

Preliminary proposal for an Annotated Index¹.

Guide for the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the implementation of the Escazú Agreement

This document has not been submitted to editorial review.

I. BACKGROUND

The Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation, and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement) aims to "guarantee the full and effective implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean of the rights of access to environmental information, public participation in the environmental decision-making process, and access to justice in environmental matters." Additionally, it seeks to build and strengthen capacities and cooperation, contributing to the protection of the right of all people—both present and future generations—to live in a healthy environment and achieve sustainable development.

The Escazú Agreement is founded on a fundamental premise: to protect the environment, uphold human rights, strengthen democracy, and consolidate a sustainable development model, States must guarantee access to information, public participation, and access to justice in environmental matters.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres succinctly captured the treaty's purpose, stating that it aims to "combat inequality and discrimination and to guarantee the rights of every person to a healthy environment and to sustainable development. In doing so, it devotes particular attention to persons and groups in vulnerable situations, and places equality at the core of sustainable development."

As women are among the most marginalized and vulnerable populations in Latin America and the Caribbean, the Third Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Escazú Agreement has recognized the importance of advancing gender equality to ensure the full and effective implementation of the Agreement. This includes incorporating measures, initiatives and activities aimed at integrating and strengthening the gender perspective in matters related to the Agreement.

For this reason, in its Decision III/4 on Mainstreaming the Gender Perspective, the COP requested the Secretariat (ECLAC) "to prepare, with the support of the United Nations Entity Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and other agencies, funds and programmes of the

¹ This working document has been prepared by Lorena Aguilar and M. Victoria Galleguillos, experts in gender issues and consultants of the Secretariat of the Escazú Agreement (ECLAC) as an input to the process of building the Guide for mainstreaming the gender perspective of the Escazú Agreement, based on the results obtained from the Questionnaire for the preparation of the Guide for the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the implementation of the Agreement of Escazú corresponding to stage 1 of the public consultation process. The ideas and opinions expressed in this document do not necessarily reflect the views of the Secretariat of the Escazú Agreement.

United Nations, a guide on mainstreaming the gender perspective in the implementation of the Escazú” to be presented at the next ordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP4) in 2026.

II. ABOUT THE GUIDE

a. Objective

The objective of the Guide for the Mainstreaming of the Gender Perspective (GTGe or Guide) is to provide information, guidance and options for actions and strategic measures for States Parties to integrate and strengthen the gender perspective in the implementation of the Escazú Agreement, both at the national and regional levels, and thus strengthen the exercise of access rights and the work of environmental protection exercised by women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

b. Recipients

The Guide is intended for:

- Officials from States Parties across various entities involved in the implementation of the Escazú Agreement.
- Other States.
- A wide range of actors and the public at local, national, regional, and international levels.

c. Process of preparing the Guide

The proposed Guide is developed through the following stages:

Stage 1: Design and implementation of a virtual questionnaire with the aim to collect gaps, challenges and measures for the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in exercising the access rights in environmental matters and environmental protection. This questionnaire was addressed to States Parties, agencies of the United Nations system and the public².

Stage 2: Virtual and face-to-face consultation of the proposal for the annotated index of the Guide. The face-to-face consultation will be held within the framework of the Third Forum on Human Rights Defenders in Environmental Matters. The proposal for an annotated index subject to consultation was prepared based on the results of Stage 1 and a bibliographic review on outstanding practices in environmental matters and in the mainstreaming of the gender perspective.

Stage 3: Virtual consultation of the draft Guide, which will be prepared considering the contributions obtained in Stage 2, both in its virtual and face-to-face instances.

² Within the framework of Decision III/4 on "Mainstreaming the Gender Perspective" of COP3 of the Escazú Agreement, the Escazú Secretariat initiated a public consultation for the preparation of the Guide for the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the implementation of the Escazú Agreement. This public consultation was carried out through an online questionnaire, which aimed to collect relevant inputs. The consultation was aimed at the public, States Parties and agencies of the United Nations system and was available on the participatory platform of the Regional Public Mechanism of the Escazú Agreement. The consultation period was from January 3 to February 14, 2025, receiving a total of 110 questionnaires answered by States Parties to the Escazú Agreement, agencies of the United Nations System and the public.

III. MAINSTREAMING THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN ACCESS RIGHTS IN ENVIRONMENTAL MATTERS

a. Key conceptual aspects and relevance of the gender perspective in environmental matters

The concept of gender mainstreaming or PoG "responds to the need to integrate analysis of the different needs of women and men into all dimensions of State policy and activity, including statistical production. This is aimed at making gender inequalities visible.³ It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.⁴

The mainstreaming of the gender perspective in environmental matters is an essential approach to guarantee equity in access to information, public participation, access to justice and the protection of environmental defenders. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes that gender equality is not only a goal in itself (SDG 5), but also a means to achieve the fulfillment of all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Gender discrimination and structural inequalities exacerbate the vulnerability of women and girls to the environmental crisis, making it imperative to adopt gender-responsive measures to address these challenges equitably and effectively.

The recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment through United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/76/300 (2022) and the report of the Special Rapporteur on environment and human rights in 2023 underscores the need to address environmental injustices with a gender-transformative approach. In particular, the protection of women environmental defenders is a key priority, given that they face greater risks of violence, criminalization and repression. Therefore, ensuring their safety and promoting their active participation in decision-making is fundamental for sustainability and environmental justice.

At the international level, various legal instruments and environmental agreements have progressively incorporated gender equality into their regulatory frameworks. By way of example, it is possible to highlight the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The aforementioned instruments have adopted specific provisions to guarantee gender equity in the planning and execution of environmental policies. In addition, financial mechanisms such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Green

³ ECLAC. 2022. Breaking the statistical silence to achieve gender equality by 2030: application of the information systems axis of the Montevideo Strategy for the Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda in the Framework of Sustainable Development towards 2030. Santiago: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. Available in: <https://www.cepal.org/en/publications/48372-breaking-statistical-silence-achieve-gender-equality-2030-application-information>

⁴ Ibid.

Climate Fund (GCF) have integrated gender criteria into their investment and financing strategies, strengthening the role of women in environmental governance.

This evolution in environmental policy responds to multiple interconnected factors, including the recognition of human rights and gender equality as fundamental principles of sustainable development. The work of feminist organizations, human rights defenders and multilateral organizations has been crucial in consolidating a gender approach in the global environmental agenda. As the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation continue to intensify, it is imperative to strengthen gender mainstreaming across all dimensions of environmental policy, ensuring that solutions are inclusive, equitable and effective for all people.

b. Regional gender agenda

Latin America and the Caribbean is the only region in the world where, for more than four decades, governments, international organizations, and civil society—particularly women's and feminist organizations—have met periodically at the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. This conference serves as a platform to assess the regional and subregional status of women's autonomy and rights, propose recommendations for gender equality policies, and conduct periodic evaluations of actions taken to uphold regional and international commitments to women's rights and gender equality.

Within the framework of the meetings of this subsidiary body of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the member states have agreed on a progressive, innovative and comprehensive Regional Gender Agenda to guarantee all the rights of women in their diversity, including collective and environmental rights, and to move towards sustainable development styles that contribute to the achievement of physical and economic autonomy and decision-making of women in the region. The Montevideo Strategy for the Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda⁵ in the Framework of Sustainable Development towards 2030, agreed in 2016, contains a series of measures of vital relevance to this guide. In this regard, the following aspects of the Strategy should be highlighted:

***1.b** Ratify and enforce human rights treaties; review laws, policies, plans, programmes and protocols periodically, and modify them, if necessary, to bring them into line with international standards on women's human rights, gender equality and non-discrimination;*

and ensure that all women's rights are respected, protected and guaranteed and prevent setbacks.

***1.i** Remove all legal and institutional barriers to women's effective and equal access to justice, without discrimination, by ensuring participation, transparency, independence and high-quality, timely assistance from specialized personnel, and access to comprehensive remedies for damages in the event of rights violations in order to end impunity.*

***3.c** Create and maintain a safe and supportive environment for the full and effective participation of civil society through an enabling policy framework, a human rights protection system that safeguards freedoms and ensures effective access to justice, timely public information and citizen*

⁵ Montevideo Strategy for the Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda in the Framework of Sustainable Development towards 2030, 2017, ECLAC. Available in: <https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/41011-estrategia-montevideo-la-implementacion-la-agenda-regional-genero-marco>.

participation channels, including mechanisms for the free, prior and informed consent of rural and campesino communities and different indigenous peoples and ethnic groups.

IV. STRUCTURAL KNOTS OF INEQUALITY AND CHALLENGES FACED BY WOMEN IN EXERCISING ACCESS RIGHTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Latin America and the Caribbean continue to be the most unequal region in the world. In this context, where poverty and inequality have deepened, the differentiated impacts of the triple environmental crisis (climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss) are intertwined with the structural knots of inequality identified in the Montevideo Strategy. The aforementioned knots are the following: 1) socioeconomic inequality and the persistence of poverty, 2) the sexual division of labor and the unjust social organization of care, 3) the predominance of the culture of privilege and patriarchal, discriminatory and violent cultural patterns, and 4) the unequal concentration of power. These knots exacerbate vulnerabilities or create new challenges in areas such as the exercise of rights and the protection of the environment.

The unequal impacts of the environmental crisis from a gender perspective are strongly linked to socioeconomic inequality and the persistence of poverty in the context of growth that is exclusionary and unsustainable. In 2019, according to data from the Gender Equality Observatory of Latin America and the Caribbean (OIG), for every 100 men living in poor households, there were 112.7 women in a similar situation, thus evidencing their lack of economic autonomy.⁶ At the same time, the structural nature of gender inequality means that women face persistent barriers in accessing natural resources, goods and services such as training and technologies.⁷

The sexual division of labor and the unjust social organization of care limit women's participation in environmental decision-making processes. According to survey data collected by the OIG, trends indicate that women spend more time on unpaid work with an average of two-thirds of their time in this activity and one-third of their time dedicated to paid work, while in men, the trend is reversed with one-third of their time dedicated to unpaid work and two-thirds to paid work.⁸

On the other hand, **discriminatory cultural patterns and the predominance of the culture of privilege** continue in Latin America and the Caribbean and are also manifested in environmental problems. While women have been the guardians of biodiversity and possess specific and valuable knowledge that can provide sustainable solutions, patriarchal cultural patterns tend to exclude and ignore women's knowledge, especially rural, indigenous, and Afro-descendant women.⁹

⁶ ECLAC. 2021. COVID-19 Special Report No 9: Women's Economic Autonomy in Sustainable and Equal Recovery. February 2021. Santiago. Available in: <https://repositorio.cepal.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/61479b27-0784-4fa1-ba56-e8887c5651cd/content>

⁷ ECLAC. 2017. Montevideo Strategy for the Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda in the Framework of Sustainable Development towards 2030 (LC/CRM.13/5), Santiago.

⁸ Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, disaggregated by sex (SDG indicator 5.4.1). Available online: <https://oig.cepal.org/es/indicadores/proporcion-tiempo-dedicado-al-trabajo-domestico-cuidado-no-remunerado-desglosado-sexo>.

⁹ ECLAC. 2017. Montevideo Strategy for the Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda in the Framework of Sustainable Development towards 2030 (LC/CRM.13/5), Santiago.

Similarly, and reflecting **the concentration of power and hierarchical relations in the public sphere**, institutional decision-making structures in the environmental sphere demonstrate women's limited access to the exercise of power and decision-making processes.

Faced with these structural knots of inequality and in the face of a scenario that threatens the sustainability of life, a key challenge is to ensure that the actions under the Escazú Agreement generate the necessary conditions for equality and that women, in particular, can exercise their rights access in environmental matters.

The following sections correlate the challenges resulting from structural knots with difficulties in accessing environmental information, public participation in environmental decision-making processes, access to justice in environmental matters, and human rights defenders in environmental matters recognized and safeguarded by the provisions of the Escazú Agreement.

a. Access to Environmental Information

Due to **socioeconomic inequality and poverty** rural populations face significant barriers to accessing information, including environmental information. Women encounter additional challenges, such as limited financial resources to purchase cell phones, computers, or afford mobile and internet services. Furthermore, educational gaps hinder their ability to develop essential literacy skills, further restricting their access to information.

Similarly, **access to environmental information** can be difficult due to the lack of knowledge on the part of communities or populations, especially in the case of women. For example, their ability to understand, access or complete the forms necessary to request information, as well as to challenge the non-delivery of what is required by the competent authorities, is usually more complex and less likely as a result of the inequality indicated. Likewise, the environmental information produced by both State entities at the national, regional and local levels and private companies is usually in a highly specialized language and the preparation of summary reports or reports aimed at communities in general are not usual practices, nor are there sufficient scenarios for socialization of this, circumstances that again make it even more complex for women to obtain them.

Women, especially those in marginalized communities, are often unaware of the availability of or how to access environmental systems and records. They mention that in rural areas it is difficult to access environmental information on the pages of the institutions because there are long chains to find it, in addition to the fact that they do not have the ability to navigate in the places where it is found, and their connections are unstable.

b. Public participation in environmental decision-making processes.

Among the most important challenges associated with **the concentration of power and hierarchical relations in the public sphere**, it is worth noting that:

- Women have difficulty accessing spaces where relevant environmental information for communities is socialized or shared, such as hearings, prior consultations, workshops, meetings, and negotiation tables, among others. Very often, women are not invited to

participate in consultation spaces for decision-making on environmental matters, nor is the particular way in which such information affects or interests them (e.g., information that is relevant to their development) recognized, and the design of the consultations often makes it difficult for them to attend (e.g., the times and duration of the meetings discourage the participation of women). These limitations hinder their direct access to information, often leaving them dependent on intermediaries or emissaries, or even causing the information never to reach them.

- Due to masculinized social structures in rural communities, women are often excluded from community meetings, where important decisions related to the territory, including environmental issues, are made. The spaces or mechanisms do not provide them with confidence and security because sometimes when they are consulted or invited to the space where the activities are carried out, they are spaces that are forbidden to them. One of them can be the assembly or council of elders, even though it is said that more and more women are part of these, there are still unwritten moral norms that continue to consider that the place of women is the private space and not the public one. In addition, the dialogues that take place with traditional and municipal authorities do not guarantee that women will attend or participate because there are limitations on transportation and information. On the other hand, the means of disseminating the consultations to participate in decision-making spaces are not always adequate, as is the case when the information is exhibited in public venues, where women rarely attend, or they are published in national newspapers that are available mainly in urban areas.
- Instances of participation do not always have a gender focus, which makes it difficult for women to find support or safe spaces to express their opinions. This means that participation mechanisms do not always ensure the equal participation of men and women in decision-making processes. Due to uses and customs, participation could meet gender quotas, however, especially in the rural context, real access for women in community decisions is not guaranteed.
- The quality of the participation and opinions of women who attend meetings is affected if they are unaware of the information previously circulated or available or if it was presented at a technical level that is difficult to understand.
- Mobility is an important point when the spaces or mechanisms for participation are face-to-face, since women do not have the means of transportation, both in terms of transportation, and economic means to travel to the places where consultations or public information meetings are held. For example, many of the instances of environmental participation are carried out in capitals or municipal capitals that make it difficult, in turn,

for women who live in rural, indigenous or dispersed communities to attend. Added to this is the cost of transportation and travel time.

In addition, **the sexual division of labor and the unfair social organization of care**, which disproportionately affect women, limit their time and energy to engage in complex and lengthy processes. Women often take on most domestic and care tasks, reducing their availability to actively participate in environmental decision-making processes. The schedules of the consultations do not take into account the schedules and availability of the women because they have among their responsibility's activities of the house and care of minors and older adults that usually involve them having time to take their daughters and sons to school and to prepare food for the whole family. In addition, the environmental information available in government offices must be consulted at times that do not allow women to access it because they coincide with the schedules derived from their gender roles.

Patriarchal, **discriminatory, and violent cultural norms, along with the dominance of a culture of privilege**, continue to limit the participation of women and other age groups. In many countries across the region, traditional practices and customs—particularly within Indigenous and rural communities—pose significant barriers to the full and effective participation of women. Similarly, young women, and even young men, often face constraints imposed by deeply rooted expectations of deference to elders and adherence to traditional moral hierarchies that demand their obedience.

Under this same structural knot, women face sexist and **discriminatory attitudes** on the part of public officials or family members that discourage their participation in public affairs. As a result, they may feel intimidated or discouraged when interacting with authorities because of previous experiences of discrimination.

Similarly, women face a difficulty associated with gender where women leaders are not always recognized as legitimate representatives in environmental decision-making processes.

c. Access to justice in environmental matters

Socioeconomic inequality and the persistence of poverty (access to goods and services) means that women in vulnerable economic situations allocate fewer economic resources to access justice. For example, the costs associated with accessing legal counsel or the time needed to pursue a challenge can be prohibitive, especially for women with no income of their own. Although administrative procedures may be officially free, there are indirect costs such as transportation, food, lodging and copying of documents, which may be inaccessible to women due to their limited access to financial resources. On the other hand, there are certain judicial procedures usually linked to the reparation of damages that are associated with economic charges and usually women in conditions of poverty do not have the resources to pay them and therefore are unable to initiate the trial.

Access to other goods and services that affect women is related to the lack of knowledge of the means of challenge to access justice. For example, it is common that there are no protocols that allow them to give them adequate attention and guidance. In addition, the challenge mechanisms

often use technical legal language that makes it difficult for women without access to adequate training to understand and participate. The same is true of limited access to evidentiary remedies, which, in environmental proceedings, may be essential for the success of the action filed. In particular, women often have greater difficulties in gathering evidence of environmental damage due to technical, logistical and economic constraints.

On the other hand, judicial and administrative processes are often long and complex, which delays the implementation of decisions and affects women who do not have the resources or time to follow them effectively. Many women, especially in rural and indigenous communities, have difficulty accessing information about their rights and the status of judicial or administrative proceedings that affect them. This limits their ability to enforce the decisions taken.

On the same line, women, especially those from vulnerable sectors, may lack the resources to hire lawyers or access adequate legal assistance, which makes it difficult for them to ensure the execution of judicial or administrative decisions in their favor. Thus, even if there are judicial rulings or administrative decisions in favor of women, they are often not implemented in a timely or effective manner, either due to a lack of political will or structural problems in the institutions in charge of enforcing the decisions. In addition, enforcement mechanisms in many cases are not effective or well-designed enough to ensure that decisions are carried out in a timely manner, which can lead to impunity or lack of justice for women fighting for the protection of their environment.

Additionally, in conflicts related to natural resources or environmental rights, women often face additional barriers from actors with more economic, political, or social power, which makes it difficult to execute decisions favorable to them. Women often have fewer financial and social resources to deal with environmental protection-related litigation with large companies or the state.

d. Human rights defenders in environmental matters

The most important gender-related challenges for women human rights defenders in environmental matters are mainly linked to **patriarchal, discriminatory and violent cultural patterns and the prevalence of the culture of privilege**. Among the most important challenges are:

- The safety of women defenders who repeatedly request environmental information is stigmatized by private companies, the community, armed actors and even by public officials, as people who oppose the progress of the region and therefore begin to experience conflicts with their neighbors, threats and even if they are women in public office they can lose their jobs due to their role as defenders. To this must be added gender-based violence, both indirect violence, slander, threats against the children of defenders and direct violence (rape, domestic violence). This causes environmental defenders to suffer economic problems, mental health problems, risks to their personal safety and even forced displacement to safeguard their lives and that of their families.
- Women's dialogue with state entities, private companies and/or environmental authorities is permeated by historically patriarchal contexts where the demands of women defenders are not seen as demands of a political nature, but as "domestic community" issues that are not important to be addressed or answered.

- Corruption and opacity in environmental issues discourage women's participation, as they fear reprisals or believe that they will not get clear answers. This, coupled with the lack of effective protection mechanisms, makes many desist from seeking technical or legal assistance.
- In countries of the region, there are platforms for access to information that require the disclosure of the identity of the applicant, an issue that can mean an increase in the risk or vulnerability of the defender.

Many women, especially in marginalized areas, do not have access to support networks that can facilitate connection with lawyers or experts on environmental issues, further hindering their ability to receive adequate technical or legal assistance. In rural areas, where women are more involved in environmentally dependent activities, the availability of specialized legal and technical professionals is even lower. This leaves them at a disadvantage in situations that require technical or legal knowledge in environmental issues.

V. CONSIDERATIONS AND POSSIBLE MEASURES TO INTEGRATE THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN THE ESCAZÚ AGREEMENT.

Below is a set of possible measures to address and reduce the barriers previously raised in this document.

Cross-cutting aspects

As an introduction to these possible measures, it is necessary to consider cross-cutting aspects of them.

A first cross-cutting aspect is the human right, recognized in the Agreement, to live in a healthy environment. This right reinforces the virtuous circle between the environment and human rights, a circle in which access rights contribute to a healthy environment, and in which the right to access is a right in itself and allows other human rights to be realized.

In addition, the Escazú Agreement recognizes the diversity and different capacities, vulnerabilities, and conditions of individuals and groups in the countries of the region.

The principles of equality and non-discrimination, progressivity and non-regression as well as pro persona, set out in Article 3 of the Escazú Agreement, are of particular relevance to integrate the gender perspective in the implementation of its provisions.

It is also important to consider the general provisions of Article 4 of the Escazú Agreement.

Pillar 1: Access to environmental information

The first of the rights enshrined in the Escazú Agreement is access to environmental information and identifies commitments with specific standards for States Parties, for which it has two articles related to the right of access to environmental information.

Article 5 "Access to environmental information" sets out the provisions concerning the aspect of access to information referred to as "passive transparency", whereby information is provided at the request of a member of the public.

For its part, Article 6 on "Generation and Disclosure of Environmental Information" which sets out the provisions concerning the aspect of access to information referred to as "active transparency", where information is proactively published by the State.

The enjoyment of this right is a real challenge for both men and women, and in general, the most vulnerable individuals and groups. The challenge lies in accessing on equal terms, respecting cultural and social diversity, generating information also in local languages, and establishing equity mechanisms considering the economic, geographical and technological barriers that these groups face.¹⁰ Therefore, the measures adopted should seek to strengthen or establish mechanisms and procedures for the dissemination of valid, current, truthful and adequate information on the state of the environment, as well as for the delivery of public environmental information for women and/or groups in vulnerable situations, with the aim of reducing or mitigating the gaps and challenges faced by women in the full exercise of the right of access to environmental information.

Possible measures:

Passive transparency:

- Allow requests for information to be made verbally and in indigenous or local languages, assessing the need for interpreters when necessary.
- Incorporate intersectional approaches to ensure a respectful and non-discrimination behavior from public official, with an emphasis on the reality of indigenous, afro-descendant, and rural community women.
- Raise awareness among authorities about the importance of access to information as a key tool for environmental justice and gender equity.

Active Transparency:

- Evaluate the enabling of multiple channels of access to information, including digital platforms, face-to-face counters and toll-free telephone lines.
- Promote the incorporation of accessible options for communities and women without an internet connection or with low levels of digital literacy, such as community radios, physical mailboxes, and personalized assistance.

- Establish alliances between national, provincial, and local public entities, including those usually frequented by women, to ensure the dissemination of information in communities far from urban centers.
- Translate and adapt technical content into clear and understandable language for different groups, with special emphasis on those issues that could be of special interest to different sectors of the population, including women.
- Disseminate information through community media, local radio, social networks, and other effective channels to reach various sectors of the population.
- Promote information campaigns that highlight the importance of access to information for the exercise of other rights, such as public participation and access to justice in environmental matters.
- Implement permanent training programs for state personnel on issues of gender equality, cultural diversity, and environmental rights.

Pillar 2: Public participation in decision-making processes in environmental matters

The Agreement distinguishes two different types of environmental decision-making processes for the purposes of public participation.

On the one hand, there are projects and activities and in other processes (Revisions, re-examinations or updates) for granting environmental permits.

On the other hand, there are revisions, re-examinations or updates related to matters of public interest, such as land-use planning, policies, strategies, plans, programmes, rules and regulations, among others.

In the Latin American and Caribbean region, both men and women, and individuals and groups in vulnerable situations, face common barriers to exercising their right to participate in environmental decision making processes that interest or affect them, such as difficulties in accessing the internet when the instances of participation are virtual, or not being aware of the existing instances of participation, among others.

Measures to promote open and inclusive participation in decision-making processes on environmental matters should address women's socio-cultural barriers that prevent or hinder them from accessing participation and decision-making spaces, with the aim of increasing women's participation levels and expanding the scope of calls.

Possible measures:

- Design and implement specific training programs to strengthen the leadership of women of all ages, ensuring their participation in environmental decision-making processes.

- Prioritize the training of women in vulnerable situations, including those from indigenous, Afro-descendant, and rural communities.
- Establish permanent spaces for dialogue with women's organizations to integrate their proposals into environmental policies.
- Implement strategies for the inclusion of women in environmental decision-making spaces within public institutions, as well as review consultation bodies or decision-making processes to promote women's participation.
- Create mechanisms for promotion and support so that women can exercise leadership positions in the formulation and implementation of environmental policies.
- Create and strengthen online platforms for consultations and public participation in environmental matters, ensuring accessibility for women of all ages and groups in vulnerable situations.
- Promote the use of accessible digital tools, such as mobile applications, social networks and videoconferencing with low data consumption.
- Coordinate with educational centers, NGOs, international organizations, and universities to guarantee access to technology and connectivity in online consultation processes.
- Establish public access points to the internet and digital training in communities with technological gaps.
- Develop digital literacy strategies with a gender focus to strengthen women's participation in virtual decision-making spaces.
- Select meeting places and times considering aspects of gender, age, accessibility, work schedules, and care responsibilities.
- Guarantee safe and violence-free spaces for women's participation in environmental decision-making processes.
- Include childcare services and logistical support to facilitate the assistance of women with caregiving duties in their families.

Pillar 3: Access to justice in environmental matters

In Latin America and the Caribbean, both men and women and, in general, individuals and groups in vulnerable situations, face common barriers to access justice in environmental matters, such as the prohibitive costs of procedures or limited access to proof of environmental damage, among others. Based on this right, each Party must ensure accessible procedures, precautionary measures,

evidentiary facilitation, effective enforcement of decisions, and mechanisms for environmental redress. The objective of these measures is to promote environmental justice with a gender perspective that guarantees women access to timely and transparent judicial procedures.

Possible measures:

- Review, update, and harmonize judicial regulations and procedures to ensure that access to justice incorporates a gender approach and complies with the standards of the Escazú Agreement.
- Develop specific protocols for the attention of cases in which women face structural barriers, considering their diversity (indigenous, Afro-descendant, rural, disabled women, among others).
- Establish mechanisms that allow free access to justice in environmental matters for women in vulnerable situations, including those in rural areas or indigenous communities.
- Establish support and economic assistance funds to cover the costs of legal representation, technical expertise, and other expenses related to the defense of environmental rights that women, especially those potentially affected by environmental conflicts or in vulnerable situations, can apply for and access.
- Simplify procedures and eliminate administrative requirements that may hinder women's access to justice.
- Create and strengthen accessible, secure and confidential complaint mechanisms, adapted to different cultural and territorial contexts, ensuring their availability in multiple languages and allowing them to be presented in various offices, including those outside central localities.
- Guarantee effective protection mechanisms for women who face threats or reprisals for exercising their right to justice.
- Promote the training of courts and administrative bodies with environmental competence in gender equity and its link with access rights and environmental protection.
- Publish clear and accessible information on judicial and administrative processes, ensuring that women can follow up on their cases.
- Incorporate continuous training programs for justice operators on women's rights and access to environmental justice.
- Develop free technical and legal assistance programs with a differentiated approach for women in rural, indigenous and Afro-descendant communities, promoting their installation or operation in rural and hard-to-reach communities.

- Implement mobile legal advice units that travel to areas with limited access to justice and with a schedule compatible with the work usually carried out by women.
- Encourage the creation of support networks between women, civil society organizations, and institutions to strengthen their access to justice and guarantee their protection.

Pillar 4: Human rights defenders in environmental matters

Latin America and the Caribbean is today the most dangerous region in the world for human rights defenders in environmental matters. A large percentage of them are indigenous leaders. This places them in a situation of greater risk for the exercise of their rights, because their safety, and that of their families and communities, violated.¹¹ In addition, various studies in the region show the differentiated impact experienced by men and women human rights defenders in environmental matters. Women defenders also face gender-specific violence, including both indirect violence (slander, threats against the children of defenders) and direct violence (rape, physical abuse). Unfortunately, these cases are often underestimated in formal records, especially in remote areas and rural sectors.

Therefore, the objective is to identify actions to guarantee a safe and enabling environment for their work as human rights defenders in environmental matters, and to adopt effective measures to prevent, investigate and punish attacks, threats or intimidation that women human rights defenders in environmental matters may suffer.

Possible measures:

- Collect, document, and disseminate stories of women environmental defenders, highlighting their role in the protection of the land and natural resources.
- Implement public campaigns to raise awareness of their work, promoting their recognition in the political, social, and community spheres.
- Establish support mechanisms for women environmental defenders, ensuring measures adapted to their contexts, including protection of their families or caregivers.
- Include specific measures for the protection of women defenders that consider their particular situation, such as caring for their families and children, gender-based violence, and access to safe shelters.
- Adopt and implement action protocols for public bodies, judicial and security institutions to act diligently in the face of threats, attacks or criminalization of women environmental defenders.

- Provide access to digital tools and secure communication technologies for monitoring and reporting threats.
- Train public officials, justice operators, and security forces in the protection of women human rights defenders in environmental matters with a gender and human rights perspective.
- Encourage, strengthen, and promote the creation of networks of women human rights defenders in environmental matters at the local, national, and regional levels to strengthen their articulation and capacity to respond to threats.
- Establish alliances between governments, international organizations, civil society, and indigenous and rural communities to ensure effective protection and recognition of their work.
- Promote access to financing and resources for initiatives led by women human rights defenders in environmental matters, promoting their empowerment and autonomy.
- Implement effective measures to investigate and punish acts of violence, intimidation, and criminalization against women human rights defenders in environmental matters.
- Create accessible and confidential complaint mechanisms, with units specialized in dealing with cases of violence against women human rights defenders in environmental matters.

Pillar 5: Capacity building and cooperation

This priority area seeks to define actions that strengthen capacities and cooperation among the Parties, as well as with other actors in the region, with the aim of optimizing the systematic integration of the perspective in the design and implementation of actions under the Agreement and facilitating dissemination, knowledge sharing and communication.

Possible measures:

- Design and implement capacity development processes for States Parties to integrate a gender perspective into the implementation of the Agreement in collaboration with relevant organizations.
- Improve the capacity of States Parties and other relevant stakeholders to mainstream the perspective of gender, intersectionality and interculturality in the production and use of statistical information for the formulation of policies, plans, strategies and actions within the framework of the actions of the Agreement.
- Promote the mainstreaming of the gender approach in national statistical systems on environmental issues through coordinated work between the organizations that produce and use the information, as well as the periodicity of measurements and the dissemination of information.

- Promote national dialogues with other gender focal points at the Rio Conventions to identify possible synergies and areas of collaboration on gender issues.

Institutional aspects of the Escazú Agreement

In order to advance in the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the implementation of the Escazú Agreement at the regional level, it is desirable to establish possible approaches and measures in its bodies, such as the Conference of the Parties and the Committee to Support Implementation and Compliance.

The measures to be highlighted include the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the Parties to the Escazú Agreement, which in paragraph VII establish that the election of Presiding Officers shall be held preferably by acclamation, giving special consideration to the need to ensure adequate geographical representation of the Parties and gender balance among representatives, as well as the provisions of numeral VIII on the creation of subsidiary bodies, the Parties shall give special consideration to the need to ensure adequate geographical representation and gender balance in participation. The composition of the Implementation and Compliance Support Committee, which has a majority of women, is noteworthy (four women and three men).

Another component of the Escazú Agreement is the Principle 10 Observatory, which serves as a clearing-house for Article 12. Although it contains a gender theme, it is necessary to deepen it and reflect in a more comprehensive way the advances on norms, regulations and public policies that seek the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the exercise of access rights and in the work of environmental protection.

The Regional Public Mechanism (MPR), in turn, could coordinate with other entities to expand and diversify the range of actors registered in the MPR, thereby reaching a broader audience. Notably, the second election of public representatives incorporated a formula to ensure equal representation.

Similarly, in the national implementation process of the Escazú Agreement, efforts can be made to actively involve women in the development of roadmaps and national implementation plans, as well as in their subsequent execution. In general, governance systems established for the Agreement's implementation involve the creation of committees or commissions composed of public entities alongside representatives from civil society, academia, and the private sector. These spaces provide an opportunity to promote gender-balanced participation.

Additionally, delegations of States Parties attending meetings of the Escazú Agreement could be encouraged to ensure equitable gender representation, following the example of other Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

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