



# IUCN Policy on Gender Equity and Equality

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IUCN's mission is to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.

Gender is an essential component in the sustainable use, management and conservation of natural resources. Women and men have different roles and responsibilities in relation to natural resources, which vary greatly across cultures and regions. Women often make contributions to their family, community and society while facing unequal access to, control over, and benefits from resources and resource use. Gender equality and equity are matters of fundamental human rights and social justice, as well as a pre-condition for sustainable development and the achievement of IUCN's mission.

## **Why gender?**

IUCN understands that gender refers to the socially constructed roles and opportunities associated with women and men, as well as the hidden power structures that govern relationships between women and men. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in access to and control over resources and decision-making opportunities, in particular in relation to environmental resources. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural, economic and political contexts, which also takes into consideration factors such as class, status, ethnicity and age.

IUCN recognizes that both gender equity and equality must be pursued in a complementary manner. Gender equality is the ultimate goal. In order to achieve gender equality, it is often necessary to empower groups that have limited access to resources. Gender equity, or creating fair opportunities according to gender differentiated needs, will require IUCN to take measures to redress for the historical and social disadvantages experienced by women.

Achieving poverty reduction goals are largely dependent on equitable access and control by women and men over natural resources. There are gender differences in vulnerabilities to poverty and contributions to poverty reduction. Globally, women make up 70% of the 1.3 billion people living in poverty<sup>1</sup>, and the feminisation of poverty is at the core of a wide range of development challenges. On the other hand, women have played a critical role in poverty reduction, largely due to their role in caring for family and community. Enabling women to escape from poverty often creates a chain reaction of success in other development and environmental areas. Indeed, there is widespread acknowledgement that

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). 1995. Human Development Report 1995. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will require an integrated approach that recognizes the inherent linkages between Goal 1 on poverty eradication, Goal 3 on gender equality, and Goal 7 on environmental sustainability.

The development and implementation of this Gender Policy signifies IUCN's ongoing commitment to integrating a gender perspective in policies, programmes, and projects, as well as in its institutional structure. Working with a gender perspective encompasses understanding the different roles and needs of women and men, as well as other social groupings, in relation to IUCN and its initiatives; striving for more equitable relationships between women and men; and ensuring equality of participation and decision-making.

### **Mainstreaming Gender in IUCN**

While IUCN began incorporating gender issues into its programme in 1984, it was not until 1996 that a Resolution was passed "to integrate a gender perspective across the IUCN Program." In the following years, the IUCN General Assembly passed additional resolutions on gender at every Congress.

IUCN recognises that its commitment to gender equality and equity necessitates a process of gender mainstreaming, which implies an assessment of the implications for women and men of any planned action. In this way, women's and men's concerns and experiences become an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes so that gender inequalities and inequities are not perpetuated.

The process of gender mainstreaming has implications for management priorities and systems, the process of decentralization, organizational structure, culture and behaviour, human resources, programming and project cycle management, the balance between global and regional policies and programs, external partnerships, staff capacity development, and resources allocation.

IUCN acknowledges that incorporating gender equity and equality into institutional structures, policies, and programmes is a long-term undertaking. Thus, IUCN is committed to sustained action in every aspect of the institution's work and is aware that progress in one area will lead to progress in other areas. To track progress in IUCN's gender mainstreaming goals, this Gender Policy will be reviewed and updated every 4 to 10 years.

IUCN regards its commitment to mainstreaming gender to be a challenge and one to which it dedicates itself fully. The Director General, Secretariat, President, Council and Commission Chairs assume full responsibility for its implementation. In addition, IUCN understands that full implementation of the Policy requires the involvement and commitment of all individuals throughout the Union.