ensure that droughts do not turn into disasters.² Many of the targets entail co-benefits for sustainable agriculture and food security, and link to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to advance gender equality, increase women's equal access to and control over land and natural resources, improve health and nutrition, reduce poverty, and restore ecosystems and climate change impacts.

This manual provides step-by-step guidance to Parties on integrating gender issues and promoting gender equality in the design of transformative LDN projects.³ It builds on work launched by UN Women, the Global Mechanism of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and the International Union on the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in advising governments on integrating gender perspectives in the development of LDN initiatives, as mandated by the UNCCD Gender Action Plan (GAP), the Science Policy Interface LDN Conceptual Framework and related decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties.⁴ Given the recent adoption of the LDN Framework approach, only a few projects that explicitly incorporate the LDN approach have been submitted through the UNCCD and related funding sources. To supplement the small but growing number of LDN projects, this manual draws on related work around land degradation and gender.⁵

Gender-responsive LDN transformative projects and programmes strategically contribute to the achievement of LDN and address the needs of the most vulnerable groups, such as small farmers, rural communities and indigenous peoples, with a dedicated focus on women. The manual for gender-responsive LDN projects and programmes intends to equip national-level project developers with specific, pragmatic guidance and examples for mainstreaming gender perspectives across the lifecycle of an LDN project – to achieve greater effectiveness, better outcomes and stronger co-benefits. It contains strategic guidance to support countries that have set their LDN targets to mainstream gender issues in LDN action, to ensure that initiatives do not perpetuate or deepen historical inequalities or marginalize women's rights, erode their land rights or overlook their rights within indigenous and local communities.

SUMMARY CHECKLIST

Integrating gender perspectives in LDN transformative projects and programmes

What to do during the ‘project identification and development’ stage?

1. **Review national research reports and studies, where available, on women’s and men’s roles in and rights to land use, management and control** in order to best tailor project interventions.
2. **Align project goals to gender equality priorities in national plans** and strategies related to land, forest, watershed and natural resource use, management and governance.
3. **Conduct gender and social mapping and analysis** that outlines the context, problems, root causes and drivers that contribute to land degradation and women’s and men’s varied roles, rights and duties regarding land, productive and natural resources, and how the project interventions might affect them differently.
4. **Identify and reach out to stakeholders and partners**, ensuring gender-balanced representation, perspectives and expertise.
5. **Facilitate participatory, inclusive stakeholder consultations** that account for possible barriers for women and men to attend, participate and determine priorities for project design and implementation.

What to do during the ‘project concept and proposal’ stage?

1. **Craft project objectives** aim to both stop excessive loss of productive land and reduce gender inequality by leveraging co-benefits for optimal outcomes, endeavouring to align with Sustainable Development Goals on land degradation (SDG 15), gender equality (SDG 5), ending poverty (SDG 1), achieving food security (SDG 2) and mitigating climate change (SDG 13).
2. **Situate the project in a gender-responsive country context that:**
 - highlights gender equality and social equity priorities and gaps in national human rights

protections, laws governing land, productive and natural resources, environment, family and inheritance laws, and development, poverty and environmental plans

- identifies gender differences in livelihood and tenure security constraints that could impact women’s and men’s authority and incentives to invest in and contribute to LDN interventions
 - analyses women’s rights in different land governance regimes in the project areas, including their land and inheritance rights to communal, family, ancestral, indigenous, public and private lands, to ensure that they include guarantees and safeguards for women’s rights within the community. These should be equivalent to those of male community members and ensure equal benefits from project dividends
 - aligns project goals to national and global development and human rights commitments.
3. **Adopt a dual approach of gender mainstreaming and targeting women (twin track) to deliver multiple benefits in transformative LDN project and programme features**, including in activities related to land-use planning, climate-smart agriculture land management practices, agroforestry and landscape management, alternative livelihoods and reduced workloads for women.
 4. **Ensure gender-equitable responsible and inclusive governance** of projects and programmes through specific requirements – for example, by tackling gender discrimination and bias that exclude women from equal access, control and management of land and natural resources and by facilitating the free, prior and informed consent of women and men in indigenous and local communities.
 5. **Capture local knowledge** – gathered from women and men – to inform project progress, impacts, successes and shortfalls and potential scaling.

6. Set up a gender-responsive results framework or logframe that includes:

- indicators disaggregated by sex (as well as age, relevant identity and other social status factors)
- **gender-responsive indicators** that gauge gender differences with respect to participation and decision-making in projects from inception to delivery; women's and men's differing land rights, access to and use of land and resources, and how project interventions plan to mitigate and erase such differences
- indicators that capture **both the scope and the quality of the change** (i.e., people's experiences, opinions, attitudes and feelings) and seek to capture progressive outcomes of policies, processes and interventions and gender-related changes in society and the environment over time
- gender-responsive data collection that seeks a mix of **quantitative and qualitative indicators and participatory monitoring** that collects anecdotes and narratives from affected women and men.

7. Prepare a Social and Environmental Impact Assessment and a Gender Equality Impact Assessment to evaluate risks, mitigate adverse impacts, and align anticipated benefits with national and global priorities and human rights norms.

8. Earmark adequate gender project budget allocation to carry out the anticipated gender analysis, activities, monitoring and evaluation and to resource the requisite staff needed to ensure affected men and women benefit from the intervention.

What to do during the 'project implementation' stage?

1. Institute a project Gender Action Plan to operationalize

3. Track compliance by setting up regular project review meetings and outreach with implementers, stakeholders and affected women and populations to review whether designed activities might need adjustment, change or strengthening.

What to do for 'project monitoring & evaluation, learning & reporting'?

1. Set up a clear project oversight and governance structure or body and include technical gender specialists and representatives from national institutions or ministries with gender equality mandates.

2. Set up a gender-responsive monitoring and evaluation plan that draws on the gender-responsive results framework, relevant national and SDG indicators, and feeds into periodic reports to the project management team and governance body. Such evaluation seeks to answer:

- How and to what extent have project components and the overall project achieved results related to gender equality? Was there reduction in or exacerbation of gender inequalities (identified in the initial gender analysis)?
- To what extent was the project aligned with the specific land degradation concerns and priorities for women and men?
- Were project opportunities, benefits and results distributed equally between men and women in the targeted stakeholder groups? Or did women suffer any detriment as a result of the interventions (e.g. with respect to division of labour and care-burdens or access and control of land and resources)?
- Have men's and women's perceptions (norms, stereotypes, values) been altered towards

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