

Draft guide on mainstreaming the gender perspective in the implementation of the Escazú Agreement¹

Version for public consultation: 25 November 2025

This document has not been edited. Translation for information purposes only.

¹ This draft guide on mainstreaming the gender perspective in the implementation of the Escazú Agreement has been prepared by the Sustainable Development and Human Settlements Division of ECLAC with the support of Lorena Aguilar and M. Victoria Galleguillos, experts in gender issues and consultants of ECLAC, taking into account the results obtained in stages 1 and 2 of the public consultation process carried out during 2024 and 2025 with the participation of States Parties, United Nations agencies, women academics, women's organizations, and the public. The authors wish to thank the Gender Affairs Division of ECLAC for its review and comments.

BACKGROUND

The Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean ("Escazú Agreement") is the first environmental treaty in the region to expand on the three access rights or procedural rights—information, participation, and justice recognized in Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.

The objective of the Agreement, as set forth in Article 1, is to *"guarantee the full and effective implementation in Latin America and the Caribbean of the rights of access to environmental information, public participation in environmental decision-making processes, and access to justice in environmental matters, as well as the creation and strengthening of capacities and cooperation, contributing to the protection of the right of every person, of present and future generations, to live in a healthy environment and to sustainable development."*

The Escazú Agreement rests on a fundamental premise: the protection of the environment, respect for and guarantee of human rights, the strengthening of democracy, and the consolidation of a sustainable development model are only possible if States effectively ensure access to information, public participation, and access to justice in environmental matters. As United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has pointed out², this treaty seeks to *"combat inequality and discrimination and to guarantee the rights of every person to a healthy environment and sustainable development. In so doing, it devotes particular attention to persons and groups in vulnerable situations, and places equality at the core of sustainable development."*

A distinctive feature of the Escazú Agreement is that it is the first treaty in the world that seeks to guarantee a safe and enabling environment for individuals, groups, and organizations that promote and defend human rights in environmental matters. This dimension is particularly relevant in Latin America and the Caribbean, recognized as one of the regions where people who defend the environment and human rights face the greatest danger in the world, according to various reports by the United Nations System and international organizations.³ Furthermore, women, due to their ethnicity, age, and sexual orientation, among other factors, are among the most vulnerable populations in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially those who defend the environment and human rights⁴.

The Escazú Agreement establishes a regulatory framework that promotes equality and non-discrimination, broadly and inclusively recognizing the public and individuals or groups in vulnerable situations, understood as those individuals or groups that encounter particular difficulties in fully exercising the access rights recognized in this Agreement, due to the circumstances or conditions present in the national context of each Party and in accordance with their international obligations⁵. Although this provision does not specifically mention women as part of this group, its inclusion allows for the effective addressing of inequalities that may exist in

² Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), 2022. Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (LC/PUB.2018/8/Rev.1), Santiago.

³ See, for example, reports from the United Nations and Inter-American systems on the situation of human rights defenders in environmental matters, including A/71/281 (2016), A/HRC/39/17 (2018), A/HRC/40/60 (2019), A/HRC/52/33 (2023), and IACHR, *Criminalization of the Work of Human Rights Defenders* (2015).

⁴ ECLAC (2022b), Women's autonomy and gender equality at the heart of climate action in Latin America and the Caribbean. Regional Consultation prior to the Sixty-Sixth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women within the framework of the 62nd Meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. Reference document LC/MDM.62/DDR/1

⁵ Article 2(e) of the Escazú Agreement.

the exercise of access rights, including gender inequalities and challenges to the empowerment and autonomy of women and girls.

In this way, the Escazú Agreement includes a set of provisions that seek to reduce the barriers faced by individuals and groups in vulnerable situations in exercising their rights. An example of these provisions is that State has to, within the framework of a participatory process, actively identify and contact these individuals and groups in order to provide them with the necessary support and ensure their involvement in the participatory process.

In this vein, the Third Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Escazú Agreement⁶ (COP3) recognized the importance of continuing to advance gender equality to achieve the full and effective implementation of the Escazú Agreement. In its Decision III/4 on Mainstreaming the Gender Perspective, the Conference of the Parties to the Agreement, among other things, requested ECLAC, in its capacity as Secretariat of the Agreement, to prepare, with the support of UN Women, as well as other agencies, funds, and programs of the United Nations system, a guide on mainstreaming the gender perspective in the implementation of the Escazú Agreement, and present it at the next ordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties” (or COP4) in 2026.

ABOUT THE GUIDE

A. Objective and target audience

The objective of the Guide on Mainstreaming the Gender Perspective (or Guide) is to provide information, guidance, and possible measures to integrate and strengthen the gender perspective in the implementation of the Escazú Agreement at the local, national, and regional levels. This integration seeks to promote the full exercise by women in all their diversity, of their rights of access to information, public participation, and justice in environmental matters, as well as their work in protecting the environment in Latin America and the Caribbean. It thus recognizes that women play a fundamental role in environmental management and development.⁷

Although the content of this Guide is not authoritative and does not establish a definitive legal interpretation of the provisions of the Agreement, the idea is that it will serve as an easy-to-use reference that will enable government representatives, legislators, policymakers, public officials, academics, lawyers, and professionals to study, apply, and implement the Agreement from a gender perspective.

In offering this guidance, the Guide does not prejudge the will or intention of States or the bodies established under the Agreement, nor does it substitute or replace the text of the Agreement. Therefore, when assessing the scope and implications of each provision, it is always important to refer to the actual text of the Agreement.

This guide also contributes to the United Nations Secretary-General's Plan for Accelerating Gender Equality (2024), which seeks to advance progress on gender equality across the United Nations system⁸.

⁶ Third Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation, and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean, Santiago, April 22-24, 2024, Decision III/4.

⁷ Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992).

⁸ Plan for Accelerating Gender Equality, UN (2024).

B. Methodology

The Guide was drafted by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) in its capacity as Secretariat of the Escazú Agreement, with the support of experts in international law, environmental law, and gender perspective. In addition, the UN system was invited to contribute and, in particular, UN Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights made valuable comments.

Using a participatory methodology, the guide also drew on proposals from the public received during a three-stage consultation process. In the first stage, an online consultation was held on the gaps, challenges, and possible measures for mainstreaming a gender perspective in the implementation of the Agreement. The consultation was aimed at the public, States Parties, and United Nations agencies⁹. With these inputs, plus a literature review on best practices in mainstreaming a gender perspective in the environmental sector, a proposed annotated index for the Guide was drafted, suggesting its structure and preliminary content. Subsequently, a second stage of virtual and face-to-face consultation on the proposed annotated index of the Guide was carried out within the framework of the Third Forum on Human Rights Defenders in Environmental Matters. Likewise, within the framework of the Ninth Forum on Business and Human Rights, held in April 2025 in São Paulo, a participatory dialogue was held on "Towards gender mainstreaming in the Escazú Agreement: the role of companies," organized by ECLAC and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, where gaps, good practices, and recommendations for strengthening the integration of a gender perspective in the implementation of the Agreement were discussed. With all the contributions received at this stage, the draft of the Guide was prepared. The third and final stage of the consultation was carried out with the aim of gathering input on the final draft of the guide.

We are grateful for all the contributions made by the Parties, public institutions, United Nations agencies, various women, including academics and women's organizations, civil society organizations, academia, the private sector, and the public, among other actors, all of whom have enriched the content of this document.

1. Structure

The first chapter of the Guide provides a brief overview of the concept and relevance of gender mainstreaming in environmental issues and addresses the challenges of gender inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as the progress made by the region in this area. The second chapter analyzes the structural obstacles of gender inequality identified in the Montevideo Strategy for the Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda towards 2030¹⁰ and their relationship to the challenges women face in exercising their rights of access recognized in the Escazú Agreement, as well as their contribution to environmental protection, based on consultations with various stakeholders during the preparation of the Guide. The third chapter offers guidance for the implementation of the Escazú Agreement from a gender perspective, providing suggestions and examples of possible measures to promote women's empowerment and autonomy and reduce the barriers they face in exercising their access rights in different areas

⁹ This consultation was available on the participatory platform of the Regional Public Mechanism of the Escazú Agreement from January 3 to February 14, 2025.

¹⁰ Montevideo Strategy for the Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda in the Framework of Sustainable Development towards 2030, 2017, ECLAC. Available at: <https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/41011-estrategia-montevideo-la-implementacion-la-agenda-regional-genero-marco>.

of action. Finally, the fourth chapter addresses the institutional aspects of the Escazú Agreement and analyzes the measures that have been adopted to mainstream the gender perspective in the implementation and operation of its mechanisms and bodies and indicates other guidelines to be considered.

I. GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

A. Background on the gender perspective in environmental matters in international regulatory frameworks

In 1992, following the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Earth Summit, there was explicit recognition that the full and equal participation of women in environmental issues and decisions is a fundamental requirement for achieving sustainable development¹¹⁻¹².

Additionally, Agenda 21¹³—adopted at UNCED—recognizes in Chapter 24 the importance of women in sustainability and their empowerment so that they can lead the transformation toward a more just and equitable future. To this end, it proposes:

- Recognizing that women face discrimination and obstacles in accessing the labor market, land, resources, and decision-making power, which limits their ability to fully contribute to sustainable development.
- Ensure that women have access to economic resources, education, and leadership opportunities so that they can actively participate in decision-making and in building a sustainable future.
- Adopt, strengthen, and enforce laws that prohibit violence against women and take all necessary administrative, social, and educational measures to eliminate it in all its forms, recognizing that it affects their physical autonomy, safety, and ability to participate in public and economic life.

Another important milestone in this area was the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which came out of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. In particular, strategic objective K, referring to "women and the environment," calls on governments to: *"integrate women, including indigenous women, their perspectives and knowledge, on an equal basis with men, into decision-making regarding sustainable resource management and the development of policies and programmes for sustainable development, including in particular those designed to address and prevent environmental degradation of the land; and to develop a strategy for change to eliminate all obstacles to women's full and equal participation in sustainable development and equal access to and control over resources."*

¹¹ Principle 20 of the 1992 Rio Declaration states that "women play a fundamental role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieving sustainable development."

¹² This chapter has been prepared taking into account the Guide for Mainstreaming Gender Perspectives in International Development Cooperation Programs and Projects. November (2023) UNDP.

¹³ United Nations Division for Sustainable Development. 1992. Agenda 21. United Nations Conference on Environment & Development, [online], <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf>

In addition, in 1979, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the first international treaty specifically addressing women's human rights. Although CEDAW does not contain an article specifically dedicated to the environment, its Article 14—referring to the rights of rural women—includes provisions directly related to environmental issues, such as access to drinking water, sanitation, control of natural resources, and adequate housing conditions. The article obliges States Parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas, ensuring their participation in rural development, its benefits, and all levels of development planning.¹⁴

In 2016, the CEDAW Committee adopted General Recommendation No. 34¹⁵ on the rights of rural women, and in October 2018, General Recommendation No. 37 addressing gender dimensions in disaster risk reduction in a changing climate¹⁶. Subsequently, in 2022, it issued General Recommendation No. 39 (2022) on the rights of indigenous women and girls, and in 2024, General Recommendation No. 40 on parity in public decision-making. These recommendations underscore the importance of ensuring the effective participation of women in all their diversity, especially those belonging to historically marginalized groups, in decision-making systems and processes, including environmental issues.

For its part, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in its General Comment No. 27 of 2025 on the environmental dimension of sustainable development, recalled that environmental crises exacerbate gender inequalities and calls on States to integrate a gender perspective into all sustainable development policies, especially those related to disaster risk reduction, climate change, pollution, biodiversity protection, and natural resource management.

In a complementary vein, General Comment No. 26 of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child recognizes that girls are particularly vulnerable to the effects of environmental degradation due to structural gender inequalities. This interpretation broadens the protection framework of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by reaffirming children's right to life, health, and development in safe environments, as well as their right to access information and participate in environmental decisions through inclusive and age-appropriate mechanisms.

In this context, the concept of gender mainstreaming was adopted in 1997 by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as a strategy for the systematic incorporation of the gender perspective into all policies and programs of the United Nations system, as indicated in its formulation, without necessarily linking it to a specific treaty or instrument. This is a tool for making the interests and needs of men and women an integrated dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, social, and economic spheres.¹⁷

¹⁴ CEDAW, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women," OHCHR, [online], <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/cedaw.pdf>.

¹⁵ CEDAW, General recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of rural women, [online], <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/835897?v=pdf>

¹⁶ CEDAW, General Recommendation No. 37 (2018) on the gender dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, [CEDAW/C/GC/37](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees/cdaw/cgc/37). Also noteworthy in this regard: CEDAW, General Recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention and in conflict and post-conflict situations.

¹⁷ United Nations (1999), Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programs of the United Nations system. Report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997, Supplement No. 3 (A/52/3/Rev.1), New York. United Nations, Economic and Social Council. *Resolution E/2025/L.14, "Integration of a gender perspective into all policies and programs of the United Nations system."* New York: United Nations, June 4, 2025.

Table 1
UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies and linkages with gender equality

Committee	Link to gender equality
Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)	This is the committee most specialized in gender equality and women's rights. In particular, regarding environmental and gender issues, it has the General Recommendation No. 37 (2018) on the gender dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change.
Human Rights Committee (CCPR)	This committee has addressed non-discrimination and gender equality, notably in General Comment No. 18 (1989) on non-discrimination and General Comment No. 28 (2000) on equal rights between men and women.
Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)	It has addressed gender equality in various observations, notably General Comment No. 16 (2005) on equal rights between men and women. In addition, General Comments 14, 13, 18, and 19 on health, education, labor, and social security make explicit references to gender gaps and equality. In 2025, it issued General Comment 27 on economic, social, and cultural rights and the environmental dimension of sustainable development.
Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	It has addressed gender issues in General Comment No. 26 (2023) on children's rights and the environment, with a special focus on climate change, mentioning the obligation to protect girls from environmental and climate risks, considering gender inequalities.
Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)	It has addressed gender issues in its actions, notably in General Recommendation No. 25 (2000) on gender-related racial discrimination, which recognizes that women and girls often suffer multiple and intersectional discrimination when racism and sexism combine.
Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)	It has addressed gender equality issues, notably in General Recommendation No. 3 (2016) on women and girls with disabilities, which points out that women and girls with disabilities face intersectional discrimination.
Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (CMW)	It has addressed gender issues in various actions, notably General Observation No. 4 (2017) on women migrant workers, which recognizes the multiple discrimination they face based on gender, race, national origin, migration status, and class.

Source: authors.

Thus, through the Gender Perspective, the implications for women and men of any planned action—including legislation, policies, or programs—are assessed in all spheres and levels of government. This approach seeks to ensure that the experiences, needs, and interests of women

and men are integrated into the policy process with the ultimate goal of achieving substantive gender equality.¹⁸

In line with this approach, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes that gender equality is not only a goal in itself (SDG 5), but also a cross-cutting issue and a means to achieve all the Sustainable Development Goals.

However, it is essential to note that women are not a homogeneous group. Women experience the effects of environmental crises differently, depending on a combination of factors and conditions that shape their reality.¹⁹ Women are diverse in terms of age, socioeconomic status, race and ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability status, geographic origin, mobility status, and cultural context, among other factors. This diversity implies different levels of exposure, risk, and vulnerability to climate and environmental impacts, which are exacerbated in situations of natural disasters, conflict, and displacement. Thus, some women—in addition to facing structural inequalities based on gender—may also be simultaneously affected by socioeconomic inequality, racial discrimination, or other forms of exclusion, and therefore require an intersectional perspective to address intersecting forms of discrimination. (see Box 1)

Box 1 **Concept of intersectionality**

The concept of intersectionality adopted in the field of international human rights law, based on debates on multiple discrimination. Its earliest antecedent is found in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, where paragraph 32 recognizes that some women face multiple barriers due to their race, age, language, ethnicity, culture, religion, or disability, among other factors.

This recognizes the need to integrate a gender perspective into policies, strategies, and action programs against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related forms of intolerance *"in order to address multiple forms of discrimination."*

In the same vein, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has specified in its General Recommendation No. 28 that:

"(...) discrimination against women on the basis of sex or gender is inextricably linked with other factors that affect women, such as race, ethnicity, religion or belief, health, status, age, class, caste and sexual orientation and gender identity."

This definition has helped to consolidate the understanding of intersectionality in international human rights law as a central element in the design and implementation of public policies that are sensitive to the multiple forms of discrimination faced by women.

Source: authors.

¹⁸ ECLAC (2022c), Breaking the statistical silence to achieve gender equality by 2030: implementation of the information systems component 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, [online], https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/48371/4/S2200754_es.pdf

Subsequently, explicit recognition of the concept was consolidated at the World Conference against Racism (Durban, 2001), whose preamble recognizes that victims may suffer "multiple or aggravated forms of discrimination" due to the confluence of factors such as race, sex, religion, economic status, or other conditions.

In the environmental sphere, the concept of intersectionality has been progressively incorporated into various analyses to understand how factors such as gender, class, age, ethnicity, disability, or migration status interact with each other and with environmental crises. For example, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has recognized that these social dimensions influence people's exposure, sensitivity, and responsiveness to climate risks, allowing for the identification of differentiated vulnerabilities and the adoption of more appropriate and contextualized measures²⁰.

Gender equality and intersectionality approaches have been progressively integrated into the regulatory frameworks of various legal instruments and multilateral environmental agreements. Notably, the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) have adopted specific provisions to ensure gender equality in the formulation and implementation of environmental policies. In turn, financial mechanisms such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF) have incorporated these approaches into their financing and investment strategies, thereby strengthening the role of women in sustainable natural resource management and environmental governance.

Table 2
Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and linkages to gender

Year	MEA	Documents incorporating a gender perspective
1971	Ramsar Convention on Wetlands	Contemplates Resolution XIII.18 "Gender and Wetlands" (2018), which promotes disaggregated data and women's participation in governance ²¹ .
1989	Basel Convention on Hazardous Wastes	Part of a joint Gender Action Plan with the Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (2013, with various updates) ²² .
1992	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	Includes the Lima Work Programme on Gender and its Gender Action Plan (2019, updated in Glasgow 2021), which promotes full

²⁰ IPCC, 2022: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability*. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [H.-O. Pörtner, D.C. Roberts, M. Tignor, E.S. Poloczanska, K. Mintenbeck, A. Alegria, M. Craig, S. Langsdorf, S. Lössche, V. Möller, A. Okem, B. Rama (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK and New York, NY, USA, 3056 pp., doi:[10.1017/9781009325844](https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009325844).

²¹ Ramsar Convention on Wetlands. (2018, October 21-29). Resolution XIII.18 "Wetlands and Gender" [13th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties, Dubai, United Arab Emirates]. Available online: https://www.ramsar.org/sites/default/files/documents/library/xiii.18_gender_s.pdf

²² Secretariat of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, Rotterdam Convention, and Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (BRS) – Gender Action Plan (BRS-GAP): Framework for integrating gender perspectives into the sound management of chemicals and wastes (2014-2015). Available at: <https://www.brsmeas.org/Gender/BRSGenderActionPlan/Overview/tabid/7998/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>

		participation and gender mainstreaming in climate action ²³ .
1992	Convention on Biological Diversity	Target 23 of the Global Biodiversity Framework (2022) on gender equality and women's leadership ²⁴ .
1994	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification	Includes a Gender Action Plan (2017) to integrate gender into adaptation, land tenure, and resilience ²⁵ .
1998	Rotterdam Convention	It is part of a joint Gender Action Plan with the Basel Convention and the Stockholm Convention (2013, with various updates) ²⁶ .
2001	Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants	It is part of a joint Gender Action Plan with the Basel Convention and the Rotterdam Convention (2013, with various updates) ²⁷ .
2015	Paris Agreement	The Parties to the Paris Agreement, in its preamble, recognize that "climate change is a common concern of humankind: the Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote, and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, the empowerment of women, and intergenerational equity" ²⁸ .

Source: authors.

It is also worth noting the recognition of the human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment through Resolution A/RES/76/300 of the United Nations General Assembly (2022). This resolution not only enshrines this right as universal, but also expressly recognizes the importance of gender equality and the adoption of gender-sensitive measures to address climate change and environmental degradation. It also recognizes the fundamental role that women and girls play as managers, leaders, defenders of natural resources, and agents of change.

²³ Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (25th session, Madrid, December 2-13, 2019), Decision -/CP.25: Enhanced Lima Program of Work on Gender and its Gender Action Plan (FCCC/CP/2019/L.3), available at: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cp2019_L03S.pdf

²⁴ Convention on Biological Diversity, Target 23: Ensure gender equality in biodiversity approaches and actions (by 2030) – Ensure gender equality in the implementation of the Framework through a gender-responsive approach, in which all women and girls have equal opportunities and capacities to contribute to the three objectives of the Convention, including by recognizing their rights and equal access to land and natural resources, as well as their full, equitable, meaningful, and informed participation and leadership at all levels of action, engagement, policy, and decision-making. Available at: <https://www.cbd.int/gbf/targets/23>.

²⁵ Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Gender Action Plan (GAP), in Spanish, Available at: https://catalogue.unccd.int/993_GAP_SPA.pdf

²⁶ Secretariat of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, Rotterdam Convention, and Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (BRS) – Gender Action Plan (BRS-GAP): Framework for integrating a gender perspective into the sound management of chemicals and wastes (2014-2015). Available at: <https://www.brsmeas.org/Gender/BRSGenderActionPlan/Overview/tabid/7998/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ United Nations, *Paris Agreement*, adopted at the 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Paris, 2015). Available at: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/spanish_paris_agreement.pdf.

Along the same lines, the Special Rapporteur on the environment and human rights, in his 2023 report²⁹ on women and girls and the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, emphasized the need to address environmental injustices with a transformative gender approach, recognizing the differentiated and structural impacts faced by women and girls.

It is also important to consider the progressive consolidation of the international legal framework for the protection of human rights defenders, particularly those working on environmental issues. One of the pillars of this framework is the *Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*, adopted by the General Assembly in 1998 (Resolution 53/144). In addition, the United Nations General Assembly also adopted a Declaration on Women Human Rights Defenders, which calls on States to take the necessary measures to ensure the protection of women human rights defenders and defenders of women's rights of all ages and to integrate a gender perspective into their efforts to create a safe and enabling environment for the defense of human rights³⁰.

In addition, in 2000, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders was established³¹, whose role is to monitor, report, and issue recommendations to States to strengthen their protection. This mandate—along with other mechanisms—has documented that women human rights defenders face differentiated and often aggravated risks, such as gender-based violence, harassment, exclusion from property and decision-making, as well as attacks directed against them and their communities, reinforcing the need to integrate a gender and intersectional approach into all protection frameworks and mechanisms³².

B. The development traps and gender inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean

Latin American and Caribbean countries face structural challenges that condition their development and perpetuate inequalities, which has been conceptualized by ECLAC as the three interrelated development traps, as shown in Diagram 1.

The traps refer to a set of structural vicious circles that limit countries' ability to make sustained progress toward higher levels of well-being. They are presented as three dimensions that interact with and reinforce each other, creating obstacles that make it difficult to overcome poverty, expand rights, and strengthen economic and social development. First, there is the trap of high inequality, low mobility, and limited social cohesion, characterized by the persistence of highly stratified social structures that reproduce inequalities in income, access, and opportunities. Second, the trap of low institutional capacity and ineffective governance reflects the weakness of public institutions in designing, implementing, and evaluating policies in a coherent and sustained manner. Finally, the trap of low capacity for growth is linked to undiversified productive structures, low productivity, reduced investment in innovation, and limited technological development.

These traps are exacerbated by increasingly severe environmental crises, such as climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and ecosystem degradation, which deepen existing inequalities and compromise the sustainability of the region's development models.

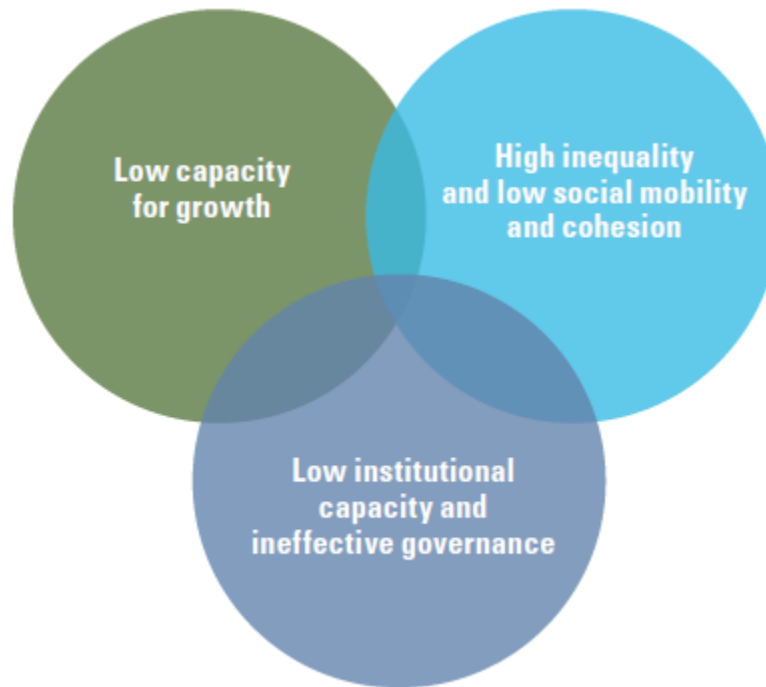
²⁹ Report of the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations related to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, A/HRC/52/33: Women and girls and the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, 2023.

³⁰ UNGA Resolution 68/181 of 2013.

³¹ Commission on Human Rights Resolution 2000/61.

³² Resolutions A/HRC/49/50 and A/HRC/40/60.

Diagram 1
Development traps



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Latin America and the Caribbean facing development traps: indispensable transformations and how to manage them (LC/SES.40/3-P/-*), Santiago, 2024.

Gender inequality is interrelated with each of these traps in the following way³³ :

- Low growth capacity and high labor informality limit women's economic autonomy.
- Low social mobility and weak cohesion reproduce the exclusion of women from positions of power and decision-making.
- Weak institutions translate into regulatory frameworks and policies that are insufficient to guarantee women's rights.

As stated in the Position Paper of the XVI Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, these dynamics deepen the structural inequalities that affect women in all their

³³ Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Latin America and the Caribbean facing development traps: indispensable transformations and how to manage them (LC/SES.40/3-P/-*), Santiago, 2024.

diversity, restricting their opportunities and limiting the effective enjoyment of their human rights³⁴. Against this backdrop, the major transformations that the region needs—productive transitions to grow, reduce inequalities, and address environmental crises—require decisive progress on gender equality as a condition for sustainability and social justice.

In response to these challenges, Latin America and the Caribbean have been pioneer in building institutional and regulatory frameworks to promote gender equality and women's autonomy. For more than four decades, the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean³⁵ —a subsidiary body of ECLAC—has provided an intergovernmental forum for monitoring, evaluating, and generating commitments in this area. At the Conference meetings, ECLAC member States approve agreements that make up the Regional Gender Agenda, a comprehensive roadmap that seeks to guarantee all women's rights, including their collective and environmental rights.

One of its key instruments is the Montevideo Strategy for the Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda towards 2030 (XIII Regional Conference, 2016), which proposes measures in 10 areas of implementation to overcome the structural barriers to equality and guarantee women's rights, including equal access to justice, and to create safe environments that promote access to information, participation, and the protection of human rights. The Santiago Commitment (2020), approved at the XIV Regional Conference, promotes the incorporation of gender perspective, intersectionality, and human rights into policies on sustainable development, climate action, risk management, and reconstruction. It also promotes the active participation of women and girls—especially those from indigenous peoples, Afro-descendant communities, and rural communities—in the design and implementation of environmental policies.

At the Sixteenth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, held from August 12 to 15, 2025, in Mexico City, ECLAC member states approved the "Tlatelolco Commitment: A Decade of Action to achieve Substantive Gender Equality and the Care Society." This intergovernmental agreement recognizes that the current social organization of care in Latin America and the Caribbean "is unjust and unequal, and historically, has affected women, adolescents, and girls, particularly those of indigenous and afrodescendent, and their considerable contribution to the development of societies and the importance of ensuring their full, equal, and meaningful participation in all aspects of society." To address these challenges, it indicates, among other things, that "measures must be promoted to overcome the sexual division of labour and move towards a fair social organization of care, in the framework of a new development model that fosters gender equality in the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainable development."³⁶

In environmental matters, the Tlatelolco Commitment urges States to integrate a gender perspective into environmental policies and climate change adaptation and mitigation policies, recognizing the fundamental role of women, especially environmental defenders, and to strengthen their resilience and adaptation capacity to respond to the adverse effects of climate change. It also calls for the creation of a safe and enabling environment for the promotion and

³⁴ Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) & UN Women. Position paper: The care society—governance, political economy, and social dialogue for a transformation with gender equality. Mexico City: ECLAC/UN Women, 2025.

³⁵ <https://www.cepal.org/es/organos-subsidiarios/conferencia-regional-la-mujer-america-latina-caribe>

³⁶ Tlatelolco Commitment: A decade of action for the achievement of substantive gender equality and the care society. Sixteenth Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean Mexico City, August 12-15, 2025.

effective protection of the rights of all women human rights defenders in environmental matters, as well as the promotion, strengthening, and consolidation of gender mainstreaming in national statistical systems on climate and environmental issues.

In line with regional efforts to promote equality and participation in environmental governance, as already stated, the Escazú Agreement incorporates equality and non-discrimination as one of its guiding principles (Article 3, paragraph a), recognizing that the enjoyment and exercise of access rights must be guaranteed without discrimination. Furthermore, it defines persons and groups in vulnerable situations as those who face particular difficulties in fully exercising their access rights (Article 2, paragraph e), which may include women in all their diversity due to circumstances or conditions understood in the national context of each Party, establishing specific cross-cutting measures for these persons and groups in all its pillars. It also establishes that public participation processes must be adapted to the social, economic, cultural, geographical, and gender characteristics of the public (Article 7, paragraph 10).

These agreements, together with the international commitments made by the countries of the region in the area of human rights, provide a legal framework for the gender perspective—with an intersectional approach—to be a central guiding principle for the application of the obligations of the Escazú Agreement and for the implementation of mechanisms that effectively realize women's access rights and remove the barriers that hinder their full exercise.

In this context, Decision III/4 of the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Escazú Agreement on mainstreaming the gender perspective in the implementation of the Escazú Agreement adds to the initiatives mentioned above and advances the application of this guiding principle. In particular, this decision encourages the Parties to continue promoting the full and effective participation of women in all their diversity, including indigenous women, and the incorporation of a gender-equality perspective into the implementation of the Agreement.

The decision also recommends that Parties integrate a gender perspective into the creation of a safe and enabling environment for the defense of human rights in environmental matters and to prevent discrimination and gender-based violence against women defenders, understanding that ensuring their safety and promoting their participation in decision-making is fundamental to environmental sustainability and justice.

II. STRUCTURAL OBSTACLES FACED BY WOMEN IN EXERCISING THEIR RIGHTS OF ACCESS AND PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Gender inequality is one of the factors that explain the trap of high inequality, low social mobility, and weak social cohesion, and inequality, discrimination, and human rights violations are a cross-cutting factor that affects certain population groups.

Addressing gender inequality is both a commitment to human rights and an essential condition for advancing toward inclusive and sustainable social development, as reaffirmed in the recently adopted Tlatelolco Commitment (ECLAC/UN Women, 2025). Among other factors, it is necessary to address four structural challenges that perpetuate gender inequality in Latin America and the Caribbean, identified in the Regional Gender Agenda, which have a direct impact on women's autonomy. These issues interact systemically and reinforce each other, forming a persistent

network that prevents women from fully exercising their human rights and hinders gender equality and women's autonomy. This raises the need to move toward a caring society through transformations that are essential for advancing toward more productive, inclusive, and sustainable development.

The first of these obstacles is the socioeconomic inequality and the persistent of poverty within the framework of exclusionary growth. Although poverty has declined in aggregate terms in the region, women continue to be overrepresented in low-income households, facing greater difficulties in entering the labor market. The second obstacle refers to the persistent sexual division of labor and the unfair social organization of care, which place women as the main providers of care work, which is central to sustaining life. This occurs in a context of growing demand for care, driven by demographic, epidemiological, and climate changes, which, together with less time available for caregiving and fewer caregivers available, constitute a care crisis that is at risk of deepening. The third obstacle is linked to discriminatory, violent and patriarchal cultural patterns and the predominance of a culture of privilege, reproduce the subordination of women and are expressed, for example, in the high prevalence of gender-based violence and persistent rates of femicide. Inequalities are further exacerbated in the case of women who face multiple forms of exclusion and discrimination, such as indigenous and afrodescendent women, women with disabilities, girls and young women, in migratory and rural contexts, highlighting how the structural axes of inequality interrelate and reinforce each other. The fourth obstacle corresponds to the concentration of power and hierarchical relations in the public sphere. Despite regulatory advances to increase political participation and the implementation of mechanisms such as gender quotas, gender parity remains an unmet goal in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches and in local governments.

These obstacles exacerbate existing vulnerabilities or create new challenges in areas such as the exercise of the right to a healthy environment and environmental protection. First, the unequal impacts of the multiple environmental crises, from a gender perspective, are strongly linked to socioeconomic inequality and persistent poverty. In 2025, according to data from the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (OIG), women are overrepresented in poor households by 21.3% compared to men, thus evidencing their lack of economic autonomy.³⁷ 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, which are exacerbated by ethnicity and age, among other factors.³⁸

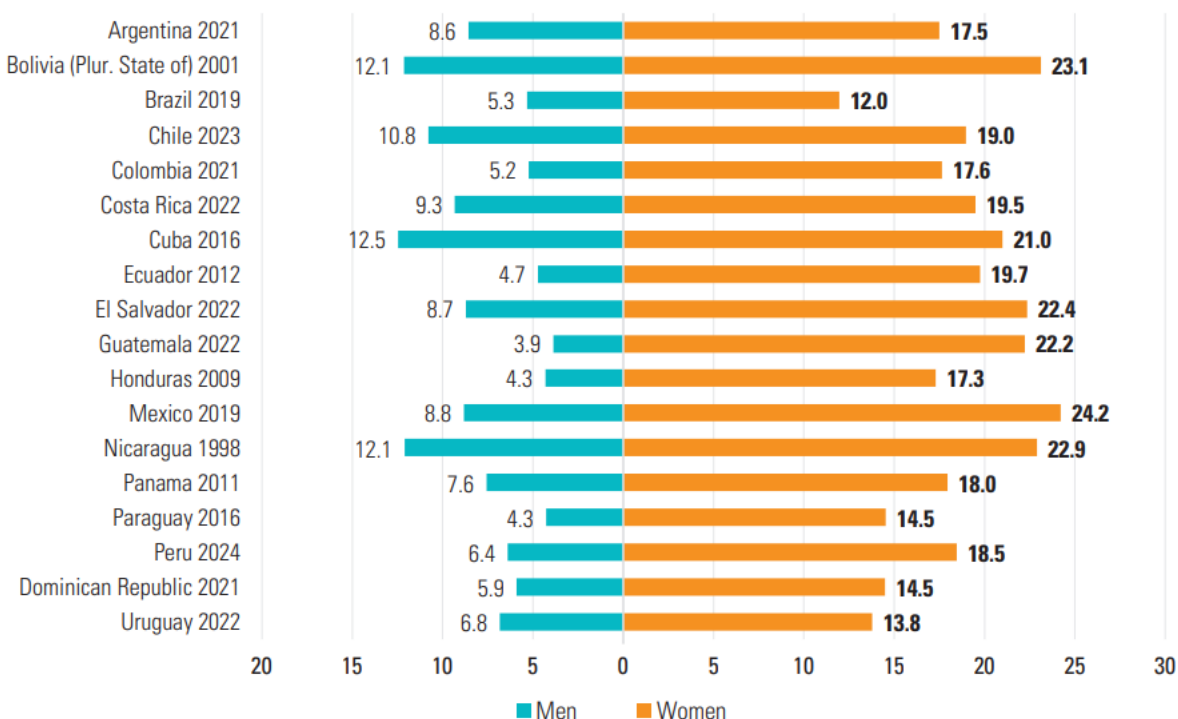
For their part, the sexual division of labor and the unfair social organization of care limit women's participation in environmental decision-making processes. According to data compiled by the Gender Equality Observatory for Latin America and the Caribbean (OIG), women devote more time to unpaid work, with an average of two-thirds of their time spent on this activity and one-third of their time devoted to paid work, while for men, the trend is reversed, with one-third of their time devoted to unpaid work and two-thirds to paid work³⁹, as shown in Figure 1.

³⁷ Gender Equality Observatory (OIG) (2025), [online], <https://oig.cepal.org/es/indicadores/indice-feminidad-hogares-pobres>

³⁸ 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, [online], <https://oig.cepal.org/es/documentos/practicas-promisorias-que-promueven-la-igualdad-genero-la-autonomia-mujeres-la-respuesta>

³⁹ Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, broken down by sex (SDG indicator 5.4.1), [online], <https://oig.cepal.org/es/indicadores/proporcion-tiempo-dedicado-al-trabajo-domestico-cuidado-no-remunerado-desglosado-sexo>

Figure 1
Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work in Latin America and the Caribbean



Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, 2025.

Additionally, it is necessary to delve deeper into the role that women play in caring for others in Latin America and the Caribbean, where they often assume responsibility not only for their families, but also for their extended community. They are responsible for caring for men, children, the elderly, and the land. This caregiving burden is intertwined with other structural factors of inequality, exposing women not only to gender-based violence but also to violence from their community and its members.⁴⁰

On the other hand, discriminatory patterns persist in Latin America and the Caribbean and are also evident in the environmental sphere. This is evidenced by various responses to questionnaires and consultation processes—both in person and online—conducted for the preparation of this guide, which show that many women have played a role as guardians of biodiversity and are bearers of specific and valuable environmental knowledge that could provide sustainable solutions⁴¹. However, discriminatory patterns tend to exclude and ignore this knowledge, especially that of rural, indigenous, Afro-descendant women and other groups in

⁴⁰ Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Gender Affairs Division. (2020, April 3). *The COVID-19 pandemic deepens the care crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean* (COVID-19 Reports).

⁴¹ The survey showed that many women are recognized as bearers of community and environmental knowledge, although these contributions are undervalued. For example, several responses pointed to the need for "specific programs to strengthen the leadership of indigenous, Afro-descendant, and rural women," as well as "government training in gender equality, cultural diversity, and environmental rights" so that their knowledge is visible and respected.

environmental decision-making processes⁴². This exclusion is replicated in other areas, such as academia and technical fields, where practices that delegitimize the knowledge produced by women are observed.

Institutional decision-making structures in the environmental sphere demonstrate women's limited access to power and decision-making processes, which reproduces dynamics of unequal concentration of power and hierarchies present in the public sphere⁴³. Among the main obstacles women face in accessing these spaces in decision-making processes is the social discredit to which many are exposed within their own communities or families, especially when their leadership as human rights defenders in environmental matters challenges traditional gender roles. This delegitimization translates into exclusion from public policy-making processes, forcing them to act in precarious conditions and in highly masculinized environments that reinforce their marginalization.

Likewise, a critical point identified in the consultation processes carried out for the preparation of this guide is the criminalization of female leadership in the defense of human rights in the environmental field⁴⁴. As will be seen, this takes the form of threats, harassment, persecution on social media, physical violence, and intimidation. This situation is exacerbated by the lack of adequate mechanisms for the protection of the human rights of women human rights defenders in environmental matters, including accessible and gender-sensitive reporting channels.

The consultation processes also highlighted that, from an intersectional perspective, the exclusion of women from environmental decision-making processes is even more pronounced in the case of rural, indigenous, Afro-descendant, young, disabled women, or those living in informal settlements. These women face additional obstacles, such as the absence or remoteness of institutional offices, the lack of culturally competent staff, and the absence of participation and accountability mechanisms appropriate to their realities and contexts⁴⁵.

In the face of these structural obstacles and a scenario that threatens the sustainability of life, a key challenge is to ensure that the actions undertaken by States, within the framework of the Escazú Agreement, create the necessary conditions for women, in all their diversity, to fully exercise their rights of access to environmental matters and their work to protect the environment.

The following sections explore this correlation between the challenges arising from structural inequalities and the difficulties women face in fully exercising each of the access rights that they identified during the consultations for the preparation of the Guide.

A. Access to environmental information

As a result of socioeconomic inequality and persistent poverty, especially in rural areas, many people face barriers to accessing public information in general, which also translates into

⁴² ECLAC. (2021), Promising practices that promote gender equality and women's autonomy in the response to climate change in Latin America and the Caribbean (LC/CRM.13/5), Santiago, [online], <https://oig.cepal.org/es/documentos/practicas-promisorias-que-promueven-la-igualdad-genero-la-autonomia-mujeres-la-respuesta>

⁴³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. "Comments from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Consultation - proposed annotated index of the guide for mainstreaming a gender perspective in the implementation of the Escazú Agreement."

⁴⁴ In the virtual consultation, more than 70% of respondents indicated that women who defend environmental human rights face many risks, restrictions, and threats, and 66% indicated that these women face particular difficulties in accessing prevention, investigation, and punishment measures in the face of attacks or intimidation.

⁴⁵ The consultation showed that the exclusion of women from environmental decision-making processes is even worse for indigenous, Afro-descendant, rural, young, and disabled women. About a third of the open responses mentioned these conditions as factors of exclusion, pointing to the need for specific leadership programs, differentiated care protocols, and digital and territorial accessibility measures.

restrictions on access to information related to environmental issues. From a broader perspective on digital access, the concept of "meaningful connectivity" has been incorporated, emphasizing that having an internet connection is not enough to fully benefit from digitization. This approach considers elements such as the quality and stability of the connection, the affordability of the service, the digital skills necessary for effective use, and the security conditions under which access is provided⁴⁶. From this comprehensive perspective, it is clear that many women—especially those in rural areas, with lower incomes, or belonging to indigenous peoples and Afro-descendant communities—face specific obstacles that limit their ability to use technology for their personal, social, and economic development, even when they have basic access to devices or connectivity.

Similarly, access to environmental information can be hampered by the level of technicality with which it is often presented. Furthermore, environmental information generated by public institutions or private companies is transmitted in highly specialized language, and it is not a common practice to produce summaries or reports aimed at communities. Nor is it common to provide spaces for socialization and explanation of the information.

Many women—especially those in marginalized communities—reported being unaware of the availability of environmental systems and records or how to access them. In rural areas, for example, it is difficult to access environmental information on institutional websites, as it requires navigating through many pages and/or links to find it, which is complex when one does not have the necessary digital skills and internet connections are unstable or non-existent. This situation creates a structural disconnect between institutions and communities, especially in rural, indigenous, peri-urban, and migrant contexts, and widens access gaps.

B. Public participation in environmental decision-making processes

Among the most significant challenges associated with the concentration of power and hierarchical relationships in the public sphere and women's participation, the consultation process for the Guide identified that women often reported facing restrictions in accessing spaces where they can socialize or share environmental information relevant to their communities, such as hearings, prior consultation processes, workshops, meetings, and roundtables or negotiation tables. In rural communities, for example, women are often excluded from community meetings where key decisions about the territory—including environmental issues—are made, as well as from traditional and local authority bodies, such as assemblies or councils of elders. The consultation highlighted that these restrictions are in many cases due to unwritten moral norms that continue to assign women a role confined to the domestic sphere, restricting their participation in the public sphere. This same pattern also affects young men and women, who, according to this moral order, owe obedience and subordination to adults.

Women often take on the majority of domestic and care tasks, which reduces their availability to actively participate in complex and lengthy decision-making processes. One identified barrier has to do with consultation schedules that do not consider their responsibilities, such as caring for minors and older adults. These limitations hinder their direct access to the information provided in such participatory forums, often leaving them dependent on intermediaries or emissaries, or

⁴⁶ Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), *Overcoming the development traps of Latin America and the Caribbean in the digital age: the transformative potential of digital technologies and artificial intelligence* (LC/MSI.9/3/Rev.1) (Santiago: United Nations, 2025)

even preventing the information from reaching them and affecting their ability to influence these processes.

Furthermore, the means of disseminating calls for participation may be inadequate. For example, when calls are posted in public places or published in national newspapers that are not widely available in rural areas. In addition, participation opportunities organized by public entities do not always have a gender focus, making it difficult for women to find support or safe spaces to express their opinions. Furthermore, many of the opportunities for participation take place in capitals or municipal capitals, which in turn makes it difficult for women living in rural, indigenous, or dispersed communities to attend and generates excessive travel costs. In these contexts, women highlight that on various occasions they face sexist and discriminatory attitudes from public officials, local authorities, or family members, which discourages their participation in public affairs. As a result, many of them may feel intimidated or discouraged from interacting with authorities due to previous experiences of exclusion or discrimination.

C. Access to justice in environmental matters

Socioeconomic inequality and persistent poverty—manifested, among other things, in limited access to goods and services—mean that women in situations of economic vulnerability have fewer resources to access justice. Judicial and administrative processes are often lengthy and complex, which has a particular impact on those who lack the time and means to follow them up effectively.

Many women, especially in rural communities and indigenous peoples, reported facing obstacles in accessing clear and timely information about their rights and the status of proceedings affecting them. They also indicated that the lack of resources to hire legal representation or access adequate legal assistance limited their ability to ensure the enforcement of favorable judicial or administrative decisions. Thus, the costs associated with legal advice or judicial or administrative proceedings, especially for women without their own income, become a direct barrier to the effective exercise of their rights. Even when proceedings are free of charge, there are indirect costs such as transportation, food, lodging, and copying documents, which may be inaccessible to women living in poverty.

Furthermore, there is often a lack of protocols to provide adequate, gender-sensitive care to women, including, for example, advice on understanding the technical language of appeal mechanisms. The same is true of limited access to evidence, which in environmental proceedings is often essential to the success of the action brought. Thus, women often face greater difficulties in gathering evidence of environmental damage due to technical, logistical, and economic limitations.

Finally, even when there are court rulings or administrative decisions in favor of women, they are not always implemented in a timely or effective manner. In many cases, the lack of enforcement and compliance leads to impunity and discourages women from seeking justice.

D. Human rights defenders in environmental matters

The most significant challenges reported by women human rights defenders in environmental matters during the consultations include the following:

- Social and community discredit for not complying with traditional gender roles: Women human rights defenders in environmental matters face discredit within their own communities or families when, due to their advocacy work, they do not comply with traditional gender roles. This situation means that many of them do not identify themselves as human rights defenders in environmental matters for fear of criticism, which has direct implications for their ability to request state protection measures⁴⁷.
- Lack of institutional recognition: Some defenders mention that their work to protect the environment is not recognized by the public institutions in charge of environmental protection, so their knowledge and perspectives are not valued or recognized as legitimate contributions to the environmental debate.
- Stigmatization and criminalization: Women human rights defenders in environmental matters begin to be stigmatized when they become involved in environmental issues in their community, both by the community itself, their work environment, and even by public officials and authorities, often being labeled as people who oppose progress and economic development. This situation can also result in threats, dismissals, intimidation, attacks, and gender-based violence—including physical, psychological, or sexual assault—against them and their families, which can lead to forced displacement, physical or mental health problems, and the loss of their livelihoods.
- Lack of effective protection mechanisms and limited access to technical and legal assistance to report violations: The lack of effective protection mechanisms discourages women from participating for fear of reprisals. In addition, many of them, especially in marginalized areas, have difficulty accessing these mechanisms and institutions, and do not have support networks that can provide adequate technical or legal assistance to report and follow up on cases.

Box 2

Testimony of a woman human rights defender in environmental matters

“Attacks differ depending on whether the defender is a woman or a man. Men are not sent to do the washing or look after the children; they are not sexually harassed or catcalled. And public institutions do not offer psychosocial support processes for women. We looked for a lawyer who works with this (gender) approach, but there were none. Lawyers need training in this area.”

Source: Third Forum on Human Rights Defenders in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean. April 2025.

Source: authors.

⁴⁷ This point is referred to in the report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders: United Nations. 2019. Situation of women human rights defenders. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders. (A/HRC/40/60). Available at: <https://docs.un.org/es/A/HRC/40/60>

Table 3 below summarizes the links mentioned between the gaps in the exercise of access rights and the structural nodes of gender inequality.

Table 3
Gender inequality structural obstacles and gaps in the exercise of access rights

Inequality structural obstacles	Pillars of the Escazú Agreement			
	Access to environmental information	Public participation	Access to justice	Human rights defenders in environmental matters
Socioeconomic inequality and poverty.	Significant connectivity gap, especially in rural areas	Difficulty covering transportation costs to places where participation activities take place.	Lack of financial resources to access legal advice and knowledge about their rights.	Difficulty in reporting abuse and seeking protection due to lack of resources, support networks, and, in some cases, the remoteness of institutions.
Sexual division of labor and unfair social organization of care	Unequal burden of care prevents them from dedicating time to seeking and requesting information.	Care responsibilities limit the time available to attend participatory forums where decisions on environmental issues are made.	Limited time to engage in long and complex legal processes.	Discredit and criticism from their communities and families for their advocacy work.
	Undervaluing of women's	Exclusion of women from	Discriminatory practices in	Stigmatization and differential

Discriminatory, violent and patriarchal cultural patterns	environmental knowledge.	institutional, technical, and community decision-making spaces.	administrative and judicial institutions.	criminalization of women defenders and their families.
Concentration of power and hierarchical relations in the public sphere	Lack of adequate and accessible channels for women to provide information.	Persistence of male-dominated hierarchical structures in environmental decision-making bodies.	Lack of gender-sensitive care protocols.	Lack of institutional recognition of the work carried out by women defenders.

Source: authors.

III. GUIDELINES FOR MAINSTREAMING THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ESCAZÚ AGREEMENT

Below is a set of possible measures aimed at addressing and reducing the barriers identified earlier in this document and guiding the Parties in the implementation of each of the pillars of the Escazú Agreement with a gender perspective.

These measures have been identified based on information provided by the Parties, United Nations agencies, and the public in the three consultations held. In addition, they have been grouped into five strategic areas of action from the perspective of the State: (i) regulations and procedures, (ii) accessibility and affordability, (iii) language, communication, and recognition, (iv) capacity building, and (v) networks and partnerships.

This classification, presented below in Table 4, allows the measures to be organized according to their operational nature and institutional requirements, thus facilitating their prioritization, coordination, implementation, and progressive evaluation by each State Party.

Table 4
Description of areas of action

AREAS OF ACTION	ASPECTS TO BE CONSIDERED
1. Regulations and procedures	Measures to integrate the gender perspective into regulations, plans, and policies that enable the exercise of access rights.
2. Accessibility and affordability	Measures to address barriers (physical, informational, social, economic, etc.) that disproportionately affect women.
3. Language, communication, and recognition	Measures aimed at ensuring gender-sensitive content and language, disseminating information on the right of access to justice and available procedures, and promoting and recognizing the role of women in environmental protection.
4. Capacity building	Measures that seek to strengthen women's leadership and develop institutional capacities in public entities responsible for implementing information and participation processes, as well as judges and judicial operators and mechanisms for the protection and care of women human rights defenders in environmental matters, with a gender perspective.
5. Networks and alliances	Measures aimed at strengthening networks, alliances, and collaboration between local, regional, and national state entities, and between these entities and other social actors to support the dissemination of environmental information, create adequate conditions for women's participation at different levels, amplify the state's capacity to provide effective legal assistance to women in diverse contexts, and improve protection and response to risks and threats.

Source: authors.

The adoption of a "twin-track approach" is also suggested. This refers to two simultaneous efforts: on the one hand, integrating the gender perspective into all general initiatives and policies and, on the other, implementing specific actions to correct historical discrimination and empower women in particular.

The feasibility and scope of these measures will depend on the possibilities and priorities of each country, as well as the institutional, social, economic, and cultural context. Thus, it is necessary to recognize that the implementation of these actions will necessarily be progressive and that their effectiveness will depend on institutional capacity, intersectoral coordination, the availability of resources, and the sustained commitment of the responsible public entities.

In this context, it is essential to identify and take advantage of the windows of opportunity that arise in each country to include these measures in public policy proposals, programs, initiatives, or projects related to both the implementation of the Escazú Agreement and gender equality. An example of this are the roadmaps or implementation plans that several of the States Parties to the Escazú Agreement have developed or are implementing⁴⁸. Through this instrument, each State Party, with the participation of civil society and other stakeholders, defines the priority actions to advance the implementation of the Agreement and organizes them into progressive stages for implementation. Another example is the Open Government Action Plans, which are developed by the states that belong to the Open Government Partnership (OGP). These plans include biannual commitments in the areas of transparency, access to public information, participation, and accountability⁴⁹.

It is also essential that the implementation of these measures be designed and executed in a coordinated manner at the different political and administrative levels: national, regional, and local. The decentralization and territorialization of policies on access to information, participation, and environmental justice with a gender focus are key to ensuring that state responses are relevant to the specific realities of the territories. This requires not only clear national guidelines, but also the strengthening of local capacities, including subnational governments, territorial-based public institutions, and community actors, to ensure effective, inclusive, and contextualized implementation. Finally, it is important to identify and promote the participation of women and women's organizations and collectives working in the country to defend the environment and women's rights, as their experience and leadership are fundamental to designing and implementing effective and relevant actions.

Additionally, the effective incorporation of the gender perspective requires recognizing the diversity of women present in each country—such as women in rural areas; urban women in vulnerable situations, indigenous women, women of different ethnicities and ages, women with disabilities, migrants or displaced women, and non-binary women—whose realities and institutional, economic, and cultural barriers to exercising their rights vary substantially and whose experiences require differentiated responses appropriate to their contexts. In this regard, national

⁴⁸ At the time of writing, Colombia and Mexico are developing their roadmaps. Belize, Grenada, and Saint Kitts and Nevis are in the final stages, Panama has recently published its roadmap, and finally, Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Saint Lucia, and Uruguay are in the process of implementing their roadmaps and/or implementation plans.

⁴⁹ <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/>

censuses and other official sources of information disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity, and territory are essential tools for characterizing this diversity and guiding public policies with an intersectional approach.

Below, for each of the areas of action already indicated, a set of guidelines and possible measures are presented to guarantee access rights and environmental protection work with a gender perspective, beginning this section with a cross-cutting measure guided by the care society.

A. Care society: a guiding principle

This guiding principle seeks to ensure that all access rights and protection standards for environmental defenders are applied taking into account the structural inequalities faced by women in their diversity and to move towards a new paradigm.

ECLAC has highlighted that, despite significant progress in gender equality, the region faces the aforementioned structural knots of inequality that threaten to deepen in the context of the development crisis. To address this reality, ECLAC and the Regional Gender Agenda propose moving towards a care society, understood as a new paradigm that prioritizes the sustainability of life, care for people and the planet, and constitutes a transformative proposal to modify the structures that reproduce gender inequalities in the region (ECLAC, 2025).

This approach involves:

- Recognizing care as a human right, consisting of the right to care, to be cared for, and to exercise self-care, based on the principles of equality and non-discrimination, solidarity, sustainability, universality, and social and gender co-responsibility.
- Strengthening the institutions responsible for care policies, equipping them with technical, operational, and political capacities to ensure their effective implementation, including territorial management tools and social participation mechanisms.
- Overcoming the sexual division of labor through regulatory frameworks, universal quality services and benefits, and paid and protected parental and care leave that includes the entire working population, in both the formal and informal economies, and families in all their diversity.

Moving towards a care society requires integrating this vision across all policies linked to the Escazú Agreement, so that the actions taken by States create the necessary conditions for women—in all their diversity—to fully exercise their rights of access to information, public participation, and justice in environmental matters, as well as their right to a safe and conducive environment for the defense of the environment.

B. Access to environmental information on equal terms

The Escazú Agreement enshrines access to environmental information and identifies specific commitments for States Parties in two articles. Article 5 on "Access to environmental information" establishes provisions relating to "passive transparency," an aspect of access to information whereby information is provided when requested by a member of the public. Article 6 on "Generation and dissemination of environmental information" establishes provisions relating to "active transparency," an aspect of access to information whereby the State proactively generates and publishes information, in electronic and other media, without waiting for the information to be requested by anyone.

Enjoying this right is a real challenge for both men and women, and in general for individuals and groups in situations of greater vulnerability. The challenge lies in accessing information on equal terms, considering the economic, geographical, technological, and other barriers faced by these groups. Notwithstanding these common challenges for men and women, it is important to remember that, as explained throughout this document, women, in all their diversity, face a particular subset of difficulties that require the adoption of specific measures in this area, such as the possible measures mentioned below. In addition, environmental information itself—regardless of who requests it—should have a gender focus, contain disaggregated data by sex/gender, and highlight applicable gender specificities.

1. Regulations and procedures

- Promote the strengthening of the regulatory framework and procedures related to access to environmental information, incorporating the principles of equality, non-discrimination, and a gender and intersectional approach in a cross-cutting manner.
- Ensure that national regulations include the principle of non-discrimination based on gender equality.
- Include in the annual reports prepared by the competent authorities responsible for implementing the regulation on access to information the affirmative measures implemented to guarantee accessibility conditions so that persons and groups in vulnerable situations, including women in all their diversity, can exercise, on equal terms and without any discrimination, the right of access to public information.

2. Accessibility and affordability

- Facilitate access to environmental information for women in all their diversity by establishing procedures for handling requests for information, which can be made through different means, such as verbally and in indigenous or local languages, incorporating interpreters when necessary, with personalized assistance, and the provision of explanatory materials in a clear language, to the delivery of the information, with the aim of promoting access on equal terms.
- Expand the types of channels for accessing information, such as digital platforms, instant messaging, in-person service windows, fixed or mobile information centers, toll-free telephone lines, and community media such as local radio stations and social networks, ensuring cultural and territorial relevance.

- Translate and adapt technical content into understandable, accessible, and inclusive formats.
- Provide environmental information⁵⁰ free of charge, if it does not require reproduction or shipment. Reproduction and shipping costs will be applied in accordance with the procedures established by the competent authority. These costs must be reasonable and disclosed in advance, and payment may be waived if the applicant is considered to be in a vulnerable situation or in special circumstances that justify such an exemption.

3. Language, communication, and recognition

- Generate environmental information and data disaggregated by sex/gender on differentiated environmental impacts on women, where appropriate. Such disaggregation shall be cross-cutting in all active transparency tools in environmental matters, such as environmental information systems, emissions and pollutant transfer registers, and reports on the state of the environment, among others.
- Generate statistical information on requests for access to environmental information received by public entities, disaggregated by sex/gender, in order to obtain data that allows for an understanding of the different needs of women and men in terms of access to information. To this end, it is suggested that gender identification options be included in request forms and that mechanisms be established to facilitate access to recurring topics.
- Encourage the competent authorities to disseminate environmental information in the various languages used in the country by women in all their diversity, and to develop alternative formats that are understandable to them, through appropriate communication channels, to adapt them to their cultural, linguistic, and territorial characteristics.
- Consider the development of specialized guidelines so that the communication of environmental information has a gender focus.
- Incorporate inclusive language criteria into environmental communication, seeking to make women and men visible when the communicative situation requires it and using gender-neutral alternatives when appropriate. This includes the use of split terms, typographical strategies to avoid bias, collective nouns, and formulations that do not reproduce stereotypes, in order to ensure that environmental information is accessible, clear, and non-discriminatory for all people⁵¹.

4. Capacity building

- Train and raise awareness among authorities and officials about access to information as a key tool for gender equality.
- Implement ongoing training for state personnel and open to the public on gender equality, cultural diversity, and environmental rights, from a rights-based and intersectional approach.

⁵⁰ Article 2 of the Escazú Agreement on definitions includes the concept of "environmental information," which is understood to mean any written, visual, audio, electronic, or other format of information relating to the environment and its elements and natural resources, including information related to environmental risks and possible associated adverse impacts that affect or may affect the environment and health, as well as information related to environmental protection and management.

⁵¹ For guidance on this matter, see Annex No. 1.

- Incorporate mechanisms to evaluate the impact of training, promoting the continuous improvement of public personnel.

5. Networks and alliances

- Support and strengthen the creation of women-led media outlets and local information networks, with access to resources and connectivity.
- Establish alliances with civil society organizations, the private sector, public entities, and local media to ensure that information effectively reaches rural, isolated, or marginalized areas. These alliances can take the form, for example, of fixed or mobile information centers that facilitate territorial access to relevant environmental content.

C. Broad and inclusive public participation in decision-making processes on environmental matters

The Agreement distinguishes between different environmental decision-making processes for the purposes of public participation. On the one hand, there are projects, activities, and other processes related to the granting of environmental authorizations that have or may have a significant impact on the environment. These processes are generally subject to environmental impact assessments carried out at the national or subnational level. On the other hand, there are other decision-making processes related to matters of public interest, such as strategies, policies, programs, rules, and regulations on environmental issues, among others.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, both men and women, and in general, individuals and groups in vulnerable situations, face various barriers to exercising their right to participate in decision-making on environmental matters that interest or affect them. For this reason, Article 7 of the Escazú Agreement provides that measures must be implemented to ensure open and inclusive participation in these decisions.

In particular, measures aimed at promoting open and inclusive participation in these decision-making processes must consider the sociocultural barriers faced by women in their diversity, which prevent or hinder their access to spaces for participation and decision-making. The objective should be to increase the levels of participation of women and broaden the scope of the calls for participation.

1. Regulations and procedures

- Ensure that regulatory frameworks and procedures for participation in decision-making processes incorporate a gender perspective and recognize diversity and particularities.
- Promote the active inclusion of women, in all their diversity, by encouraging the establishment of appropriate spaces for consultation on environmental issues or the use of existing ones. To this end, it is recommended to ensure specific conditions that facilitate their effective participation, such as adequate schedules, availability of childcare during activities, and the presence of facilitators with knowledge of gender issues.

Have participation mechanisms that guarantee the active inclusion of women in all their diversity. Establish conditions conducive to ensuring that participation mechanisms are adapted to the social, economic, cultural, geographical, and gender characteristics of the public, considering the appropriate means and formats for involving them in an active, timely, and effective manner, thereby eliminating barriers to participation.

- Incorporate gender equality indicators when designing a public participation process and then ensure their implementation, such as: establishing mechanisms to prevent possible risks to the safety and integrity of the women who will participate; establishing protocols in case of unsafe situations at the time of their participation; use of appropriate media, selection of meeting locations and times, childcare, and dynamics to encourage women to express themselves with confidence.

2. Accessibility and affordability

- Adapt infrastructure, technological means, and territorial conditions to ensure that participation processes on environmental issues are accessible to all people, incorporating a gender perspective and recognizing the barriers faced by women in their diversity and other vulnerable groups.
- For communities with technological gaps, establish public internet access points and offer digital training programs focused on public participation processes, with particular attention to women.
- When designing activities, consider cultural, linguistic, and gender identity, as well as age, work responsibilities, and caregiving responsibilities when selecting locations and setting schedules for any activity that will involve women. In addition, childcare services and logistical support can be offered to facilitate their participation.
- Ensure that the spaces where participatory processes take place are accessible to women with disabilities, including visual and hearing impairments.
- Facilitate the participation of women, particularly those living in rural or isolated areas, by providing transportation support when consultation events take place outside their communities.

3. Language, communication, and recognition

- Develop gender-focused digital literacy strategies to strengthen women's participation in virtual environmental decision-making spaces.
- Promote the use of accessible digital tools for public participation in environmental issues, such as mobile applications, social networks, low-data-consumption videoconferencing, and platforms available in indigenous languages.
- Promote the installation of connectivity networks in rural and indigenous communities, and access to technological devices that enable the effective use of these platforms by women and other vulnerable groups.

4. Capacity building

- Design and implement specific programs and methodologies to strengthen women's leadership in all its diversity, ensuring its cultural relevance, especially in indigenous and rural contexts. These methodologies may include traditional and oral forms of communication, such as community theater, and be facilitated by local women leaders.
- Create promotion and support mechanisms that favor women's access to leadership positions and their participation in the formulation and implementation of environmental policies.
- Promote the training of women, in all their diversity, through personalized tutoring, mentoring, and counseling that facilitates effective participation in environmental issues, including indigenous, Afro-descendant, rural, and urban women living in poverty.
- Develop capacities in relation to gender, intersectionality, and interculturality in public entities and, in particular, among those involved in the implementation of participation and training processes for the exercise of leadership. To this end, specific budgets and resources must be allocated for training and participation processes.
- Raise awareness among communities to promote recognition and appreciation of women's leadership and participation, as well as the importance of creating environments conducive to their participation. and

5. Networks and partnerships

- Establish partnerships with educational centers, civil society organizations, international organizations, universities, and other local actors to ensure access to technology and connectivity in online consultation processes.
- **Facilitate state platforms for the exchange of experiences** where companies, communities, and women's organizations can share methodologies, results, and lessons learned to improve women's substantive participation in environmental decision-making.

D. Access to justice in environmental matters with a gender perspective

Access to justice is an essential component in ensuring the effectiveness of other access rights, such as access to information and public participation, as well as in challenging and appealing any other decision, action, or omission that adversely affects or may adversely affect the environment or contravene environmental laws.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, men, women, and, in general, individuals and groups in vulnerable situations face common barriers to accessing justice in environmental matters. Therefore, Article 8 of the Agreement establishes in paragraph 4(a) that, in order to facilitate access to justice in environmental matters for the public, each Party shall establish measures to minimize or eliminate barriers to the exercise of the right of access to justice. In addition, paragraph 5 establishes that each Party shall meet the needs of persons or groups in vulnerable situations by establishing support mechanisms, as appropriate.

Therefore, the objective of the measures proposed below is to promote access to environmental justice with a gender perspective, to eliminate barriers and facilitate women's access to judicial or administrative bodies in environmental matters through effective, timely, public, transparent, impartial, and affordable procedures.

1. Regulations and procedures

- Mainstream a gender perspective into regulatory and institutional frameworks related to access to environmental justice, in order to ensure equitable conditions of access for women and other vulnerable groups.
- Promote the development of assessments of barriers to access to justice that include a specific analysis of the structural patterns and obstacles that prevent or hinder effective access to justice in environmental matters by women in all their diversity.
- Adopt institutional protocols for differentiated treatment of women in judicial and administrative proceedings, considering their diversity (indigenous women, women of African descent, rural women, women with disabilities, among others). The protocols should directly address structural gender inequalities and consider the particular situation and risks faced by women defenders of human rights in environmental matters, such as specific investigation protocols for women defenders.
- Likewise, differentiated care protocols should focus not only on the beginning of the process but also on the period prior to the filing of a formal request, complaint, or action and on follow-up during all stages of the proceedings, recognizing the asymmetries that women face in these instances.

2. Accessibility and affordability

- Take measures to ensure that women in vulnerable situations, especially in rural and indigenous areas, can access legal proceedings in environmental matters without prohibitive costs, as well as simplify and reduce administrative requirements that hinder access to justice and proceedings, eliminating barriers. For example, disseminate information on the right of access to justice and the procedures for enforcing it, exempt or grant funds to cover legal representation, technical expertise, and other expenses related to the defense of environmental rights, prioritizing women affected by particularly serious environmental conflicts that require urgent intervention, the use of interpretation or translation of languages other than the official languages when necessary, and establishing support mechanisms, including free technical and legal assistance, as appropriate.
- Strengthen support for women during judicial or administrative proceedings. This support may include legal and psychosocial assistance, building trust and providing support in contexts where the formal justice system is inaccessible.
- Maintain safe, confidential reporting channels adapted to different cultural and territorial contexts, ensuring their availability in multiple languages and in various locations.
- Link reporting channels to training opportunities on rights and procedures, promoting accessible training spaces for women in all their diversity.
- Implement flexible mechanisms that include mobile legal services with the capacity to travel to remote areas, thus facilitating access to justice in rural or marginalized contexts.
- Information published and disseminated on the right of access to justice and the procedures for enforcing it must take into account criteria of accessibility and

transparency, including the use of interpretation or translation into languages other than the official languages when necessary.

3. Language, communication and recognition

- Publish information on available judicial and administrative processes, the status of proceedings, and decisions, ensuring that women in all their diversity can follow up on their cases through diverse and accessible mechanisms and means.
- Promote, through the implementation of protocols, specialized units, and/or campaigns, that the decisions of administrative and judicial bodies take a gender perspective into account.
- Promote the use of inclusive language in all oral, written, and graphic communications related to judicial and administrative proceedings, seeking to avoid biases and stereotypes⁵².

4. Capacity building

- Establish specific training and dissemination opportunities regarding the differentiated care protocols implemented, both for public officials, the judicial system, and the public, especially women. These opportunities, together with promoting the application of the protocols, should aim to bring legal language closer to women users in all their diversity.
- Maintain ongoing training initiatives for judges, judicial operators, and officials on gender equality and its relationship to access to justice and environmental protection. Training should aim to reach all territorial levels and focus on those instances with greater contact with women and decision-making powers. Likewise, promote the training of professionals linked to the judicial system with knowledge of gender perspectives and intercultural approaches.
- Train judges and justice sector officials to perform their duties with a gender perspective so that they can: i) identify whether there are situations of power that, due to gender issues, account for an imbalance between the parties to the dispute; ii) question the facts and assess the evidence, discarding any gender stereotypes or prejudices, in order to visualize situations of disadvantage caused by sex or gender conditions; iii) in cases where the evidence is insufficient to clarify the situation of violence, vulnerability, or discrimination based on gender, iv) if a situation of gender-based disadvantage is detected, assess the differentiated impact of the proposed solution in order to seek a fair and equitable resolution in accordance with the context of gender-based inequality; v) apply human rights standards for all persons involved, especially children; and vi) consider that the method requires that, at all times, the use of language based on stereotypes or prejudices be avoided, and therefore inclusive language should be used in order to ensure access to justice without discrimination on the basis of gender order the necessary tests to make such situations visible.

⁵² For guidance on this matter, see Annex No. 1.

5. Networks and alliances

- Encourage the creation of networks and alliances to promote the right of access to justice in environmental matters with a gender perspective, including the exchange of good practices among women's organizations.
- Promote international alliances aimed at exchanging experiences, methodologies, and lessons learned to strengthen mechanisms for access to environmental justice, especially those that integrate gender perspectives.

E. Women human rights defenders in environmental matters

Latin America and the Caribbean is one of the most dangerous regions in the world for defending human rights in environmental matters⁵³. In this context, women human rights defenders in environmental matters are particularly vulnerable. On one hand they are exposed to gender-based violence against them, but they are also exposed to gender-based violence against their families and communities, when exercising their access rights.⁵⁴

Gender-based violence, according to the standards established by the United Nations normative framework—particularly the *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* and the observations of the CEDAW Committee—covers a wide range of manifestations that transcend physical violence. In this area, it is possible to see how forms of violence are now also manifested through the use of social media and other digital platforms.

The aforementioned regulatory framework recognizes the existence of physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence, perpetrated in both the public and private spheres by state and non-state actors. These forms of violence can be expressed through direct acts, threats, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, and they affect women and girls differently based on multiple factors of discrimination, such as age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, immigration status, disability, or territorial affiliation.

Regarding the protection of the environment, this violence can be exacerbated when women defenders are subjected to stigmatization, criminalization, forced displacement, or sexual violence as a form of intimidation, reinforcing the need for comprehensive protection with an intersectional approach. This situation is aggravated by underreporting in formal records, especially in remote areas and rural sectors.

This reality highlights the importance of integrating measures specifically designed for women in this area, addressing, among other things, the mental and emotional health of women human rights defenders in environmental matters as a fundamental aspect of their protection. It is also necessary to recognize the collective caregiving role that many women assume in their

⁵³ See, for example, reports from the United Nations system and the inter-American system on the situation of human rights defenders in environmental matters, including A/71/281 (2016), A/HRC/39/17 (2018), A/HRC/40/60 (2019), A/HRC/52/33 (2023), and IACHR, *Criminalization of the work of human rights defenders* (2015)

⁵⁴ OHCHR (2018a). *End of mission statement by Michel Forst, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders on his visit to Honduras, 29 April to 12 May*. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23063&LangID=E>

communities, which means that the impacts of violence affect not only them, but also their communities.

Furthermore, as noted by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, difficulties in accessing justice and impunity when human rights are violated increase the risks faced by women human rights defenders in environmental matters.⁵⁵ Therefore, the objective is to identify actions to achieve safe and enabling environments for women's work in environmental protection, and to adopt appropriate, effective, and timely measures to prevent, investigate, and punish attacks, threats, or intimidation that women human rights defenders in environmental matters may suffer, in all their diversity.

1. Regulations and procedures

- Advance in the establishment and/or strengthening of mechanisms, programs, and instances of inter-institutional coordination aimed at the comprehensive protection of human rights defenders in environmental matters with a gender and culturally relevant approach, which consider the different types of violence, risks, and threats faced by women, with special attention to women defenders in rural contexts, belonging to indigenous or Afro-descendant peoples, and areas with high socio-environmental conflict.
- These protection mechanisms should have functional autonomy and independence to ensure that they can operate free from political or economic interference; their own sustainable budget to ensure their long-term operational capacity; and clearly defined functions, including prevention, immediate response, comprehensive support, and follow-up on cases.
- Consider the direct participation of women human rights defenders in environmental matters and civil society organizations, among other non-state actors, in the design, governance, and evaluation of protection mechanisms.
- Implement effective legal support and accompaniment mechanisms to report, investigate, and punish acts of intimidation, criminalization, and violence against women human rights defenders in environmental matters.
- Establish accountability, evaluation, and monitoring mechanisms, with the participation of women human rights defenders, civil society organizations, and other actors, to monitor and strengthen the state's response to situations of risk, such as by issuing early warnings in the event of threats or persistent patterns of violence.

2. Accessibility and affordability

- Establish support and protection measures adapted to the different contexts of women defenders, including measures such as protection for their families and access to safe shelters.

⁵⁵ A/HRC/40/60, para. 34.

- Consider community-based psychosocial support actions, such as support networks and specialized mental health services to address trauma related to their work, among other issues.
- Implement measures to guarantee the privacy of defenders. For example, through prior informed consent, clearly establishing how the information collected will be used.
- Promote the allocation of resources and funds for initiatives led by women human rights defenders in environmental matters, thereby promoting their autonomy and empowerment.

3. Language, communication, and recognition

- Establish measures focused on recognizing the role of women defenders through awareness campaigns targeting the public, the private sector, and the State.
- Create specific awards or recognitions for women human rights defenders in environmental matters, as well as document and disseminate their stories, highlighting their role in protecting the territory and natural resources.

4. Capacity building

- Establish training and education programs for public officials, public defenders, prosecutors, justice operators, and security forces on the protection and care of women human rights defenders in environmental matters, with a gender perspective, including resources and specialized personnel for their implementation and evaluation.

5. Networks and alliances

- Promote and strengthen networks among women environmental defenders, as well as collaborations, alliances, and exchanges between international organizations, competent state mechanisms at all levels, local networks of women defenders, and other actors, to improve the capacity to respond to threats and attacks.
- Create and strengthen work with national and local networks of prosecutors, public defenders, and other justice operators competent in protection.

F. Cooperation and capacity building

Article 11 of the Escazú Agreement establishes that Parties shall cooperate to strengthen their national capacities with the aim of implementing the Agreement in an effective manner, giving particular consideration to least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States from Latin America and the Caribbean. The aim is therefore to promote activities, mechanisms, and partnerships between the Parties and other actors to achieve the effective implementation of the Agreement. Likewise, Decision III/4 of COP3 welcomes all measures, initiatives and activities aimed at integrating and strengthening the gender perspective in matters related to the Escazú Agreement.

In this context, an example of cooperation that has been implemented in the region relates to the so-called "Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women" (MAW)⁵⁶. These mechanisms are the different bodies, established by the State present at the national, regional, and local levels, which are responsible for directing and coordinating gender equality policies in the States⁵⁷. However, as only 44% of the countries in the region have a Ministry of Women, while in the remaining countries there are other lower-level institutional structures responsible for this work, the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, through the Regional Gender Agenda, has deployed various regional cooperation efforts and initiatives to strengthen institutional frameworks and raise the hierarchical status of mechanisms for the advancement of women in the region.

In this regard, it is possible to explore forms of collaboration between the Parties, as well as to establish synergies and partnerships with these mechanisms and efforts at the regional level, as well as with other initiatives at the international level, with the aim of incorporating a gender perspective into the implementation of the Escazú Agreement. Some examples of cooperation measures and activities are:

- Design and implement capacity-building activities for States Parties on gender perspectives for the implementation of the Escazú Agreement, in collaboration with MAMs, national institutions, and relevant regional organizations.
- Establishing coordination and support from ministries or secretariats for women and gender equality to develop public management instruments on environmental issues with a gender perspective, such as National Climate Change Plans.
- Develop activities to improve the capacity of States Parties and other relevant stakeholders to mainstream gender perspectives in the production and use of statistical information that serves as a basis for the formulation of national policies, plans, strategies, and actions within the framework of the Escazú Agreement.
- Promote, in coordination with the MAMs, the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in national environmental information systems, through the coordinated work of the agencies that produce and use the information.
- Promote dialogue between the Parties to the Agreement and the focal points for other international or regional conventions to identify possible synergies and areas of collaboration for mainstreaming the gender perspective in the implementation of access rights.
- Design state training programs that include the private sector in the incorporation of a gender perspective in environmental management, prioritizing productive sectors with the greatest impact.

⁵⁶ UN Women (2024). Mechanisms for the advancement of women in Latin America and the Caribbean: a necessary condition for the advancement of gender equality.

⁵⁷ For example, in 2021, ECLAC's Gender Division published the document "Gender equality in the face of climate change: what can mechanisms for the advancement of women in Latin America and the Caribbean do?" which identifies the leadership and specific actions that MAMs can exercise and implement.

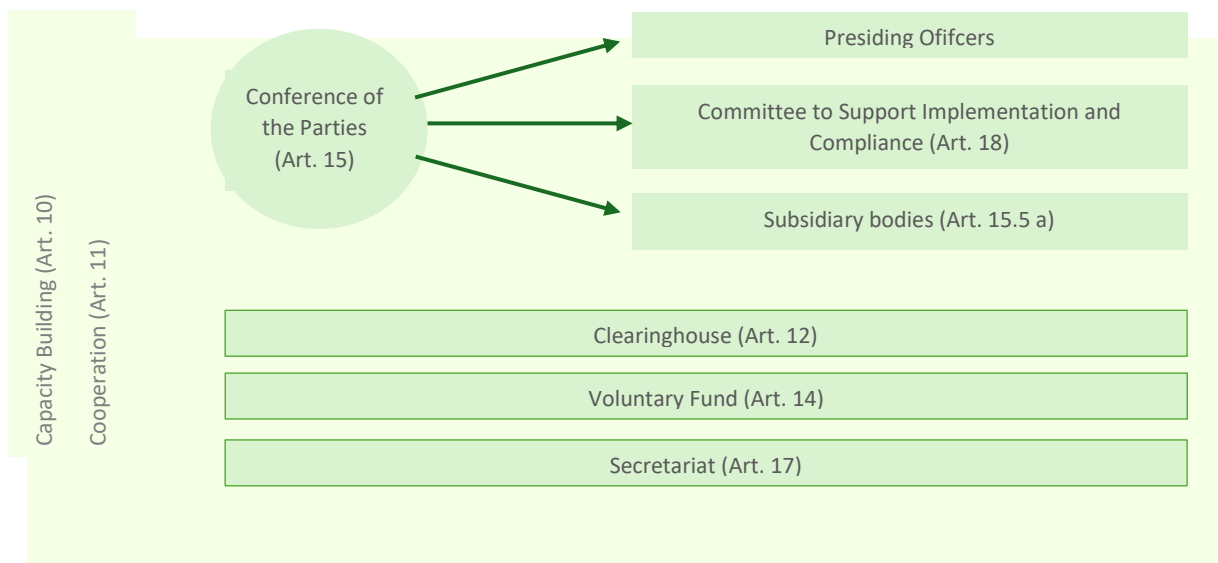
- Establish public-private partnerships to finance and sustain capacity-building programs for the Parties.
- Recognize the importance of associations, organizations, or groups that contribute to educating or raising awareness among vulnerable individuals and groups, with a special emphasis on women's access rights.

IV. THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE IN THE INSTITUTIONAL ARCHITECTURE OF THE ESCAZÚ AGREEMENT

Articles 13 to 18 of the Escazú Agreement establish its institutional architecture, which covers a wide range of issues that are essential to the existence, management, governance, and full implementation of the treaty.

The following diagram presents an outline of the institutional framework of the Escazú Agreement, its main structures and mechanisms, which enable its operation in the region.

Diagram 2
Institutional architecture and mechanisms of the Escazú Agreement



Source: ECLAC.

Within this framework, the following measures have been adopted to advance the incorporation of a gender equality perspective in the implementation of the Escazú Agreement and in the functioning of its bodies:

A. Conference of the Parties and Presiding Officers

Article 15 of the Escazú Agreement establishes the Conference of the Parties (COP) as the main and supreme decision-making body of the Agreement, which brings together all States Parties on a regular basis and has the mandate to examine and promote the implementation and effectiveness of the Escazú Agreement.

In accordance with its Rules of Procedure in section VI on the representation of Parties at meetings of the Conference of the Parties, establishes that "Each Party participating in a meeting shall be represented by a delegation consisting of a head of delegation and such other accredited representatives, alternate representatives and advisers as it may require."

Furthermore, in accordance with these rules, at the first ordinary meeting of the Conference of the Parties, a Presiding Officers consisting of a Chair and four Vice-Chairs was elected from among the Parties present at the meeting. The positions of Chair and Vice-Chairs are subject to rotation. Paragraph VII establishes that the election of Presiding Officers shall give special consideration to the need to ensure adequate geographical representation of the Parties and gender balance among representatives.

In addition, other measures that could be promoted to help ensure equitable gender representation, both in meetings of the Conference of the Parties and in the Presiding Officers, are mentioned below:

- Establish a practice of alternating or rotating between male and female representatives to serve as chair and vice-chairs of the Presiding Officers and the Conference of the Parties to the Escazú Agreement.
- Promote the equitable representation of women and men in the delegations of the States Parties at COP meetings and encourage the participation of women as heads of delegation.
- Promote a criterion of parity in the appointment of national focal points of the Parties to the bodies of the Agreement in cases where the State Party appoints more than one person.
- Promote balanced participation and representation of women in the activities carried out at COP meetings and apply moderation strategies that allow for a more equitable distribution of interventions between men and women.
- Include data and considerations on women's participation in these bodies in the official reports of COP meetings.
- Incorporate gender related topics into the thematic and substantive discussions of the COP.

B. Committee to Support Implementation and Compliance

Paragraph VIII of the COP Rules of Procedure on the establishment of subsidiary bodies states that, with regard to their structure and composition, the Parties shall give special consideration to the need to ensure adequate geographical representation and equitable gender participation.

This rule has been implemented with respect to the Committee to Support Implementation and Compliance. Its rules stipulate that, in the election of the Committee members, consideration shall be given to "equitable geographical distribution of membership, gender parity, and legal knowledge and experience" (Rule II.3).

In addition, the Committee has also incorporated a gender perspective in the exercise of its functions. For example, in the rapid response mechanism for communications, the Committee's working methods stipulate that "in assessing the measures to be taken, the Committee shall take into account the particular circumstances of the person concerned and their environment, seeking not to cause harm and promoting an intersectional, intercultural, and gender-sensitive approach."

C. Clearinghouse

In accordance with Article 12, the Escazú Agreement establishes a clearinghouse on access rights to be operated by the Secretariat. The provision states that this mechanism must be "virtual" and "universally accessible," indicating that it must be open to the public and available online. In terms of content, the article is not exhaustive and states that the clearinghouse "may include, inter alia, legislative, administrative, and policy measures, codes of conduct, and good practices." Other types of materials not specifically listed may also be included.

ECLAC has created the Principle 10 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean, which serves as a clearinghouse in accordance with Article 12 of the Agreement and contains treaties, laws, policies, and jurisprudence on access rights in Latin American and Caribbean countries and on related issues such as climate change, biodiversity, and environmental defenders.⁵⁸ The Observatory contains information that is public in nature or accessible to the public, as well as information that countries provide on a voluntary basis.

The Observatory has a specific section on gender and uses the term "gender" in its content classification.

On the other hand, COP Decision III/4 requested the Secretariat to continue recording progress in the Principle 10 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean with regard to the integration of a gender perspective in the implementation of the Agreement. To this end, the Parties can actively contribute and collaborate in deepening and more comprehensively reflecting in the Observatory's information the progress made on standards, regulations, and public policies that seek to mainstream the gender perspective in the exercise of access rights and in environmental protection efforts.

D. Significant participation of the public and the regional public mechanism

Rule XIV of the Conference of the Parties establishes that the public shall participate meaningfully in the Conference of the Parties and the subsidiary bodies established. In addition, the Escazú Agreement adopts a broad and inclusive definition of "public" (Article 2(d)), which includes "one or more natural or legal persons and the associations, organizations or groups established by those persons, that are nationals or that are subject to the national jurisdiction of the State Party".

This broad definition allows for the participation, as part of the public, of women, women's organizations, local communities, indigenous peoples, youth, academic institutions, among other

⁵⁸ See [online] <https://observatoriop10.cepal.org/es>.

potentially relevant actors. Within this framework, the significant participation of the public in the institutional framework of the Agreement also implies ensuring that women and their various organizations or groups are recognized as key actors in its implementation and promoting substantive participation mechanisms that value their contributions and forms of organization.

For its part, the third paragraph of this rule establishes that the Secretariat will maintain a regional public mechanism (RPM) in which interested people can register by completing a short form that will be available on the Secretariat's website. Thus, the RPM disseminates regular official information on the activities of the Presiding Officers, the COP, the Committee to support Implementation and Compliance and the Secretariat of the Escazú Agreement, as well as serving as a platform for public consultation and the election of public representatives.

This mechanism can also promote greater participation of women and facilitate their access through the widespread dissemination of the PRM at the regional, national, and local levels with the aim of increasing the number of women registered in it.

E. Elected representatives of the public

In accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the COP (Rule XIV.3), public representatives shall be elected through the regional public mechanism in order to encourage and facilitate public participation and to channel their contributions, including the submission of proposals on behalf of the public.

The second election of elected representatives of the public held in 2022 included in its Rules of Procedures⁵⁹ a formula for achieving equal representation. Thus, Article 11 of the Regulations states that in each subregion, no more than one person may be elected as a representative from the same country (national or resident) or of the same sex. As a result of this rule, currently, of the six elected public representatives, three are women.

F. Roadmaps and national implementation plans

The roadmaps were created with the aim of supporting the States Parties when starting the implementation of the Escazú Agreement at the national level. The roadmaps are developed through a strategic, dynamic, and structured 8-step process that allows the States Parties, in collaboration with social and private actors, to establish the necessary foundations for the implementation of the Escazú Agreement in their respective countries.

Decision III/1 of the COP invites all Parties to develop, with the support of the Secretariat, plans and roadmaps for the national implementation of the Escazú Agreement "no later than 2026 or two years after the entry into force of the Agreement in the State Party."

For its part, Decision III/4.2 urges Parties "to continue to promote the full and effective participation of women in all their diversity, including indigenous women, and the incorporation of a gender equality perspective into the implementation of the Agreement, particularly in their national implementation plans and roadmaps".

⁵⁹ Regulations for the election of Public Representatives to the Escazú Agreement: https://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/reglamento_para_la_eleccion_de_representantes.pdf

Urges the Parties to continue to promote the full and effective participation of women in all their diversity, including indigenous women, and the incorporation of a gender-equality perspective into the implementation of the Agreement, particularly in their national implementation plans and road maps;

With this objective in mind, some countries have created governance systems for the implementation of the Escazú Agreement, consisting of the creation of committees or commissions made up of public entities and other actors from civil society, academia, and the private sector, in which, for example, rules on equal integration or other mechanisms to promote the meaningful participation of women could be promoted.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

___ (2021b). Gender equality in the face of climate change: what can mechanisms for the advancement of women in Latin America and the Caribbean do? Gender Issues Series, No. 159. Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). Chile. <https://www.cepal.org/es/publicaciones/46996-la-igualdad-genero-cambio-climatico-que-pueden-hacer-mecanismos-adelanto-mujeres>

CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women) (1979), "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women," OHCHR, [online], <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/cedaw.pdf>.

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), (2023). 45 years of the Regional Gender Agenda (LC/MDM-E.2022/4/Rev.1), Santiago.

___ (2022a), Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (LC/PUB.2018/8/Rev.1), Santiago.

___ (2022b). Women's autonomy and gender equality at the heart of climate action in Latin America and the Caribbean. Regional Consultation prior to the Sixty-Sixth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women within the framework of the 62nd Meeting of the Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean. Reference document.LC/MDM.62/DDR/1

___ (2022c), Breaking the statistical silence to achieve gender equality by 2030: implementation of the information systems component 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, [online], https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/48371/4/S2200754_es.pdf

___ (2020), "Santiago Commitment," [online], https://conferenciamujer.cepal.org/14/sites/crm14/files/20-00089_crm.14_compromiso_de_santiago.pdf.

___ (2017), Montevideo Strategy for the Implementation of the Regional Gender Agenda in the Framework of Sustainable Development towards 2030 (LC/CRM.13/5), Santiago, [online], <https://oig.cepal.org/es/documentos/practicas-promisorias-que-promueven-la-igualdad-genero-la-autonomia-mujeres-la-respuesta>

Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), (2015), *Criminalization of the Work of Human Rights Defenders*, OEA/Ser.L/V/II. Doc. 49/15.

National Human Rights Commission – Mexico (2021), *The brave adventures of women defenders*, [online], <https://hchr.org.mx/wp/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/LasValientesAventurasDeMujeresDefensoras.pdf>

Gender Affairs Division ECLAC (2020), The COVID-19 pandemic The care crisis in Latin America and the Caribbean deepens, COVID-19 Reports, [online], <https://repositorio.cepal.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/c2424803-6a63-4f96-89fb-3d89b654476d/content>.

United Nations (2023), Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, *Women, Girls and the Right to a Healthy Environment*, A/HRC/52/33, Human Rights Council, 2023 (annex);

_____(2019), Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment, *The obligation to protect environmental defenders*, A/HRC/40/60, Human Rights Council.

_____(2016), Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, *Thematic report on defenders in environmental matters*, A/71/281, General Assembly.

_____(2018), Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, *Report on attacks and criminalization of indigenous peoples and their defenders*, A/HRC/39/17, Human Rights Council.

_____(1999), Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programs of the United Nations system. Report of the Economic and Social Council for 1997, Supplement No. 3 (A/52/3/Rev.1), New York.

Gender Equality Observatory (OIG) (2025), [online], <https://oig.cepal.org/es/indicadores/indice-feminidad-hogares-pobres>

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights-Mexico. (2022), *Good practices and challenges in the investigation of crimes against human rights defenders and journalists*, Mexico.

OHCHR (2018), *End of mission statement by Michel Forst, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders on his visit to Honduras, April 29 to May 12*, [online], <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23063&LangID=E>

Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2020), SIGI 2020 Regional Report for Latin America and the Caribbean, Social Institutions and Gender Index, OECD Publishing, Paris, [online], <https://doi.org/10.1787/cb7d45d1-en>

United Nations (2023), *Women, Girls and the Right to a Healthy Environment: Good practices*. Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment. Annex to A/HRC/52/33

United Nations Division for Sustainable Development (1992), Agenda 21. United Nations Conference on Environment & Development, [online], <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf>

United Nations Division for Sustainable Development (1992), Agenda 21. United Nations Conference on Environment & Development, [online], <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf>

Aguilar, Lorena (2021a), Promising practices that promote gender equality and women's autonomy in the response to climate change in Latin America and the Caribbean. Project Documents (LC/TS.2021/110). Santiago, Economic Commission for Latin America and the

Caribbean (ECLAC), [online], <https://oig.cepal.org/es/documentos/practicas-promisorias-que-promueven-la-igualdad-genero-la-autonomia-mujeres-la-respuesta>

Dazé, A. (2025), Unpacking Intersectional Approaches to Climate Change Adaptation. IISD. Working paper.

Plourde K, Thomas R. Gender Analysis for the Knowledge SUCCESS Project (2019), Knowledge SUCCESS Project, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs.

Annex 1 Inclusive language

Specify gender when the situation calls for it		
Actions	Examples	
Using both female and male pronouns ("pronoun pairing") when it is important to make it clear that both women and men are being included, bearing in mind the various techniques for avoiding excessive pronoun pairing.	When a staff member accepts an offer of employment, he or she must be able to assume that the offer is duly authorized.	
Using two different words.	Boys and girls should attend the first cooking class with their parents.	
Using "men and women" or "male and female" when the context is such that it should be made explicit that persons of both sexes are involved.	Both the male and female respondents gave a negative answer to Question No. 5.	
Not specifying gender when the situation does not call for it or using gender-neutral language		
Actions	Less inclusive	More inclusive
Use gender-neutral words.	Mankind.	Humankind; humanity; human race.
Using plural pronouns/adjectives.	Before submitting your document, send it to the focal point for him to review; he will return it to you with comments.	Before submitting your document, send it to the focal point for their review; they will return it to you with comments.
Use the pronoun one.	A staff member in Antarctica earns less than he would in New York.	A staff member in Antarctica earns less than one in New York.
Use the relative pronoun who.	If a complainant is not satisfied with the board's decision, he can ask for a rehearing.	A complainant who is not satisfied with the board's decision can ask for a rehearing.
Use a plural antecedent.	A substitute judge must certify that he has familiarized himself with the record of the proceedings.	Substitute judges must certify that they have familiarized themselves with the record of the proceedings.
Omit the gendered word.	Requests the Emergency Relief Coordinator to continue his/her efforts to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance.	Requests the Emergency Relief Coordinator to continue efforts to strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance.
Use the passive voice.	The author of a communication must have direct and reliable evidence of the situation he is describing.	The author of a communication must have direct and reliable evidence of the situation being described.

Source: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)