

# Women's Participation in Global Environmental Decision Making

*New research from the Environment and Gender Index (EGI)*

Women's voice and agency are essential for the governance of natural resources because of their diverse experiences as farmers, fishers, household providers, and entrepreneurs. However, their perspectives are often unrecognized and their needs unmet in shaping and applying environmental policy. Ensuring that gender perspectives and women's knowledge, needs, and capacities inform sound policy making is critical to achieving sustainable livelihoods and sustainable development. A key barrier to advancing gender equality in the policy arena has been a void in information, data, and measurement of women's participation in environmental decision-making processes. The new EGI dataset helps to fill this knowledge gap.

## NEW EGI DATABASE

In collaboration with UN Women, the IUCN Global Gender Office has created a new dataset on women's participation in environmental decision making. This dataset aims to deepen understanding of a broad finding from the EGI pilot phase—that women have less access to environmental decision-making at the local, national, and international level.

The dataset is comprised of nine indicators that cover diverse facets of the environmental arena, including international climate change policy; climate finance; and the forestry, energy, and transportation sectors. Updated with the most recent data from **July 2015**, this dataset is global in scale; each indicator includes every country for which data was available.

## IN 6 OUT OF 9

decision-making processes analyzed

**WOMEN REPRESENT  
LESS THAN ONE-THIRD**  
of decision makers.\*

\*Calculated after averaging the percentage of women's representation across the Conferences of the Parties (COPs) of the three Rio Conventions COPs (UNCBD, UNCCD and UNFCCC) for each Rio Convention indicator.

## INTRODUCING THE EGI

The first monitoring and accountability mechanism of its kind, the EGI is an index that brings together gender and environment variables. In its pilot phase, the EGI scored and ranked 73 countries along 27 dimensions in six categories: Ecosystems, Gender Based Education, Governance, Country Reported Activities, Livelihoods, and Gender Based Rights and Participation.

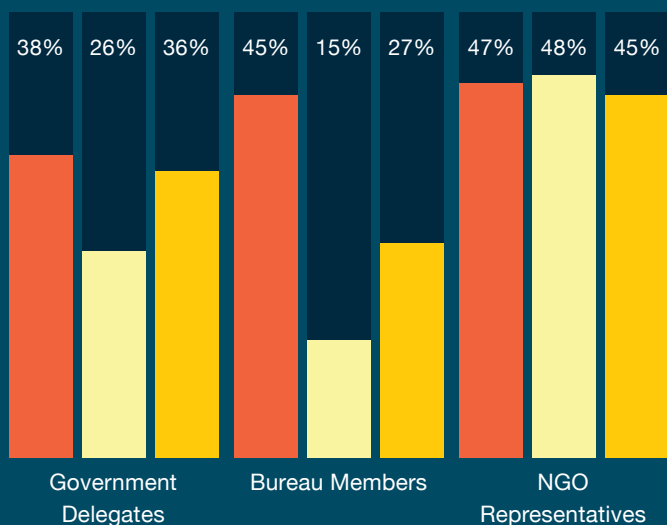
With some of the best data to date on how countries are realizing their commitments to sustainable development and women's empowerment at national level, the EGI found that countries which take seriously their commitments to advancing gender equality in environmental arenas are making strides toward long-term wellbeing for all their citizens.

The EGI revealed that there is a lack of sex-disaggregated data across environmental sectors globally and that despite national and international agreements on gender equality, leadership positions continue to be heavily dominated by men at all levels.

**For more information, visit**  
[genderandenvironment.org/EGI](http://genderandenvironment.org/EGI)  
 to view the full dataset report,  
*Women's Participation in Global Environmental Decision Making: An EGI Supplemental Report.*

## INDICATORS AND RESULTS

### WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE RIO CONVENTIONS



- CBD COP12 (2014)
  - UNCCD COP11 (2013)
  - UNFCCC COP20 (2014)
- % of Women

The three Rio Conventions—the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) —are separate, but interconnected treaties advancing international environmental cooperation. **Government Delegates, Bureau Members, and NGO Representatives** to the Conferences of the Parties (COPs) of the conventions have the opportunity to promote gender equality and women's empowerment through actions against biodiversity loss, desertification, and climate change. While there is no one solution to ensuring that gender considerations are addressed comprehensively, achieving equal gender representation at the COPs would elevate the potential impact women can have on inclusive, sustainable environmental policy. Across the Rio Conventions, there is a much higher percentage of women NGO Representatives, with an average of 47%, than Government Delegates, with an average of 33%. For the most recent COPs, CBD has the highest women's participation rate, with an average of 43% government delegates, bureau members, and NGO representatives. UNFCCC has an average of 36% and UNCCD has an average of 30%.

## NATIONAL FOCAL POINTS OF THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL FACILITY



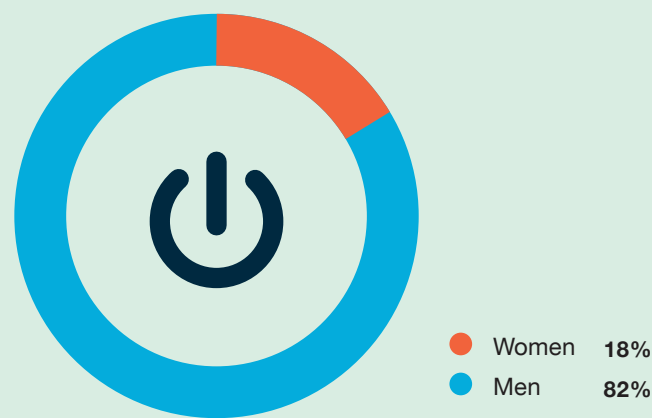
**National Focal Points of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF)** represent the 176 member countries of the GEF, coordinate GEF matters in their countries, and serve as liaisons between the GEF and its implementing agencies. Although the GEF adopted a policy to ensure equitable participation of women in GEF projects, women represent less than 1/3 of the 304 national focal points. Focal points are responsible for ensuring that GEF-funded projects include gender considerations and promote gender equality, consistent with their nation's gender policies and priorities.

### FOCAL POINTS TO THE UN FORUM ON FORESTS (UNFF)

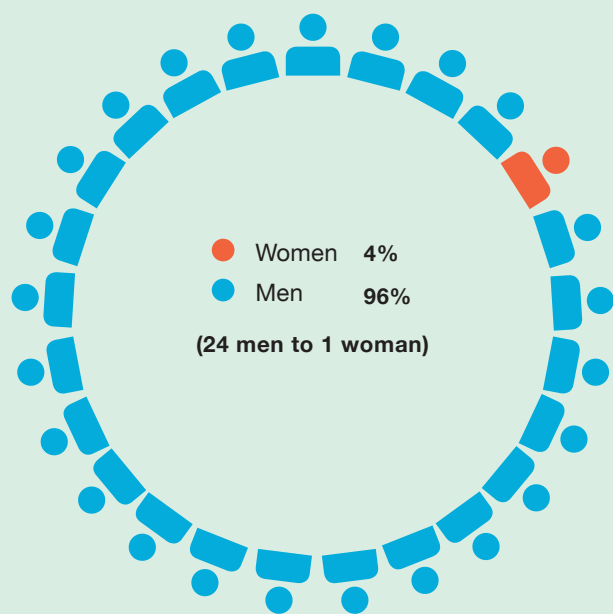


Strengthening women's participation in community-based forest governance improves forest resource conservation; however, women who rely on forest resources are often underrepresented in forest governance at the local, national, and international level. Less than a quarter of the **173 Focal Points to the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF)**—an intergovernmental forest policy forum—are women. These focal points liaise with the UNFF and member states, assisting in developing and implementing policies and producing country reports. They are therefore in a position to advance gender-responsive forestry policies and programmes.

WORLD ENERGY COUNCIL SECRETARIES

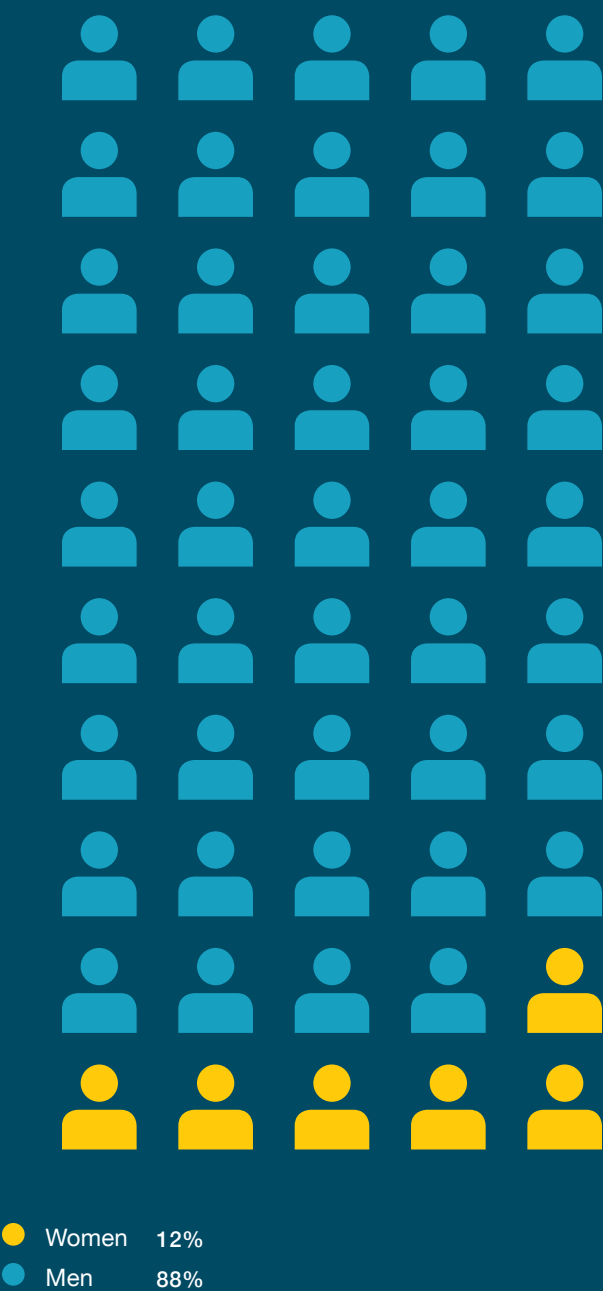


WORLD ENERGY COUNCIL CHAIRS



National Member Committees to the **World Energy Council (WEC)** each have a chair and secretary who represent national perspectives and interests in the energy dialogue of the WEC. Based on information available for chairs and secretaries from 92 nations, women hold a mere 4% of **WEC Chair Positions** and 18% of **WEC Secretary Positions**. As energy poverty is a cross-sectoral issue, energy governance institutions such as the WEC have the potential to advance key women rights, such as the right to an adequate standard of living. When women are excluded from energy governance, decision-making processes are more likely to result in energy projects and policies that ignore women’s unique needs, knowledge, and contributions.

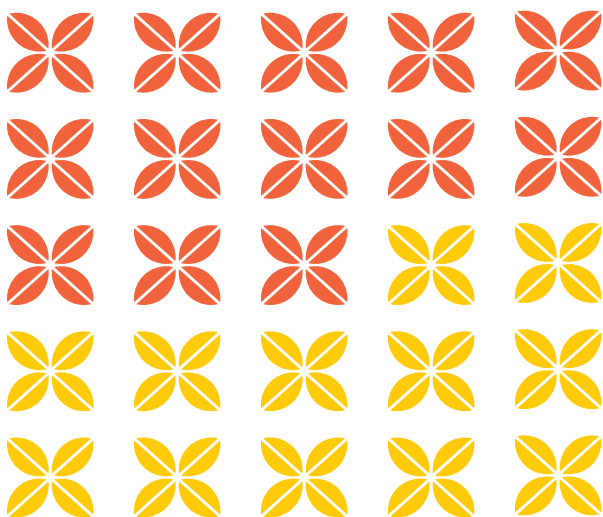
HEADS OF NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL-SECTOR MINISTRIES



National ministries spanning environmental sectors develop policies and programmes to manage natural resources, perform several critical roles in environmental governance, oversee project implementation, and develop capacity for environmental conservation, among other functions. Across 881 national environmental-sector ministries from the 193 UN Member States, only 12% of **Ministers** are women. Although gender mainstreaming within environmental ministries and programmes is increasingly common, challenges to women’s representation at the national decision-making level remain.



## NATIONALLY ELECTED GREEN PARTY LEADERS



● Women 48%  
● Men 52%

The highest performing indicator is on women in positions as **Nationally Elected Green Party Leaders**, of which women constitute 48%. In nineteen countries, women's roles in leadership positions within the Green Party provide the opportunity for women to influence policy frameworks and be at the forefront of bringing environmental issues—a Green Party priority—to national political agendas. Women's political empowerment is a key aspect of the Greens' promotion of gender equality—another Party priority.

## CONCLUSION:

Gender parity in environmental decision-making processes and forums ensures that the diverse perspectives of women and men are represented. However, as this EGI dataset shows, in international and national spheres women are underrepresented in such positions. The highest performing indicators show that women make up an average of 47% of NGO representatives across the Rio Conventions, and 48% of nationally elected Green Party leaders are women. Yet only 12% of environmental sector Ministers and 4% of WEC chairs are women, leaving tremendous room for improvement.

## CONTACT

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## NEXT STEPS:

To continue to strengthen the power of analysis of the EGI and minimize gaps in the data, IUCN Global Gender Office, in collaboration with UN Women, is developing a new dataset focusing on national-level policies, programmes, and government focal points for various environmental ministries and agencies, as well as national gender mechanisms.



For more information, visit  
[genderandenvironment.org/EGI](http://genderandenvironment.org/EGI)



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