

Online Resources: Gender and Nature



A Gender-Responsive Approach to Nature-Based Disclosures for Financial Institutions

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Introduction

Across the globe, gender-specific differences in the reliance on, and utilization of, natural resources create distinct impacts on women and men. In many developing nations, women and girls handle domestic resource collection, while men predominantly engage in commercial use, such as agriculture and timber extraction. Consequently, the effects of environmental challenges such as pollution, waste, and biodiversity loss, differ for each gender.

Women in rural areas, as primary providers of water, food, and energy, face heightened vulnerability to shifts in resource supply and quality. Climate change and overexploitation of natural resources force women and girls to travel longer distances for essentials, reducing time for education and employment opportunities. Natural resource scarcity correlates with social issues, including domestic violence and child marriages. Despite women's dependency on natural resources, structural discrimination limits their participation in finding solutions for environmental challenges. Interventions around natural resources, environment and climate change provide significant opportunities to empower women politically and economically, and to strengthen their contributions to conflict prevention and peacebuilding in conflict-affected countries. Yet opportunities related to natural resources remain underutilized.

The financial sector plays a key role in mitigating the risks of natural capital degradation through its products and services to business partners and local communities in nature-dependent industries. By adopting gender-responsive policies and strategies, financial

institutions can ensure that their business practices are responsive to the needs and interests of women who may be disproportionately impacted because of their dependency on natural resources.

These online resources have been developed to assist UNEP FI members in developing their own gender-responsive strategies to manage natural capital risks. This will be particularly useful to financial institutions wishing to incorporate a gender lens into their commitments on nature-based disclosures developed by the Taskforce of Nature-Based Financial Disclosures (TNFD).

If you would like to find out more about how UNEP FI can support your organization to develop its gender action plan as part of the TNFD framework or as part of your bank's broader commitment to gender equality and social sustainability, please reach out to arrange a consultation.

Differential Gendered Impacts on Nature-Dependent Industries

Men and women are often differentially impacted by the activities of specific nature-dependent industries. UNEP FI members that work with business partners across the following nature-dependent industries are encouraged to consider these differences when developing gender-responsive approaches to nature-based disclosures:

Agriculture: [Women are significant contributors to agriculture, especially in developing countries.](#) Climate change and environmental degradation can lead to changes in precipitation patterns and soil fertility, affecting women farmers disproportionately.

Forestry: Women are often dependent on forests for their livelihoods, as they play a crucial role in collecting fuelwood and non-timber forest products. [Deforestation and forest degradation can disrupt these activities.](#)

Mining: Women may be disproportionately affected by the negative impacts of mining activities. [The extraction of minerals can lead to environmental pollution, displacement of communities, and health hazards.](#)

Fishery/Aquaculture: In fisheries, [women are often involved in post-harvest activities such as processing and marketing.](#) Overfishing and environmental degradation can reduce fish stocks, affecting women's income and food security.

Transport: Women often face challenges in accessing transportation, particularly in rural areas. [Environmental degradation can impact transportation infrastructure, affecting women's mobility and access to economic opportunities.](#)

Water: Women are primary water users for domestic purposes. Environmental degradation can lead to water scarcity and poor water quality, [increasing the burden on women to secure clean water for their households.](#)

Waste/Sewage: [Women are often involved in waste management,](#) and environmental pollution can exacerbate health risks associated with waste disposal and sewage.

Tourism: [Women make up a significant portion of the tourism workforce.](#) Environmental degradation due to tourism activities can impact local communities, including women who depend on tourism-related employment.

Manufacturing: Women may be employed in manufacturing industries, often in informal work environments, and [environmental pollution from manufacturing processes can have adverse health effects on workers and nearby communities.](#)

The Role of the Financial Sector

Financial institutions play a crucial role as key stakeholders in combatting gender inequality in nature-dependent regions and industries. Through their role as financial intermediaries, they have a significant influence over the business activities of nature-dependent industries, and they are also directly and indirectly impacted by environmental challenges. To actively contribute to the pursuit of gender equality, financial institutions should incorporate a gender lens into their nature-based disclosures by developing a gender strategy and establishing clear and precise targets, in alignment with international and national gender frameworks.

Through incorporating a gender lens into their business practices, financial institutions can demonstrate their commitment to a sustainable future. Beyond meeting regulatory expectations, this demonstrates the financial sector's dedication to ethical and socially responsible business conduct. This approach also has the potential to resonate positively with socially conscious investors. Embracing gender equality aligns with the evolving expectations of consumers, investors, and the broader community. As societal awareness regarding social and environmental issues grows, individuals are increasingly scrutinizing the ethical dimensions of the institutions they choose to engage with. Financial institutions that authentically champion gender equality are likely to garner public support and loyalty, further bolstering their reputation and brand value. By addressing the needs of women in nature-reliant industries and communities, financial institutions can also open new markets for their products and services, thereby mitigating some of the business risks arising from nature loss and climate change.

By setting ambitious goals, aligning with global frameworks, and incorporating gender considerations into their operations, financial institutions can better align their environmental and social sustainability objectives, thereby leading to a more sustainable future across the globe.

Incorporating Gender-Responsive Strategies into the TNFD Framework

Gender-responsive strategies ensure that women and men benefit equally from an organization's policies, activities, and services, thereby improving gender equality. Gender equality is recognized as a cross-cutting priority across all aspects of UNEP's work and is one of the central pillars of the United Nations. Goal 5 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals emphasizes "Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls" as a top priority for global sustainability efforts.

In 2023, UNEP FI and UN Women developed a Gender Framework of Action which contains a three-pillar approach to support financial institutions working towards achieving gender equality both inside and outside their organization. This framework can also be a useful starting point to incorporating gender-responsive strategies specifically within nature-based activities.

The three main pillars are:

- **Gender responsiveness:** financial institutions are gender-responsive and compliant with internationally agreed norms and standards, captured in principles, such as the [Women's Empowerment Principles](#).
- **Portfolio shift:**
 - Increase investment and loans for gender-responsive businesses and projects that specifically target gender equality or disproportionately benefit women.
 - Avoid financing projects including gender risks through careful and systematic analysis and understanding of potential gender risks in portfolio.
- **Financial health and inclusion of women:** There is equality in access to and use of financial products and services and women are empowered to become more financially resilient, while women-owned or led businesses are supported in increasing their financial soundness to become sustainable successful businesses.

UNEP FI members are encouraged to incorporate gender considerations into their adoption of the recommendations of the Taskforce on Nature-based Financial Disclosures (TNFD). To do so, they should ensure that women's as well as men's concerns and experiences are an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of their TNFD commitments.

The Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD), launched in September this year, was designed to assist organizations in addressing environmental risks and opportunities through disclosure of nature-related issues across four pillars: within their **governance processes, strategies, risk management**, and through the development of **metrics and targets**. Gender considerations can be incorporated across each of these four pillars.

1. Incorporating gender considerations into the four disclosure pillars

Governance

Organizations can improve their gender responsiveness through more balanced gender representation in their decision-making. One way to do this could be to set targets for gender representation at the senior management level. Another way that gender can be considered at the governance level is through specific reference to women as part of the organization's human rights and stakeholder engagement policies.

Strategy

Organizations are encouraged to assess and disclose nature-related dependencies on their business model, strategy, and financial planning. This includes disclosure of how the organization makes decisions to mitigate the negative impacts of its business activities on the environment, including through its sourcing and procurement policies. These impact

assessments should be conducted in a gender-inclusive way to better understand how different genders may be affected differently. An important first step is to close data gaps arising from the limited collection of gender statistics and sex-disaggregated data.

Risk Management

Businesses should specifically consider gendered impacts and vulnerabilities related to nature-based dependencies, recognizing, and addressing the differential risks faced by women and men. Some of these risks may include women's limited access to and control over land and property, which can restrict their ability to equitably share in profits within the agriculture and forestry sectors. Women in nature-dependent industries may be subject to economic disparities due to gender-based wage gaps and limited access to credit and financing.

Metrics and targets

Organizations working to adopt the TNFD framework should also include gender considerations when setting their **metrics and targets**.

2. Incorporating gender considerations into the LEAP approach

To assist organizations in conducting due diligence to inform their nature-based disclosures, TNFD has also developed an integrated approach called the LEAP approach, to identify and assess nature-related issues. The LEAP approach contains four phases: Locate, Evaluate, Assess and Prepare. Financial institutions should incorporate gender considerations at each of these four phases. The following provides some guidance and advice on how to do so:

Locate: Determine alignment by completing a robust context analysis on gender gaps

Members should understand the relevant gender frameworks that may apply to them and assess their organization for any gaps in alignment.

Evaluate: Set baseline by conducting a performance analysis

Members should measure gender-disaggregated data relevant to all of their nature-based activities and establish gender indicators for all their nature-based portfolios.

Assess: Set SMART targets and prepare for action

Organizations should develop action plans and targets related to nature-based solutions. This includes through internal policies and processes; advocacy and partnerships; and portfolio management; and client engagement.

Prepare: Measure progress and report

Organizations should measure the impact of the target indicators and provide specific reference to gendered impacts as part of their reporting process.

Relevant resources

The following resources may be useful for members who are interested in setting nature-based disclosure targets on gender equality:

- [Guidance on Gender Equality Target Setting](#)
- [The Power of Women's Market Data: A How-to Guide](#)
- [The Economics of Banking on Women: 2019 Edition](#)
- [Women's Empowerment Principles](#)
- [Measuring the gender impact of investments](#)
- [Iris+ metrics](#)
- WEPs Transparency and Accountability Framework - Indicators to track: [guidance](#), 2021
- The self-assessment WEPs Gender Gap Analysis Tool: [tool](#) [Resource available in English, French, Korean, Portuguese, Spanish]
- UNEP FI gender microsite: <https://www.unepfi.org/banking/unep-fi-banking-members-space/social-and-human-rights/gender-equality-2/>
- The [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework \(GBF\)](#)'s 2020 [Gender Plan of Action](#)
- [UNEP has provided a useful guide](#) for organizations to improve the way they collect data relevant to gender and the environment.
- [UNEP Gender Framework of Action](#)
- [TNFD Guidance on Engagement with Indigenous Peoples, Local Communities and Affected Stakeholders.](#)