

**The Value of Gender-Environment Statistics to Propel SDG Action**  
**Commission on Status of Women 62 Side Event**

**Briefing Paper for ASG Elliot Harris, Director, New York Liaison Office**

Monday 12 March 2018, 4.45pm – 6:00pm

<b>Division:</b>	Science Division
<b>Focal Point:</b>	Ms. Jillian Campbell, Evelyn Ongige
<b>Background/Scope:</b> <p>Around the world, across communities, women and men have different roles, responsibilities and relationships with their natural environment. As such, environmental issues and changes, including climate change, have differentiated impacts on women and men.</p> <p>A gender-responsive approach is useful and helpful to investigate the dynamic relationships between environmental change and gender equality, as well as between environmental sustainability and realizing women's rights and empowerment. As demonstrated in the GGEO, gender equality is shaping the environmental conversation including the need for equal access to and benefits of using and protecting the ecosystems and natural resources.</p> <p>UN Environment and IUCN are implementing a project aimed at improving how to measure gender and the environment, including through country case studies. In particular, this project is aimed at looking at measuring gender and environment for the priority issues in the Global Gender and Environment Outlook (GGEO) report published in 2016, which are linked to the SDGs, as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. <b>Priority issue 1:</b> Rights to land, natural resources and biodiversity - linked to SDG 1 (End poverty), 14 (Conserve and use the Oceans, seas and marine) and 15 (protect restore and use sustainable terrestrial ecosystems)</li><li>2. <b>Priority issue 2:</b> Access to food, energy, water and sanitation - linked to SDG 2 (End Hunger), 6 (clean water and sanitation) and 7 (Affordable and clean energy)</li><li>3. <b>Priority issue 3:</b> Well-being: climate change, sustainable consumption and production, and health - linked to SDG 1(End Poverty), 3 (Good health and well-being), 11 (Sustainable cities and communities), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) and 13(Climate Action)</li><li>4. <b>Priority Issue 4:</b> Women in environment decision-making – Linked to SDG 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent work and Economic Growth),10 (Reduced inequalities)</li></ol> <p>The IUCN maintains the Environment Gender Information (EGI) platform, which aims, through data and analysis, to convey the value of gender-responsive environmental conservation and sustainable development.</p> <p>IUCN with the support of the UN Environment SDG Data and Information Unit will prepare a report discussing potential indicators and statistics that could be developed for measuring the four priority issues mentioned above. To inform the report, in addition to a desk research, IUCN will also hold an expert group consultation and conduct case studies in three countries (Mexico, Lao PDR and Kenya) to assess the type of data that exists at the country level and to get feedback from countries on how to measure the nexus between gender and the environment. These are expected to inform report recommendations.</p> <p>Initial findings and recommendations will be shared at the Commission on the Status of Women during the side event, and the final report will be presented to the UN Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics meeting, among other meetings.</p> <p>Further information is available in the attached inception note.</p>	

**Event Details:**

Overview on the Global Gender and Environment Outlook and UN Environment's work on gender-environment statistics, Overview of IUCN's work on gender-environment statistics, discussions on national experiences and importance of data with country representatives. The session has been organized with selected panelists including the UNEP, IUCN, Country Representatives, Women's Major Groups and stakeholders.

The expected speakers include a UNEP expert to set the scene, a mix of representatives from governments, UN partners, IUCN and experts:

1. Mr. Elliot Harris, Director New York Office, UN Environment
2. Ms. Lorena Aguilar, a.i. Director, IUCN GGO

## Speaking points for the Assistant Secretary General

5 minutes, 665 words (120wpm)

- I'm pleased to welcome you all to this side event on, "The Value of Gender-Environment Statistics to Propel SDG Action: Key progress, lessons learned and challenges remaining to close the data gap".
- As a joint initiative between UN Environment and International Union for Conservation of Nature, IUCN, we are examining gender-environment connections at global and national level and, especially, corresponding data gaps and opportunities.
- We recognize that advancing sustainable development and environmental conservation is not possible without advancing women's and girls' empowerment, together with men's and boys', and filling the gender gaps.
- Women's empowerment and gender equality are essential for achieving progress towards sustainable development around the world. Addressing gender and other social inequalities related to rights to own, access and control land and natural resources, including in participation and decision-making, can further efforts to achieve lasting peace and sustainable development.
- Filling data gaps related to the gender-environment nexus needs to be a priority, in order to progress towards achieving gender equality and environmental sustainability, which are essential for safeguarding human rights and well-being for women and men around the world.
- UN Environment's flagship report, the Global Gender and Environment Outlook (GGEO) 2016 states that, "Gender inequality is one of the most pervasive threats to sustainable development." It is essential that gender dimensions are taken into consideration in the environmental domain, and vice versa.
- Similarly, IUCN's Environment and Gender Information (EGI) platform builds the evidence base for gender-responsive environmental action, developing new datasets, information and knowledge products on gender-environment linkages to support advocacy and action at all levels.

### Importance of measuring the gender-environment nexus as they relate to the SDGs

- It is clear that the significant environmental challenges of our time can only be confronted through the meaningful participation of both men and women.
- All over the world, women and men have different relationships to the environment and environmental changes affect the lives of men and women differently.
- Women represent more than half the world's population. They stand in the front line in terms of poverty, and are uniquely vulnerable to environmental degradation. For example, it is well established that environmental hazards are among the major causes of global death and disease, and that the burden falls disproportionately on women and young children, especially in less developed countries and more so in rural settings.
- Yet women *also* provide invaluable contributions to sustaining communities around the world and managing the earth's biodiversity and natural resources.
- Women constitute approximately half of the rural labor force and, while not always counted, they are economically active in each subsector of the rural economy.

- The extent to which rural populations have secure and equitable access to the natural resources they need to produce food for their consumption and to increase income is critically important —their livelihoods are often based on access to and control over land, water, forest and fishery resources.
- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have likewise emphasized the importance of gender-environment links, building on decades of international mandates on the same, from Agenda 21 and the Rio Conventions to CEDAW and Beijing Platform for Action.
- In order to address gender inequality and measure progress towards the SDGs, it is crucial that gender-disaggregated data are collected at the national level.

#### **Focus of the project – Gender and Environment statistics**

- The aim of this project is to develop, or enhance, indicators to measure gender equality and women's empowerment in the environmental domain, based on background research, consultation with experts and three country case studies (Kenya, Lao PDR and Mexico).
- Ultimately, this project will provide recommendations to enhance national level capacity on gender-environment statistics and share lessons learned, and elevate the discussion on the importance of gender-environment statistics at multiple levels.
- Progress has been made on many fronts, as the importance of gender-environment synergies is increasingly acknowledged in international agreements and national policies as crucial to our ability to achieve a just, sustainable future.
- I want to thank all of you for taking the time to join us for this side event

## **Further Background on the four priority areas**

### **Right to land, natural resources and biodiversity**

The vast majority of local populations worldwide depend on natural resources to sustain their livelihoods. There are persistent restrictions imposed on access to natural resources for certain marginalized communities and groups of people, including women; such structural inequalities and discrimination can impede sustainable development.

Security of land tenure for women has been shown to be critical for women's social, economic and political empowerment—including positively contributing to the prosperity of their families and communities—yet widespread inequalities exist when it comes to the right to own, use and control land around the world. While women have equal land rights by law in 37% of the 160 countries on which data were collected, in more than half of the 160 countries legal land rights are not followed in practice, as customary, traditional and religious practices still prevent access and control for women.

In addition to gender inequalities regarding rights to land, women are also faced with barriers affecting access and usage rights for renewable resources such as water, as well as extractive resources such as minerals, metals, timber and oil and gas. Although there has been progress in decreasing women's barriers in access to land and assets, some key rights related to inheritance, economic activity and household decision-making remain difficult to shift. These challenges are directly related to SDG goal 1 to end poverty and goals 14 and 15 to protect, restore and sustainably use terrestrial ecosystems and oceans and marine resources.

### **Access to food, energy, water and sanitation**

Women are responsible for the production and processing of a significant proportion of food in developing countries, yet food and nutrition security of women and girls is often compromised because cultural and social norms give preference to men and boys, and as a result, women and girls often eat last and eat least. In addition, agricultural productivity for women farmers is often lower compared to male farmers due to inequalities in access to land and agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, pesticides and seeds. Closing the gender gap in agriculture, a pattern documented worldwide and one which means women have less access to productive resources, financial capital and advisory services than men, will improve agricultural productivity and food and nutrition security of women and girls – which is outlined under SDG goal 2 to achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

Women and girls also tend to be the primary energy, water and sanitation managers for households and families in the developing world. As a result of a lack of energy, water and sanitation services as well as basic infrastructure, women and girls bear the burden of spending time finding and fetching fuel and water. Additionally, most domestic and care work undertaken by women is underpaid, leading to social and economic pressures and time poverty. Addressing availability and access to safe, clean and affordable water and energy for all is linked to SDG goals 6 and 7.

## **Climate change, sustainable consumption and production, and health and well-being**

Existing gender inequalities can be further amplified by the impacts of climate change, thus intensifying the constraints felt by women who rely on agriculture and natural resources for their livelihoods. Fluctuations in the climate and the uncertainties associated with it put additional pressure on both already fragile ecosystems and undervalued and precarious gendered roles and responsibilities in communities. This can result in agricultural work becoming more labour intensive or in a need for alternative sources of food and income, which often leads to additional unpaid work for women. Taking action to combat climate change and its impacts is an explicit goal under SDG 13.

The health risks and water and fuel scarcity related to climate change and disaster further add to women's unpaid care work, as climate change affects the time and level of effort required to collect, secure, distribute and store water resources. The impacts of climate change affect the health and well-being of entire families and communities, especially when health facilities and services are unavailable or unaffordable. Goal 3 of the SDGs highlights the importance of ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all.

With increased population growth and development, the use of chemicals in agricultural and industrial production has intensified. Urbanisation and increased consumption place growing demands on waste management and waste water treatment. The use of chemicals, petrochemicals, pesticides and other pollutants have resulted in environmental degradation and water and air pollution, all of which have gendered impacts on health and well-being. There is an urgent need to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns and to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, as stated in SDG goals 11 and 12.

## **Women Environmental Decision-making**

A strong global policy framework recognizes the importance and promotes the active participation and leadership of women across all levels of decision making—including that on environment and sustainable development concerns. Ensuring women's unique perspectives, experience, needs, and capacities inform sound policymaking is critical to development, poverty eradication, and livelihood outcomes, among others. Research has also shown that women's leadership leads to better conservation and sustainable development outcomes. And yet, new data from the EGI shows that across key environmental fora, less than 1/3 of decision makers are women.

Women are being significantly underrepresented on a global scale. Gender parity in environmental decision making ensures that the diverse perspectives of women and men are communicated and represented at multiples levels. Women serving as focal points or as government delegates to the Rio Conventions can ensure that women's unique needs and capacities are integrated into global policy making and potentially championed in national implementation strategies of Convention agreements. But in international and national spheres, only a fraction of positions are held by women. The notable exceptions, or at least the areas of progress, appear to lie in women's representation in national Green Parties, in which participation is 45%, and in international environmental organizations, where 35% of

organizations are headed by women. Women's roles in leadership positions in these organizations provide the opportunity for women to influence policy frameworks and broaden the expertise reflected in those negotiations, and can often serve as a link between government representatives and practitioners on the ground. Moreover, their technical capacity may offer important support to implementation of environmental plans and programmes.