



## **Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy: Mainstreaming gender-responsiveness within the IUCN programme of work**

*Approved by the IUCN Council at its 95<sup>th</sup> Meeting (C/95/8, October 2018)*

### **Introduction and rationale**

1. This Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Policy recalls, reaffirms and further strengthens IUCN's commitment to realising gender equality and women's rights and empowerment and puts into place requirements for embedding a gender-responsive approach into its Programme and project portfolio.
2. IUCN defines a gender-responsive approach<sup>1</sup> as the proactive identification of gender gaps, discriminations and biases and then the coordinated development and implementation of actions to address and overcome them. This approach helps ensure that IUCN programming not only avoids exacerbating or reinforcing inequalities, but rather takes meaningful steps to reduce disparities and to empower women, girls and members of traditionally disadvantaged groups.

### **Rationale**

3. With a comprehensive rights-based framework<sup>2</sup> underpinning its conservation and sustainable development efforts, 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.<sup>3</sup> It further understands that IUCN's conservation and sustainable development programming offers the provides significant potential to accelerate progress toward gender equality.
4. IUCN has been a leader on gender and environment considerations for decades. Since 1984, women's issues and gender equality concerns have been given high priority through multiple decisions of IUCN Members' Assemblies and World Conservation Congresses<sup>4</sup> and, in 1998, IUCN formally approved its first Gender Equality and Equity policy, which was last updated in 2007.<sup>5</sup>
5. IUCN plays a major role mainstreaming gender in key international forums<sup>6</sup> (e.g., supporting decisions under and development of gender plans of action for Parties, Secretariats and stakeholders of the Rio Conventions), driving a strengthened understanding of the importance of gender-environment linkages amongst members and peers and piloting innovative strategies for gender-responsive action.

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<sup>1</sup> Key terms are defined in Annex; the full definition is included in the Key Terms list.

<sup>2</sup> Resolutions include, *inter alia*, 4.056 Rights-based approaches to conservation (Barcelona, 2008) and IUCN Policy on Conservation and Human Rights for Sustainable Development (WCC-2012-Res-099-EN)

<sup>3</sup> e.g., Recalling Resolution 17.13 Women and the environment (San Jose, 1988)

<sup>4</sup> e.g., Recalling Resolutions WCC-2012-Res 099, WCC-2012-Res-082, WCC-2004-Res-009, Resolution 18.18 Women and NRM (Perth, 1990)

<sup>5</sup> Gender policy 2007 can be accessed here:

[https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/content/documents/iucn\\_gender\\_policy.pdf](https://www.iucn.org/sites/dev/files/content/documents/iucn_gender_policy.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Resolution 4.005, (Barcelona, 2008)

6. Over the past decade, the landscape has changed considerably: from environmental changes, to sociocultural and economic changes, to the processes and normative frameworks that set the standards and strategies toward meeting globally agreed goals such as realising gender equality. Re-doubled attention to gender is needed to fully realise the Sustainable Development Goals, the Aichi Targets and next-step post-2020 Biodiversity framework, the Paris Agreement<sup>7</sup> and post-2020 climate change framework, among others.
7. To support and drive action toward these interlinked targets and to meet its mission overall, IUCN must continue to play a leading role in addressing inequalities and inequities that not only drive and reinforce unsustainable practices but more fundamentally deny communities and individuals their rights, ultimately also restricting their wellbeing, prosperity and potential. This includes communities' and individuals' rights to access, use, benefit from and control the land and natural resources over which they have traditionally exercised stewardship.
8. Gender gaps of all kinds, across sectors, undermine conservation and threaten sustainable development progress. The historic and recurring patterns of explicitly gender-based discrimination and bias, which includes gender-based violence, as well as escalating violence against women environmental defenders,<sup>8</sup> continue to demand special attention and corrective action.
9. Equally important is the opportunity that gender-responsive action unlocks, as gender equality is a powerful driver of positive change across sectors, in all countries and communities and at all levels. Women and girls—together with men and boys—are vital change agents, possessing invaluable knowledge, experiences and capacities that can and must shape more equitable and effective policies, projects and programmes toward a just world that values and conserves nature.
10. The IUCN Programme reaches over 150 countries with projects and policy interventions and therefore can be, through a gender-responsive approach, a powerful driver of gender equality and women's empowerment.

### **Purpose**

11. The purpose of this Policy is to guide and ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment are systematically and comprehensively recognised, addressed and accounted for in the IUCN Programme and project portfolio,<sup>9</sup> and that the IUCN Programme and project portfolio is ultimately improved, through a gender-responsive approach.

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<sup>7</sup> e.g., WCC-2016-Res-056 IUCN Response to Paris Agreement (Paris, 2015)

<sup>8</sup> Recalling Resolution 2.37, Support to Environmental Defenders (Amman, 2000)

<sup>9</sup> Per the IUCN Project Guidelines and Standards, and recalling IUCN's role as both implementing and executing agency: A project is a unique set of activities with a defined start and end date undertaken to achieve planned objectives according to specified norms of quality and within an agreed budget. Projects are the means by which the IUCN Programme is implemented, and projects are identified based on the needs of the Programme. The IUCN Programme operates on a four-year cycle following an extensive consultation of Members and Commissions. The IUCN Programme is approved at the World Conservation Congress by the Membership every four years.

### Applicability

12. This Policy applies to all Secretariat staff, Commissions, and can provide guidance to National Committees and IUCN Members.

### Objective

13. The objective of this Policy is to ensure a gender-responsive approach to the implementation of IUCN's Programme and project portfolio, including in the design, planning, execution, monitoring and evaluation, and closure phases, as well as in related learning, communications and advocacy efforts.

### Operational principles

14. To operationalise this policy, IUCN Secretariat and Commissions are required to apply the following principles:
  - i) ***Proactively and publicly champion gender equality and women's and girls' rights and empowerment*** as fundamental to the realisation of human rights and as preconditions to achieving conservation and sustainable development goals.
  - ii) ***Promote and demonstrate equitable and inclusive decision-making, at all levels, and throughout the project cycle***, especially increasing the voice, participation, representation and leadership of women and girls, providing them with equal opportunity to participate in, contribute to and benefit from resources, services and governance, regardless of anyone's background, age, race, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity or religion.
  - iii) ***Actively embrace knowledge systems that are curated by women across different societies***, highlighting the value of bringing diverse—including traditional—knowledge, practices, values and innovations of women and men for natural resource management.
  - iv) ***Facilitate active and meaningful engagement of women and girls who live within the most marginalised populations and groups***, for example through embracing social and environmental safeguards that require specific steps to ensure that impacts are understood, avoided or minimised to every extent possible and agreed with affected people—such as indigenous women and girls—in accordance with human rights standards.
  - v) ***Promote and ensure equitable access to, use of, control over and benefits from*** resources, technology, knowledge and services for women and men, in all their diversity.
  - vi) ***Foster a socially inclusive, empowering and enabling understanding of gender equality***, including but not limited to promoting women's powerful agency for change, as well as engaging men and boys as champions and partners so that all individuals understand, value and realise gender equality as a benefit for all.

### Implementation framework

15. To reaffirm and strengthen IUCN's gender-responsive approach and to realise gender-responsive results across the IUCN Programme and project portfolio, including the inputs and actions of third party executing entities, IUCN requires the following actions:
  - a) Include gender equality and women's empowerment as fundamental components to the **IUCN Programme**, including knowledge products and standard setting and, especially through strategic planning processes, resource allocation and

budgeting, developing and applying indicators and targets, monitoring and evaluating results, and communicating priorities and results, across themes;

- b) Ensure that its Programme and project **planning and approval systems** systematically and comprehensively screen for gender gaps as well as risks of gender-based discrimination and bias, putting in place coordinated measures designed not only to address and overcome such risk but also to proactively promote gender equality, women's rights and women's and girls' empowerment, including women's nature-based solutions and innovations;
- c) Identify, account for and overcome gender gaps and advance gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment in **all IUCN projects**, including those executed by third party collaborating institutions, consistent with Project Guidelines and Standards (PGS) and Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS), with coordinated technical support from the Global Programme on Governance and Rights upon request, including through the following specific steps:
  - i) Conducting **gender analyses and applying key issues and recommendations** identified to inform gender-responsive project design, budgeting, staffing, implementation, monitoring and evaluation;
  - ii) Analysing risks that the project may experience or pose, putting measures in place to ensure activities **do not exacerbate existing gender-related inequalities**, including gender-based violence, and **seize opportunities to address gender gaps** and support empowerment of women;
  - iii) Structuring inclusive and gender-sensitive project teams that demonstrate **appropriate capacities and technical expertise** to support gender-responsive action;
  - iv) Ensuring women and men have **equal opportunities in terms of participation, decision-making and benefits**, throughout the identification, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of activities;
  - v) **Allocating sufficient resources** for specific activities, technical support and/or other actions to improve gender equality considerations, including the meaningful engagement of diverse stakeholders and beneficiaries; and
  - vi) Collecting, analysing and applying **sex-disaggregated data and using gender indicators** to inform gender-responsive monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning on IUCN programmatic activities.
- d) **Mainstream gender into the IUCN Evaluation System** and **account for the outcomes** of such measures, at strategic, programme and project level: first to ensure that IUCN programming does not exacerbate inequities and inequalities; moreover to ensure that it is taking meaningful steps to reduce such disparities, proactively facilitating the engagement of women and girls, at all levels and across sectors; and finally to ensure learning informs progressively impactful gender-responsive action; and
- e) Support knowledge generation and sharing, capacity building, **learning and information** exchange, including through project reporting and Annual Reporting,

to enable all individuals and IUCN as an institution to be agents of change through gender-responsive action and impact.

**Roles and responsibilities**

16. The Director General will provide oversight with respect to the implementation of this Policy, reporting regularly to Council.
17. Programme Managers and Commission Chairs are accountable for ensuring implementation of this Policy, with results tracked through workplans, appraisals and collated to monitor institutional implementation and trends. Furthermore, Programme Managers and Commission Chairs are responsible for ensuring that teams and individuals working under their supervision are familiar with their obligations under this policy and equipped to meet them.
18. Each programme unit, office and Commission specialist/ working group is responsible for ensuring implementation requirements of this policy are adequately met. In addition, the Global Programme on Governance and Rights is, upon request, available to provide technical support and advice.

**Review**

19. To track results, enhance learning and ensure IUCN remains at the forefront of gender-responsive programming and outcomes, the Secretariat will produce a quadrennial Gender Equality Synthesis, systematically reviewing the body of knowledge produced through IUCN programme and project evaluations, in order to inform the next Programme cycle.

**Effectiveness**

20. The Policy comes into effect upon adoption by the Council and will remain in effect until the Council approves a revised version, developed on request of the Director General.

**Policy alignment**

21. Among other synergies, this Policy aligns in particular with:
  - i) The global human rights frameworks in particular with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, International Labour Organization's core conventions, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the UN Human Rights Council Resolutions on Human Rights and the Environment;
  - ii) IUCN's overall mandate and those derived from World Conservation Congresses' Resolutions wherein members urged that rights-based, gender-responsive and socially inclusive implementation arrangements and frameworks shall be consistently applied to IUCN's project/programme delivery;
  - iii) Mandates under the relevant multilateral environmental agreements (e.g., UNFCCC, UNCCD and CBD), the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals and their targets, as well the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and other major environmental finance mechanisms; and

- iv) Various policy commitments made by member and donor organisations, both state and non-governmental.

***Related policies, processes and documentation include:***

- [\*The IUCN Environment and Social Management System \(ESMS\)\*](#): The ESMS provides a systematic procedure to check IUCN projects for potential adverse environmental and social impacts to assure that negative impacts are avoided or minimised to the extent possible while positive impacts are stimulated.
- [\*The IUCN Project Guidelines and Standards \(PGS\)\*](#): The Project Guidelines and Standards (PGS) are a roadmap and toolkit for selecting, identifying, planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluating and closing IUCN projects, whether IUCN is acting as an implementing or executing agency.
- [\*The Natural Resources Governance Framework \(NRGF\)\*](#): The NRGF is an IUCN initiative created for the purpose of providing a robust, inclusive, and credible approach to assessing and strengthening natural resource governance, at multiple levels and in diverse contexts. Its overarching goal is to set standards and guidance for decision-makers at all levels to make better and more just decisions on the use of natural resources and the distribution of nature's benefits, following good governance principles, such that improved governance will enhance the contributions of ecosystems and biodiversity to equity and sustainability.
- [\*The IUCN Standard on Indigenous Peoples\*](#): This purpose of this standard is to establish risk assessment and management requirements for IUCN projects to avoid negative impacts on indigenous peoples.
- Forthcoming policies on anti-harrasment and gender mainstreaming for IUCN events
- [\*The 2016 Course of Action on Gender \(CAG\)\*](#): The CAG for the Union "signifies IUCN's ongoing commitment to integrating a gender perspective in policies, programmes, and projects, as well as in its institutional structure", including the development of an IUCN Gender Equality Certification (in development, 2018-2020)

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## **Glossary of Terms**

### **Agency (e.g., women's and men's agency)**

Having the ability to make effective choices and to transform those choices into desired outcomes. Agency can be understood as the process through which women and men use their endowments and take advantage of economic opportunities to achieve desired outcomes. (A common usage is "women as agents of change", that is, seeing and respecting women's potential to contribute to transformative development outcomes, for example.) (Source: World Bank)

### **Empowerment (e.g., Women's empowerment)**

Empowerment is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process are actions which both build individual and collective assets, and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organisational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets. (Source: World Bank)

### **Environmental human rights defenders (EHRDs)**

Environmental human rights defenders are individuals and groups who 'strive to protect and promote human rights relating to the environment.' They come from many different backgrounds and work in different ways. (Source: UN)

### **Gender**

The socially constructed set of norms and behaviors, based on social, cultural, political and economic expectations and values, describing what it means to be a woman or a man. The term distinguishes the socially constructed from the biologically determined aspects of being female and male. Unlike the biology of sex, gender roles, behaviours and the relations between women and men are dynamic. They can change over time and vary widely within and across a culture, even if aspects of these roles originated in the biological differences between the sexes. (Source: IUCN, IFAD)

### **Gender-based violence**

GBV is an umbrella term for any harmful act (e.g. physical, verbal, sexual, psychological, and socioeconomic) that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between females and males. The nature and extent of specific types of GBV vary across cultures, countries and regions. Examples include sexual violence, including sexual exploitation/abuse and forced prostitution; domestic violence; trafficking; forced/early marriage; harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation; honour killings; and widow inheritance. (Source: IUCN, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women)

### **Gender equality**

Women and men have equal rights, freedoms, conditions and opportunities to access and control socially valued goods and resources and enjoy the same status within a society. It does not mean that the goal is that women and men become the same, but rather that they have equal life chances. This applies not only to equality of opportunity but also to equality of impact and benefits arising from economic, social, cultural and political development. (Source: IFAD)

### **Gender equity**

Fairness of treatment for women and men according to their respective needs. A gender equity goal often requires measures to rectify the imbalances between the sexes, in particular to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages of women. Equity can be understood as the means, where equality is the end. Equity leads to equality. (Source: IFAD, IUCN)

### **Gender gap**

Disparity between people—women and men, and girls and boys—in their access to resources, education, health services or power. (Source: IFAD)

### **Gender identity**

Gender identity reflects a deeply felt and experienced sense of one's own gender. Everyone has a gender identity, which is part of their overall identity. A person's gender identity is typically aligned with the sex assigned to them at birth. Transgender is an umbrella term used to describe people with a wide range of identities, including people who identify as third gender, and others whose appearance and characteristics are seen as gender atypical and whose sense of their own gender is different to the sex that they were assigned at birth. (Source: *UN Free and Equal*)

### **Gender indicators**

Indicators used to measure changes in gender relations over time (e.g., the changes in the status or situation of women and men, such as levels of poverty or participation) as a result of a particular policy, programme or activity. (Source: *IUCN*)

### **Gender responsive**

To identify and understand gender gaps and biases, and then act on them, developing and implementing actions to overcome challenges and barriers, thereby improving gender equality. In comparison to *gender sensitive* (see below), gender responsive has come to mean more than "doing no harm"; it means "to do better". (Source: *IUCN*)

### **Gender-responsive approach**

The proactive identification of gender gaps, discriminations and biases and then the coordinated development and implementation of actions to address and overcome them, by advancing women's and girls' empowerment via enhanced access to and control of, for example, resources and services, benefits, participation and decision-making. This approach helps ensure that IUCN policies, programs or projects do not exacerbate inequalities, but rather take meaningful steps to reduce disparities and empower women, girls and members of traditionally disadvantaged groups, as fundamental toward meeting IUCN's mission. (Source: *IUCN*)

### **Gender sensitive**

Understanding and taking into consideration socio-cultural factors underlying sex-based discrimination. In application, gender sensitive has come to mean "do no harm". (Source: *IUCN*)

### **Human rights-based approach**

A conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. It seeks to analyse inequalities which lie at the heart of development problems and redress discriminatory practices and unjust distributions of power that impede development progress. In this way, it is complementary to a gender-responsive approach. (Source: *UN, IUCN*)

### **Indigenous peoples**

The definition or 'statement of coverage' contained in the International Labour Organisation Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries comprises: i. peoples who identify themselves as 'indigenous'; ii. tribal peoples whose social, cultural, and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community, and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations; iii. traditional peoples not necessarily called indigenous or tribal but who share the same characteristics of social, cultural, and economic conditions that distinguish them from other sections of the national community, whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions, and whose livelihoods are closely connected to ecosystems and their goods and services. (Source: *ILO, 1989*)

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