



# Knowledge is power

## Enhancing data for action on women's rights, equality, and environmental sustainability via the Environment and Gender Index (EGI)



IUCN's Environment and Gender Index (EGI) monitors progress toward gender equality and women's empowerment in the environmental arena, holding governments and policy makers accountable. Existing knowledge can effectively inform national gender and environment policies and their implementation, bridging data gaps and overcoming barriers, to formulate best practices for using sex-disaggregated data and establishing a way forward.



### Key messages

- The Environment and Gender Index (EGI) brings together environmental and gender variables in a composite index, providing some of the best data to date on how countries are translating their commitments to environmental sustainability and women's empowerment into action.
- The pilot EGI exposed the limited availability of information on women's rights in natural resource sectors – because this data is not widely collected or reported – affirming the need for its existence.
- In its second full phase, the EGI will aim to improve and increase global and national efforts to reduce gender gaps and advance gender equality and the status of women in environmental sectors through analysis of gender and environment variables, creation of innovative databases, dissemination of knowledge, and capacity building and advocacy toward improving country performance.
- As the IUCN's Global Gender Office (GGO) moves forward in developing the next phase, the EGI's potential to serve as a critical baseline of information – and an accountability mechanism – is evident, especially as the global community makes progress in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The first accountability and monitoring mechanism of its kind, IUCN's Environment and Gender Index (EGI) was launched in 2013, bringing together environment and gender variables in a composite index that scored and ranked 73<sup>1</sup> countries worldwide along 27 dimensions in 6 categories: ecosystems; gender-based education and assets; governance; country reported activities; livelihoods; and gender-based rights and participation. With some of the only data to date on how countries are translating their commitments to environmental sustainability and women's empowerment, the EGI found that countries which take their commitments to advancing gender equality in environmental arenas seriously are making strides toward long-term wellbeing for all their citizens. In 2014–2015, IUCN has created new datasets – in particular on women's roles and participation in key environmental decision-making fora – and begun research and preparation toward a second full Index phase.

<sup>1</sup> The EGI Pilot first included 72 countries; Peru was added in 2014. Countries were included mainly based on availability of information.

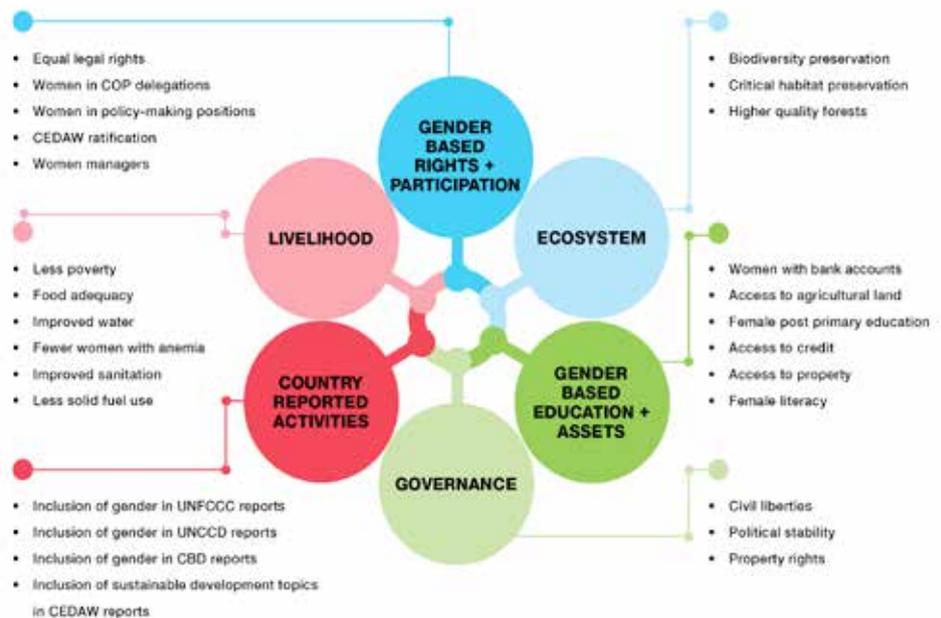
## The problem

In 2011, the Human Development Report discovered a groundbreaking correlation between women's rights and national efforts toward sustainability. Countries with higher female parliamentary representation and higher rankings on the Human Development Index were more likely to safeguard protected land areas and to address climate change by reducing carbon dioxide emissions<sup>2</sup>.

Simultaneously, the World Bank and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization published evidence documenting the transformative impact of women's empowerment on the economy<sup>3</sup> and agricultural production<sup>4</sup>. These revelations signaled to the global development community that women's limited access to land, forest, energy, water and other natural resources is a fundamental obstacle to securing their social and economic rights in developing countries.

For the past three decades, governments have established international commitments and mandates to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment are central to environmental decision-making and sustainable development. This strong policy framework has suggested great strides and yet, without a mechanism to monitor and measure implementation of these commitments and drive further action, a void has remained in being able to identify real progress – not to mention persisting challenges, areas of comparative gains or gaps, or effective strategies for improvement.

Thus, recognizing the potential power of innovative knowledge for leveraging progress toward advancing women's rights and sustainable development alike, IUCN's Global Gender Office (GGO) developed the EGI<sup>5</sup>. Its 2013 pilot phase was followed by specific activities to fill data gaps on the most pressing gender–environment concerns and to analyze more deeply country data and information to find opportunities for improvement and identify significant context-specific challenges.



## Evidence and experience

### EGI pilot: Results and response

The pilot phase of the EGI revealed deeply ingrained inequalities across the 73 countries – for example, in the appointment of women to lead national environmental initiatives and to represent governments at major environmental negotiations. The EGI found that governments are not fully implementing their commitments to women's environmental rights in multilateral agreements, such as the Rio Conventions and CEDAW. Even more importantly, the EGI exposed the limited availability of information on women's rights in natural resource sectors – because this data is not widely collected or reported. For example, no data with broad country coverage is available on women's access to forest resources, women in senior agricultural positions, women's involvement in fisheries, women's land tenure or female graduates in environment-related areas. In essence, policy-makers, practitioners and women's movements face a significant challenge in addressing access to, control over, and sustainability of these critical resources because women's roles and needs are virtually invisible.

The response to the EGI pilot was, in itself, an affirmation of the need for its existence: from the grassroots to policy levels, stakeholders recognized the powerful co-benefits to advancing equality and sustainability and the major gaps remaining in information. They requested guidance for improving national performances and sought to delve deeper into the persisting challenges. As the GGO moves forward in developing the next phase, the EGI's potential to serve as a critical baseline of information – and an accountability mechanism – is evident, especially as the global community makes progress in implementing the SDGs.

2 UNDP, 2011 Human Development Report, 63.

3 World Bank, World Development Report 2012: Gender Equality and Development.

4 FAO, The State of Food and Agriculture 2010–2011.

5 <http://www.genderandenvironment.org/EGI>

## New datasets: Women in environmental decision making<sup>6</sup>

This dataset, developed in collaboration with UN Women, consists of nine indicators that cover diverse facets of the environmental decision-making arena, including international climate change policy; climate finance; and the forestry, energy and transportation sectors. Methods involved gathering the names and confirming the genders of delegates, focal points, ministers and other decision makers.

Results included:

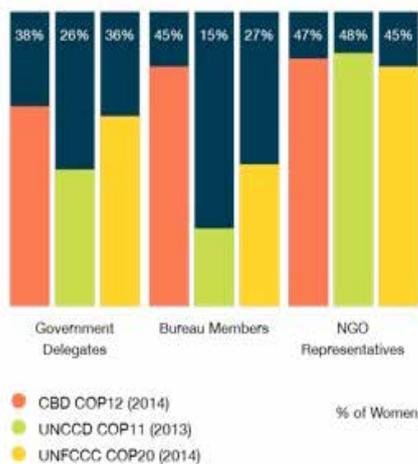
- During the most recent Conference of Parties (COPs) for the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) 38%, 26%, and 36% of government delegations were women; 45%, 15% and 27% of Bureau Members were women; and 47%, 48% and 45% of non-governmental organization delegates were women, respectively (see graphic below);
- 29% of Global Environment Facility (GEF) National Focal Points and 24% of Focal Points to the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) are women;
- 18% of World Environment Center (WEC) Secretaries and 4% of WEC Chairs are women;
- 12% of heads of environmental-sector ministries are women (see graphic below); and
- 48% of nationally elected Green Party leaders are women.

## Gender focal points and policies in national environmental ministries<sup>7</sup>

This dataset, developed in collaboration with UN Women, consists of five indicators in three categories: gender focal points in environmental ministries; gender policies and programs in environmental ministries; and environmental linkages in and with national women's affairs' mechanisms. Data was gathered through survey responses from ministry officials, Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA) partners, IUCN regional and program offices, other practitioners and academics. Data was gathered from March to August 2015 and includes 65 countries. Results, according to survey respondents, are as follows:

- Of environmental-sector ministries, 35% have a gender focal point, 25% have a formal gender policy and 35% include gender considerations in their policies and/or programs;
- 63% of countries perform cross-ministerial work between the women's affairs mechanism and environmental-sector ministries;
- 32% of countries have an environmental focal point within the women's affairs mechanism; and
- Ministries of agriculture stand out as the leader on every indicator in this dataset.

WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE RIO CONVENTIONS



HEADS OF NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL-SECTOR MINISTRIES



Data collection was completed in July 2015 and is global in scale.

<sup>6</sup> [https://portals.iucn.org/union/sites/union/files/doc/egi\\_factsheet\\_decision\\_making\\_web\\_sept2015.pdf](https://portals.iucn.org/union/sites/union/files/doc/egi_factsheet_decision_making_web_sept2015.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Environmental ministries included: ministries of environment, agriculture, energy, forestry, fisheries, and water.

## Recommendations

### How to use EGI data to promote gender equality

The goal of the EGI is to measure progress, enhance policy and program development, and ultimately empower countries to take steps forward for gender equality and sustainable development by improving and promoting broad use of data and information. In its second full phase, the EGI will aim to improve and increase global and national efforts to reduce gender gaps and advance gender equality and the status of women in environmental sectors through analysis of gender and environment variables, creation of innovative databases, dissemination of knowledge, and capacity building and advocacy toward improving country performance. Capacity building and information sharing across stakeholders to be able to gather and use disaggregated data will be a key activity.

#### 1. Inform policy processes

- The target audience for the EGI is diverse: governments can identify their strengths and weaknesses and compare themselves against their peers; national NGOs and other stakeholders can both work for progress and hold their policy-makers to account; international development and conservation organizations can better tailor their interventions and programming; donors can maximize their investment strategies; and researchers and UN agencies – among many others – can continue to identify and fill data gaps, not least by recognizing how little disaggregated data is available. Based on EGI data, policy recommendations can be made for each target audience, with overall recommendations for increased collection of sex-disaggregated data at every

level, women's empowerment for meaningful participation in decision-making arenas, and enhanced mainstreaming of gender in the development and implementation of environmental policies and programs.

#### 2. Bolster advocacy efforts

- The EGI was founded not only as a means for gathering and analyzing necessary data, but also as an advocacy tool.
- Information on gender equality and women's rights and access to resources and services at the national level can be used for understanding discrepancies and acting to reduce inequalities.
- Results and knowledge are crucial for effective planning, policies and programming for maximum impact, especially for enhancing adaptive capacity and resilience in the face of climate change.
- Monitoring and evaluating progress is facilitated in both environmental sustainability and gender equality.
- Development and channeling resources in the most effective and efficient way is enabled, advancing toward collaborative information systems on issues surrounding climate change and environmental responsibility.
- Gaps in information and data that research institutions and governments use can be identified.

A forthcoming second full phase of the EGI aims to update and expand pilot datasets to uncover further the drivers of inequality and unsustainability and pursue linkages with other key platforms for information and monitoring, such as those related to the SDGs, bridging the gaps between knowledge, commitments and accountability. **To learn more about the EGI please go to <http://genderandenvironment.org/egi/>.**

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#### Photo by

Photo by Tomas Munita for Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR)  
Kichwa community listens to Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) scientists informing them of their findings, Napo Province, Ecuador.

This brief is number 7 in a set of Gender Climate Briefs.  
See the full set here: [CIFOR.org/gender-climate](http://CIFOR.org/gender-climate)



Produced by CIFOR as part of the CGIAR Research Program on Forests, Trees and Agroforestry (CRP-FTA). This collaborative program aims to enhance the management and use of forests, agroforestry and tree genetic resources across the landscape from forests to farms. CIFOR leads CRP-FTA in partnership with Bioversity International, CATIE, CIRAD, the International Center for Tropical Agriculture and the World Agroforestry Centre.



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RESEARCH PROGRAM ON  
Climate Change,  
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