

## Gender and Environment: Empowering Rural Women

### About

The Sustainable Development Goals Policy Briefs highlight key issues identified in the Sustainable Development Goals and show how they matter to development decision makers and practitioners. The evidence provided builds on the scientific data and information hosted on Environment Live and is complemented by stories from Regions and Countries. This Brief highlights the important link between women and men's access to land, natural resources and biodiversity.



Women constitute approximately half of the rural labour force and are economically active in each subsector of the rural economy. Their livelihoods are often based on access to and control over natural resources. Some relevant SDG indicators are:

- 1.4.2 Proportion of total adult population with secure tenure rights to land, with legally recognized documentation and who perceive their rights to land as secure, by sex and by type of tenure
- 3.9.1 Mortality rate attributed to [household](#) and [ambient air pollution](#)
- 5.a.2 Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control
- 6.1.1 Percentage of population using safely managed drinking water services
- 7.1.2 Percentage of population with primary reliance on clean fuels and technology

### Access to land and natural resources

#### Gender-disaggregated information is essential.

- ☑ **The SDG Global indicator framework is gender-blind in SDGs 6, 7, 9, 12, 14 and 15.**
- ☑ **Strengthening the focus on developing, collecting and analysing gender-disaggregated data, indicators and other information (including at the intra-household level) would support more effective environmental decision-making.**



Addressing access to land and natural resources helps to achieve the following SDGs:


- **SDG 1** No Poverty
- **SDG 2** Zero Hunger
- **SDG 3** Good Health and Well-Being
- **SDG 5** Gender Equality
- **SDG 6** Clean Water and Sanitation
- **SDG 7** Access to Clean Energy
- **SDG 14** Life below Water
- **SDG 15** Life on Land


**The potential economic gains from reducing the gender gap translate into significant poverty reduction and improved nutritional outcomes.**


Increasing GDP by closing the gender gap in agricultural productivity has the potential to lift as many as 238,000 people out of poverty in Malawi, approximately 80,000 people in Tanzania and 119,000 people in Uganda.

## Facts and figures

### Access to land and natural resources

 **15%** of West African households spend more than 30 minutes collecting water (Year 2015)

 **47%** of West African households spend less than 30 minutes collecting water (Year 2015)


 **30%** of West African households collect water on the premises (Year 2015)


Survey data for 61 countries show that in households without access to water on premises, women and girls are responsible for 73.5% water collection. In Benin, women in rural households take an average of 24 minutes, while in urban households it takes 16 minutes average time to reach a water source.


The time spent on collecting water diminishes women's overall ability to control their own time and participate in other pursuits.


In India, 150 million working days per year fetching and carrying water.


In Sub-Saharan Africa, over 40 billion working hours are lost in water collection every year.


 **21.11%** of total women are agriculture land holders (based on 32 countries, 2010).

 **94 countries** in 2017 have customary, traditional or religious practices that discriminate against women


 **31.36%** of working women are working in agriculture in 2017. While for the same period only 28.34 of working men are.

 **21.47% females** and 27.85% males received payments for agricultural products In 2014.

 **74%** of main cooking fuel is biomass in Eastern Africa (agriculture, dung, grass, wood, charcoal)


 **98%** of deaths attributable to household air pollution are happening in the developing countries.


Women are far less likely to be agricultural land holders: Their share ranges from **0.8 per cent** in Saudi Arabia to **51%** in Cabo Verde, with an overall global share of **12.8%**.


 **Cooking and heating with solid fuels** (wood, charcoal, crop waste, dung, and coal) produces high levels of smoke in and around the home that contains a variety of health-damaging pollutants. Reducing solid fuel use is associated with reducing poverty, respiratory illness and environment degradation.

## Action


### Towards solutions ...

 **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women** with **23** experts on women's rights from around the world


**109** countries committed to the  **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** in 1995.

 **2015-2020 Gender Plan of Action** of the Convention on Biological Diversity


 **The African Land Policy Initiative (LPI)**

 **WHO's Programme on Indoor Air Pollution**


... for achieving **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**


 **The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT)**


 **Global Land Tool Network – UN-Habitat**

 **Governing land for women and men – A technical guide**



 **Indoor air quality guidelines: household fuel combustion**

 **Good practice policies to eliminate gender inequalities in fish value chains**

 **Gender Data Portal – Guidelines and Training Materials**

## Initiatives on the ground

### America – The Brazilian experience with LPG

Brazil has been extremely successful in the development of its LPG industry and serves as a brilliant example for other nations to try to emulate.

In Brazil, 98% of households (including 93% of rural households) have access to LPG – a situation that can be attributed to government policy that has promoted the development of an LPG delivery infrastructure in all regions, including rural regions, and subsidies to LPG users. Until the late 1990s, the rise in LPG use was accompanied by a sharp decline in residential wood consumption. During the period 1973-2001, retail LPG prices were set at the same level in all regions and the average level of the subsidy amounted to 18% of the retail price.

### Africa

A study by UN Environment and UN Women measures the economic costs of the gender gap in agricultural productivity in three African countries—Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania (hereafter Tanzania), and Uganda— provides further evidence that reducing the gender gap plays a significant role in poverty reduction and improved nutritional outcomes. This research has inspired action in various front. In Malawi, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security have included a strong focus on women farmers in its recently adopted National Agricultural Policy (2016), informed by the findings of the report and with technical inputs from UN Women and the Poverty-Environment Initiative. Continuous advocacy and partnership with governments in the Africa region could yield further policy outcomes. Additionally, the report inspired rural women in Kenya to organize themselves and formed the 'Hera' (meaning love) Community Initiative, to address the water, gender and sustainable agricultural needs of their rural community, especially women who own farms.

### Asia – Involving women in water and sanitation management at the local level in Kyrgyzstan

In most Kyrgyz villages the condition of the water supply deteriorated following the collapse of the Soviet Union. In 2002 the World Bank and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) initiated a project to improve the rural water supply by establishing community-based drinking water users' unions (CDWUUs) in rural villages in northern Kyrgyzstan. Communities were required to make a 5% cash contribution towards rehabilitation of their water systems, which was made possible through a World Bank loan. CDWUUs took responsibility for operating and maintaining drinking water supplies in the villages and for financial management, including calculation and collection of drinking water fees. While overall representation of women was low, the most successful CDWUUs were those in which women were part of the management team as bookkeepers, water quarter leaders or CDWUU chairs.

### Global – UN Environment and IUCN work on developing an approach in measuring G&E (Stories from Mexico, Lao PDR and Kenya)

UN Environment and IUCN are implementing a project aimed at improving how to measure gender and the environment, including through country case studies. By addressing the links between gender and environment, new opportunities will arise to help achieve the SDGs more effectively. The report will offer suggestions on how to measure the identified priority issues in the context of the SDGs and a better knowledge base of what has been done in terms of measuring the priority issues related to gender and environment closely matched to SDGs 1, 14 and 15 (Right to land, natural resources and biodiversity), SDG 2, 6 and 7 (Access to food, energy, water and sanitation) SDG 1,3,11,12 and 13 (Climate change, Sustainable Consumption and Production and health) and SDG 4, 5, 8,10 (Women in environment decision-making).