**IUCN Submission to Call for inputs: Women, Girls and the Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment**

1. **How are the climate, pollution, and biodiversity crises adversely impacting women and girls? What are the principal barriers facing these rightsholders’ realization of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, a right that includes: clean air; a safe climate; access to safe water and adequate sanitation; healthy and sustainably produced food; non-toxic environments in which to live, work, study and play; healthy biodiversity and ecosystems; access to environmental and climate information; participation in environmental and climate decision-making processes; access to justice and an affective remedy when the aforementioned rights are violated.**

According to the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGII_FullReport.pdf) (IPCC), women and girls are in a more vulnerable position to the impacts of climate change, pollution and biodiversity crises. [Women play a vital role in managing biological resources](https://www.cbd.int/gender/doc/cbd-towards2020-gender_integration-en.pdf) and are disproportionally affected by the loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services. [Environmental pollution also has more adverse impacts on women and children](https://portals.iucn.org/union/sites/union/files/doc/iucn-egi-fs-brs-conventions.pdf) for physiological reasons. Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) bioaccumulate in fatty tissue – of which women physiologically have a higher percentage – and can be transmitted to fetuses and children through breast milk.

Traditionally ascribed gender roles, unequal power imbalances in the access, use, benefit from and control over land and natural resources, and exclusion from participation in decision-making spheres translate in women [owning less land](https://www.fao.org/gender-landrights-database/data-map/statistics/en/), having less access to [education](https://genderdata.worldbank.org/topics/education), [labour markets](https://genderdata.worldbank.org/topics/employment-and-time-use), [finance](https://genderdata.worldbank.org/topics/assets) and [communications technology](https://genderdata.worldbank.org/topics/technology/), and disproportionately bearing the burden of [unpaid care work](https://genderdata.worldbank.org/topics/employment-and-time-use). This triple crisis is increasing the [time burden and health risks](https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2015-039.pdf) associated with water, firewood and non-timber forest products collection, as well as limiting women’s agricultural productivity; key for household food security. Barriers to women’s participation also limit women access to conservation, climate adaptation and resilience building opportunities, early warning information systems and post-disaster recovery.

As [IUCN documented](https://doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.CH.2020.03.en), unequal power imbalances and discriminatory practices are often maintained and reinforced through gender-based violence, which is increasing due to environmental degradation and climate change. From increased domestic violence to exacerbation of sexual exploitation and child marriage, among others. Gender-based violence is a violation of women’s rights and a barrier for [women’s enjoyment and contribution to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment](https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=a%2F77%2F136&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False).

1. **What are the specific obligations of States and responsibilities of businesses in terms of adopting a gender-responsive approach to protecting (for States) and respecting (for businesses) women’s and girls’ rights to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment? Please provide specific examples of constitutional provisions, legislation, institutions, regulations, standards, jurisprudence, policies and programs that apply a gender-responsive approach to ensuring the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.**

IUCN has supported over a dozen countries, local authorities and regional bodies in the adoption of [Climate Change Gender Action Plans](https://genderandenvironment.org/ccgaps/) (ccGAPs) – cross-sector, multi-stakeholder and participatory national, regional and/or sub-national process that aims to identify women’s priorities and map key actions in climate change priority sectors to complement existing national climate change strategies.

The [ccGAP of the Mexican State of Sonora](https://portals.iucn.org/union/sites/union/files/doc/pagcc-rgi_final_030518.pdf) mentions that [Article 4 of Mexico’s constitution](https://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/CPEUM.pdf) establishes the right of every person to a healthy environment for his and hers development and well-being and that the State shall guarantee respect for this right. Similarly, [Peru ccGAP](https://portals.iucn.org/union/sites/union/files/doc/pagcc_version_visualizacion_diseno_copy.pdf) mentions that its [Political Constitution](https://www.congreso.gob.pe/constitucionyreglamento/#:~:text=La%20Constituci%C3%B3n%20Pol%C3%ADtica%20del%20Per%C3%BA,y%20organizaci%C3%B3n%20del%20Estado%20peruano.) recognises the right to enjoy a balanced and adequate environment for the development of life. [Zambia](https://portals.iucn.org/union/sites/union/files/doc/ccgap-zambia-final-web.pdf) and [Mozambique](https://portals.iucn.org/union/sites/union/files/doc/mozambique_0.pdf) ccGAPs emphasise that the [Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Women/WG/ProtocolontheRightsofWomen.pdf) advocates that women have the right to a healthy and sustainable environment.

1. **If your State is one of the 156 UN Member States that recognizes the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment in law, has this right been recognized and/or interpreted in a way that clarifies the state’s obligations or businesses’ responsibilities with respect to the realization of rights with no discrimination based on sex and gender and other grounds?**

As a unique international organisation composed of members from civil society and Indigenous Peoples Organisations alongside governments, IUCN is a global authority on the status and safeguarding of nature. [IUCN Marseille Manifesto](https://iucn.s3.eu-west-3.amazonaws.com/en/CGR-2021-1.6-2_Marseille_Manifesto_IUCN_World_Conservation_Congress_10_%20September_2021.pdf) – outcome document of IUCN’s World Conservation Congress 2020 – encouraged the adoption of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Its adoption in 2022 reinforces IUCN members’ [2012](https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/resrecfiles/WCC_2012_RES_100_EN.pdf) and [2016](https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/resrecfiles/WCC_2016_RES_081_EN.pdf) Resolutions, including the Resolution on Child’s right to connect with nature and to a healthy environment; as well as [IUCN’s commitment to women’s rights, women’s empowerment and gender equality](https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/resrecfiles/WCC_2020_DEC_159_EN.pdf).

This recognition also supports [IUCN Nature 2030](https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/WCC-7th-001-En.pdf) programme ambition: “A world in which a dynamic and inclusive conservation movement, effective and equitable natural resource governance, and the environmental rule of law and obligations protect and sustain healthy biodiversity while contributing to the realisation of human rights, social equity, gender equality, good health and well-being, prosperity, respect for the rights of nature, resilience to climate change, and a just transition to sustainability”. IUCN Resolutions and strategic programmes are a steppingstone for governments’ adoption of the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

1. **What steps has your State, business, and/or organization taken to employ a gender-responsive, rights-based approach to addressing the impacts of the climate, biodiversity and pollution crises and to accelerate gender equality related to environmental decision-making processes, benefit-sharing processes, and outcomes? Please identify specific challenges that your Government, business, or organization has faced in these endeavors.**

As stated in IUCN’s [Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment Policy](https://www.iucn.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/iucn-policy-on-gender-equity-and-equality-october-2018-english-only.pdf), “(…) IUCN recognises that protecting and promoting women’s rights and advancing gender equality, including through women’s empowerment, are not only globally agreed imperatives in their own right, but fundamental to meeting its mission”.

Since 1984, women’s issues and gender equality concerns have been given high priority in IUCN work and [Resolutions](https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/resrecfiles/WCC_2020_DEC_159_EN.pdf). In 1998, IUCN formally approved its first Gender Equality and Equity policy, which was [updated in 2018](https://www.iucn.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/iucn-policy-on-gender-equity-and-equality-october-2018-english-only.pdf). This policy is complemented by [IUCN Environmental and Social Management System](https://www.iucn.org/sites/default/files/2022-05/iucn-esms-manual_0.pdf) (ESMS), to go beyond “doing no harm” to do better and ensure that projects identify risks of exacerbating existing gender-inequalities, including gender-based violence, and seize opportunities to address these gender gaps.

IUCN plays a major role in mainstreaming gender in key international forums (see question 7), increasing understanding of the importance of gender-environment linkages amongst members and peers, and piloting innovative strategies for gender-responsive action (see question 9), including through USAID’s partnership [Advancing Gender in the Environment](https://genderandenvironment.org/agent/) (AGENT).

1. **Please identify specific ways in which the rights of particularly marginalized or vulnerable women and/or LGBTI persons are (or should be) recognized and protected to enable the realization of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment without discrimination based on sex or gender. "Marginalized women" include girls; women and girls in Indigenous local community, Afro-descendant and peasant communities, older women, women and girls with disabilities, LGBTI women and girls, migrant, displaced, and refuge women and girls, unmarried, informally married and widowed women and women and girls living in protracted armed conflict. How can these populations be empowered to increase their impact as agents of positive environmental transformation?**

Diverse identities defined by ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, age and other identity markers shape women and girls’ lives and vulnerability to the climate change, pollution and biodiversity crisis. Recognising and protecting their rights is key as they often face additional layers of discrimination and violence. For example, in post-disaster contexts, [transgender or third gender individuals can be excluded from shelters and recovery aid](https://doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.CH.2020.03.en) when national identification documents do not coincide with their self-identified gender. Similarly, Indigenous women – traditional stewards of the land and active in the defense of environmental rights – [face greater discrimination](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/IUCN.pdf) to access decision-making spaces and justice systems and experience greater [gender-based violence as environmental human rights defenders](https://genderandenvironment.org/the-urgency-of-addressing-gender-based-violence-against-women-environmental-human-rights-defenders/). Likewise, young women and girls are more likely to be excluded from negotiations or tokenised.

To ensure diverse women, girls and people of other identities have their voices heard – and that policies and plans leverage their experiences and solutions – their full, meaningful and effective participation in these processes is crucial. Particularly traditionally marginialised women such as indigenous women and women’s organisations and [youth, who are demanding meaningful engagement and leadership on this triple crisis](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/55914fd1e4b01fb0b851a814/t/60770654d52a5624cd2d5c3b/1618413140451/Youth%2BRoN%2BDeclaration.pdf).

Forms to advance diverse women’s and girls’ participation include providing funds to facilitate attendance; building women’s financial, legal, leadership and communication skills; ensuring language accessibility to all information and meetings; and a seat at the table in equal conditions. Participation of [children requires special attention](https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/pdf/A-COP-Fit-For-Children_designed_EN-2022.pdf/) to ensure safe and respectful access to decision-making spaces.

IUCN’s Indigenous Peoples Organisations membership category, a newly appointed Indigenous People Councillor to IUCN Council and the adoption of the [Global Indigenous Agenda](https://portals.iucn.org/union/sites/union/files/doc/global_indigenous_agenda_english.pdf) at the [2021 IUCN Indigenous Peoples Summit](https://www.iucncongress2020.org/programme/world-summit-indigenous-peoples-and-nature) are some examples of IUCN advancement of Indigenous Peoples rights. Likewise, the adoption of a [Youth Strategy 2020-2030](https://www.iucn.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/iucn_youth_strategy_23_may_2022_final.pdf) informed by [IUCN Global Youth Summit in 2021](https://www.iucncongress2020.org/programme/global-youth-summit) for meaningful youth engagement. IUCN also supports Indigenous women’s and young women’s participation in international decision-making spaces, such as IUCN World Conservation Congress and UNFCCC COP 27 Climate Change Conference.

1. **What kinds of socioeconomic, cultural, legal, and/or institutional transformations would be required within your States’ national context to achieve gender parity that most directly impact environmental decision-making processes, benefit-sharing processes, and outcomes?**

In 2020, [women held 15% of top jobs as ministers of environmental sectors](https://www.iucn.org/news/gender/202103/new-data-reveals-slow-progress-achieving-gender-equality-environmental-decision-making), a three-point increase since 2015. Recommendations for [developing a comprehensive gender approach in IUCN](https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/resrecfiles/WCC_2020_DEC_159_EN.pdf) that can guide States include:

* Integrate recommendations and/or requirements for gender balance and social inclusion in all constitutional documents, bylaws and recruitment processes.
* Create a Gender Task Force to guide the development of Terms of Reference; creation, implementation and monitoring of a gender strategy; and capacity building and awareness raising of gender among staff.
* Adopt non-discrimination, inclusivity and gender-responsive policies, including on Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (SEAH).
* Allocate sufficient funds to implement the abovementioned activities.
1. **To what extent do the environmental ministries, nationally determined contributions, and national biodiversity strategies and action plans of your State include gender action plans, gender-responsive budgets or budgets specifically devoted to gender equality? At the global level, what changes to climate and biodiversity finance mechanisms are needed to ensure that these are gender-responsive and equitably inclusive of female beneficiaries?**

IUCN plays a major role in supporting gender mainstreaming in multilateral environmental agreements (e.g., supporting integration of gender within the Rio Convention Secretariats and Gender Plans of Actions and guiding Parties in the development of gender-responsive plans, such as [Climate Change Gender Action Plans](https://genderandenvironment.org/ccgaps/)). IUCN [Environment and Gender Information](https://genderandenvironment.org/egi/) (EGI) platform collects and generates data on [women’s representation](https://portals.iucn.org/union/sites/union/files/doc/egi_factsheet_desicion_making_web_sept2015.pdf) in national delegations, and the status of gender mainstreaming within national plans and reporting mechanisms to these Conventions:

* In 2021, [78% of revised nationally determined contributions](https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2021-043-En.pdf) (NDCs) mentioned gender, a 40-points increase [since 2016](https://portals.iucn.org/union/sites/union/files/doc/gender_in_mitigation_actions4.pdf). However, only 6% allocated budget for gender activities.
* In 2017, [56% of National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans](https://portals.iucn.org/union/sites/union/files/doc/iucn-egi-nbsasp-report_final_jan17.pdf) (NBSAPs) and [67% of fifth national reports](https://portals.iucn.org/union/sites/union/files/doc/egi_fs_cbd5thnr_web.pdf) to the CBD mention gender, yet mainstreaming throughout objectives, activities and budgets was limited.
* In 2016, women accounted for [45% of government delegates to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm](https://portals.iucn.org/union/sites/union/files/doc/iucn-egi-brs-report.pdf) (BRS) Conventions and 91% of National Implementation Plans to the Stockholm Convention included gender. Yet only 11% had gender-responsive budget.

Climate and biodiversity finance mechanisms have made considerable progress in the adoption of gender equality and women’s empowerment policies and in the inclusion of gender inequalities, discrimination and violence within safeguarding. To implement and comply with these requirements, in the coming years environmental ministries, organisations and funds will need to invest in: strengthening policies, requirements and structures; building capacities on gender; mainstreaming gender across portfolios; adequately budgeting and funding to realise gender-responsive and transformative change; and working collaboratively with women’s groups and networks within global and locally-relevant contexts to advance inclusive decision-making.

1. **Please share any good practices for: i) protecting women’s and girl’s rights to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment; ii) empowering women and girls to act as positive agents of environmental justice; and iii) encouraging men and boys to act as allies in these endeavors. In addition, please highlight the work of any women or girl environmental defenders? Good practices may occur at the international, regional, national, sub-national or local levels, and may include: the implementation of measures to ensure women’s participation in environmental decision-making processes; efforts to support women environmental defenders; measures to facilitate women’s access to climate or biodiversity finance; gender-responsive legislation, regulations, standards, jurisprudence, plans and policies; and initiatives to increase women’s access to and control over productive resources including land, forest resources, freshwater, credit, loans, and extension services. Examples that treat girls distinctly from adult women would be particularly appreciated.**

IUCN has documented good practices in [policies, knowledge products and tools](https://www.iucn.org/resources?rstype=All&thm=All&tpc=1169&rgn=All&cntry=All&resource_type=All%23resources), including in [IUCN Panorama Solutions](https://panorama.solutions/en/explorer?solution_type=All&theme%5b%5d=499&theme%5b%5d=56&sort_by=changed&sort_order=DESC). An example of gender mainstreaming is USAID-funded and IUCN-implemented [Regional Coastal Biodiversity Project](https://portals.iucn.org/union/sites/union/files/doc/2022-iucn-usaid-rcbp-gender-brief-2.pdf), working with marine-coastal communities in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador to help protect the regions’ biodiversity and promote economic growth and communities’ prosperity. The gender strategy focuses on women’s economic empowerment; women’s leadership in natural resource governance; cultivating strategic alliances; capacity building of technical staff, institutions, fishermen organisations and women’s groups on gender in fisheries governance; and gender institutionalisation. A [key activity](https://iucn.org/story/202209/new-masculinities-strategy-conserving-coastal-biodiversity-central-america-0) is addressing gender-based violence risks in the communities through [positive masculinities trainings](https://genderandenvironment.org/navegando-en-nuestra-masculinidad-manual-didactico-del-facilitador-sobre-masculinidades-no-violentas-en-contextos-de-pesca-sustentable-en-centroamerica/) for men and GBV trainings for women and men.

Similarly, IUCN and Conservation International (CI) GEF-7 [Inclusive Conservation Initiative](https://www.inclusiveconservationinitiative.org/about) (ICI) aims to enhance Indigenous Peoples’ and Local Communities’ efforts to steward land, waters and natural resources to deliver global environmental benefits. Aware that social and cultural norms shape women and men’s roles, responsibilities, needs, interests, and priorities in project areas and often position women at a disadvantage, ICI is taking a systematic and proactive approach to promote gender equality and equity throughout the project cycle. The goal is to reduce gender gaps in access to and control over resources faced by indigenous women and girls; improve women’s participation and decision-making; and promote socio-economic benefits or services for indigenous women and girls.

1. **Potential benefits of respecting, protecting and fulfilling women’s and girl’s rights to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment? Examples that treat girls distinctly from adult women would be particularly appreciated.**

Women and girls account for half of the population. Their differentiated needs, lived experiences and knowledge as stewards of lands, forests and natural resources make them key agents of change in the efforts to adapt, mitigate and reverse climate change, environmental pollution and biodiversity loss. As the [IPCC](https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGIII_Full_Report.pdf) established “policies that increase the political access and participation of women, racialised, and marginalised groups, increase the democratic impetus for climate action.”

Ignoring women’s unique roles and needs can result in poor project outcomes, while evidence shows that full and effective participation in conservation has better environmental and conservation results. For example, a [fisheries initiative in Congo River](https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2019-040-En.pdf) aimed to establish measures to protect fishery resources failed because it ignored women’s roles and excluded them from community discussions. Unaware of the new restrictions and practices, women continued harvesting the fish and invertebrate resources that the initiative aimed to conserve, to the detriment of the project. Conversely, [women participating in natural resource management groups](https://environmentalevidencejournal.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s13750-016-0057-8) results in improved conservation and management. Furthermore, women’s interest in and respect for conservation initiatives increases when directly involved, as [documented in Solomon Islands](https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2019-040-En.pdf).