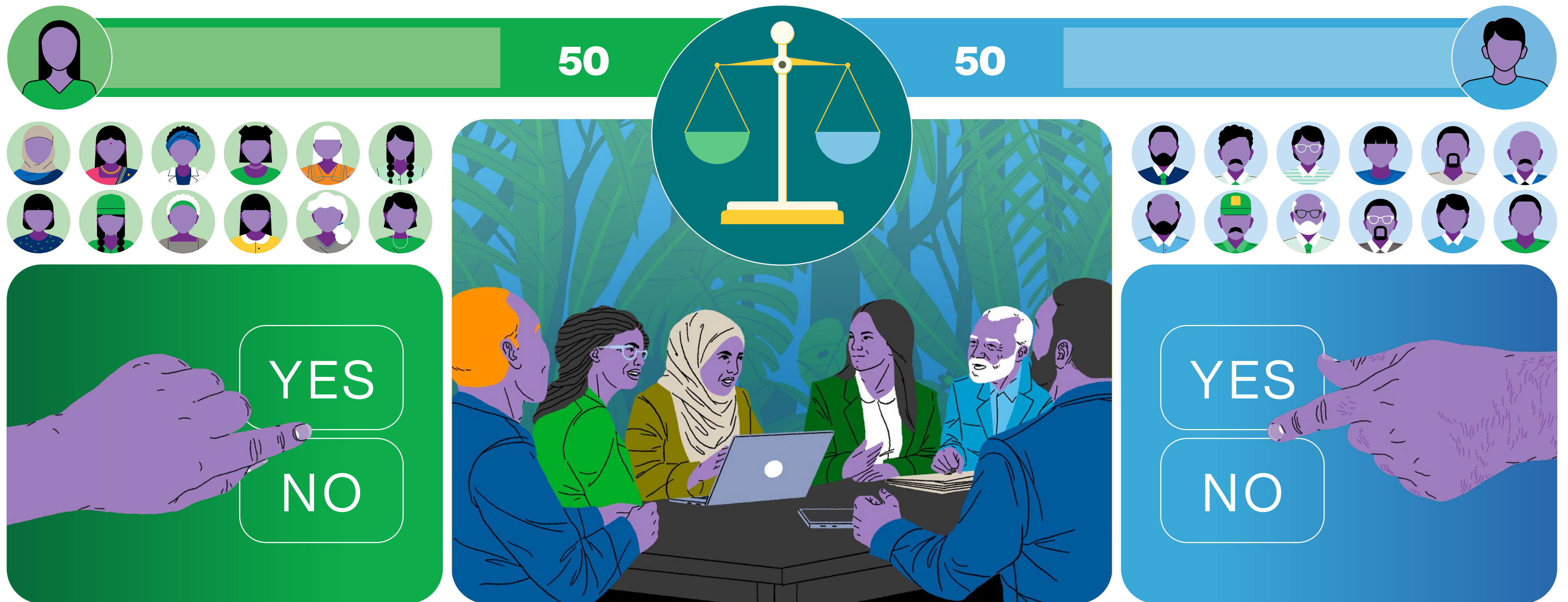




# Gender equality for greener and bluer futures

Why women's leadership matters for realising environmental goals

March 2024



## About this publication

This publication releases new data on the number of women leading environmental ministries, compared with previous data. It also reviews the case, highlighting select data, on why gender equality and women's empowerment are essential for global goals on achieving an inclusive and sustainable future.

## Key messages

- **Gender equality and women's empowerment in environmental work has been linked to improved economic outcomes such as greater national GDP, greater crop production, a fairer distribution of wealth and higher agricultural profit.**
- **Gender equality in environmental decision-making and policy-making has been linked to better environment outcomes towards achieving a sustainable future; including better ecosystems conservation and protection outcomes, better national resilience outcomes, higher reduction of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and a higher probability of ratifying environmental treaties.**
- **Gender-blind policies lead to higher risks of women experiencing inequality, including gender-based violence – as well as environmental initiatives failing.**

# Why do gender and environment linkages matter?

Women and men play different roles in the environment, bringing a wealth of knowledge, unique skills, and experiences around ecosystems and conservation that often differ from each other. Women are gatherers and managers of natural resources, playing a key role in sustainable development. Data and information showcase the ways in which women's leadership in environmental decision-making and the integration of efforts to build gender equality into conservation, sustainable development and climate action is essential for empowering women as agents of change – who contribute their diverse and rich knowledge and abilities to environmental policy and programming – and to improve environmental, health and socioeconomic outcomes.

## What is gender equality?

Gender equality is the state in which all people, regardless of their gender, have equal rights, freedoms, conditions and opportunities. To achieve it, gender equality programming uses gender equity approaches to identify gaps and barriers to gender equality and rectify the imbalances between genders. To compensate for the historical and social disadvantages faced by women in accessing these rights and roles in comparison to men, gender equality work focuses on women to close these gaps, while encouraging male support to achieve equality. Equity can be understood as the means, whereas equality is the end goal.

This publication presents new data, comparing nine years of periodic IUCN analysis that finds that gender parity in environmental leadership remains out of reach. Simply put, women are missing from top decision-making positions in environmental and environment-related ministries and the benefits of their leadership is a net loss for human rights and sustainable development and conservation. IUCN's research aligns with the latest World Economic Forum estimates, which finds that it will take 162 years to reach political parity globally ([WEF, 2023](#)). This means that IUCN also assesses it will take 162 years for women to reach gender parity as the top leaders in environmental ministries.

**IUCN assesses it will take 162 years for women to reach gender parity with men in top ministerial roles across environmental ministries.**

These trends trickle down and pervade daily life. Women face greater barriers in the access, use, management and ownership of land and natural resources as they are often underrepresented or excluded from decision-making. This makes women disproportionately impacted by environmental degradation, biodiversity loss, and climate change and less able to actively participate in solving these interlinked crises. Alongside the data are results showing women's representation in leading environmental ministries across the five pillars – or prioritised programme areas – of IUCN's 2030 Nature Vision:



([IUCN, n.d a.](#))

These examples provide illustrative examples on why and how conservation and sustainable development and climate action are key pathways for gender equality and women's empowerment. They also show that women's empowerment in these sectors has multiplied benefits for families and societies at large and environmental outcomes and results. They also show the peril of gender neutral environmental policies and actions, which can cause environmental goals to fail, increase inequality and the risk of gender-based violence, and undermine social and corporate prosperity alike.

# People



**Healthy biodiversity and ecosystems are vital for human wellbeing. Everyone has the right to live in a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, which requires equitable access to natural resources and land ([UNGA, 2022](#)).**

Yet – pervasive injustice, inequality and unsustainable use of nature undermine the prospects for human prosperity and nature conservation alike. In male dominated natural resource value chains and governance bodies, women’s key roles in natural resource management, particularly for subsistence, are often unseen and relegated to vulnerable, informal – and at times unsafe – work. Exclusion of women from natural resource governance also results in their differentiated needs, roles and expertise being excluded from decisions which often unintentionally negatively impact conservation goals. These create barriers to their environmental rights – depriving women of their right to enjoy and defend a clean, healthy and sustainable environment while preventing them from fairly accessing and benefiting from natural resources. Conversely, as strong agents of change with rich and diverse knowledge, skills and capacities to effectively and sustainably administer and govern natural resources, women’s representation in government bodies has been linked to greater conservation and environmental outcomes. Inclusive decision-making and participation increases women’s knowledge of their environmental rights which in turn improves equal land ownership; similarly, the acknowledgement of the positive effects of diversity contributes to greater environmental sustainability and conservation efforts. By recognizing the valuable knowledge and skills women possess and their potential to contribute to conservation and natural resources and land management, sustainable development can be achieved.



● **Countries with more women representatives in national parliaments lead to those countries adopting greener policies.**

A study found that a 1% point increase in the average proportion of parliament seats occupied by female members is associated with at least a 0.003 increase in a country's average Climate Laws, Institutions and Measures Index – a substantive effect given that the index ranges from 0 to 1 ([Mavisakalyan & Tarverdi, 2019](#)). Another study found that a 1% point increase in female-occupied parliament seats leads to a 0.22 % point increase in the total land under protected status ([Nugent & Shandra, 2009](#)). A review of voting patterns in the United States found that women legislators vote in favour of strengthened environmental policies in comparison to their male counterparts. Women's green voting records are between 9-11 points higher than the voting records of men ([Fredriksson & Wang, 2011](#)). Environmental treaties are also more likely to be ratified in countries with higher female proportion in parliaments – a study “on 70 mostly developed countries from 1990 to 2004 concluded that the 14 countries that made the biggest reductions in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions had a higher proportion of women elected to parliament ([Norgaard & York, 2005](#)).

● **Corporations with more women in leadership are also studied to make greener – while profitable – decisions.**

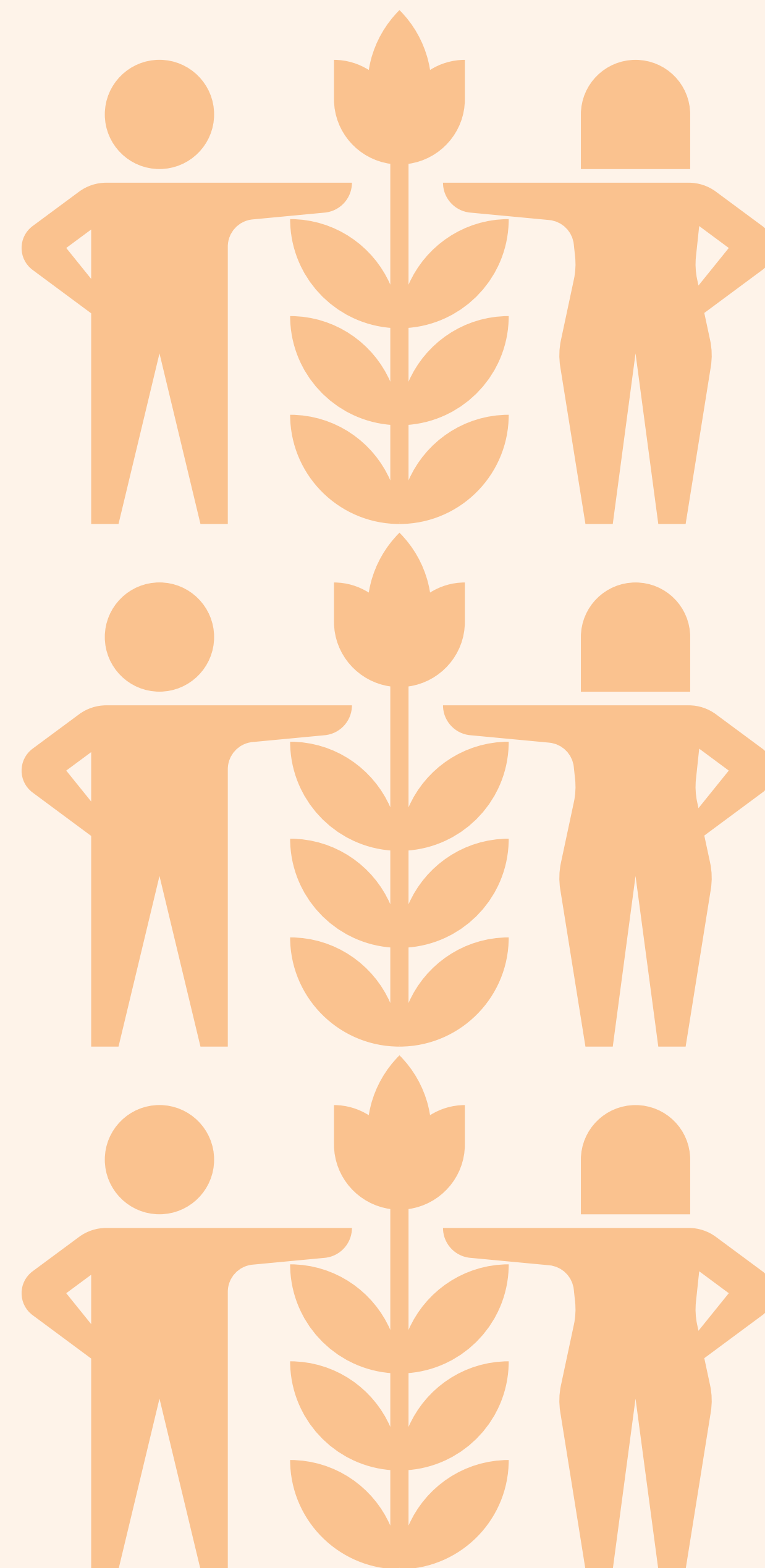
In Canadian firms, the results of a regression analysis indicate that a board with at least two women directors is 0.64 times more likely to voluntarily disclose climate-change-related risks compared to boards with less than two female members ([Ben-Amar et al., 2017](#)). Data shows that the 20 most diverse utilities outperform the less diverse ones, and utility boards with at least 30% women have higher profits ([EY, 2019](#)). With correlations ranging between 0.15-0.47 – data suggests that companies with more women on their board of directors are more likely to invest in renewable power generation and related services, and more likely to measure and reduce carbon emissions of their products, among others ([McElhaney & Mobasser, 2012](#)).

- **Women are effective in de-escalating conflicts over natural resources.**

Studies have found that women's engagement in solving conflicts increases the probability of peace agreements lasting at least two years by 20% – and by 35% for peace agreements lasting at least 15 years ([UN Women, 2015](#)) – yet, they form 13% of peace process negotiators and 6% of mediators and signatories in major peace processes ([Bigio et al., n.d.](#)). There are many resources that highlight the importance of women's roles in resolving water conflicts, in one case, from Yemen, an inclusive water governance project resulted in 88% of participants agreeing that women and youth were now engaged in water dispute management which correlated with 100% of participants agreeing that there were no more water-based conflicts in the area ([FAO, 2022a](#)). These trends are also seen in the deescalation of wildlife conflicts – in South Africa, an unarmed patrol of local women called the Black Mambas have achieved a 76% reduction in rhino poaching since 2013 through peace-based enforcement ([Aldred, 2016](#)). Similarly, the Akashinga rangers in Zimbabwe, an all-women anti-poaching unit, have managed to reduce animal poaching by more than 80% in Zimbabwe's Lower Zambezi Valley ([Gould, 2023](#); [Akashinga, n.d.](#)). These programs empower vulnerable women by employing out of work single mothers, abandoned wives and survivors of sexual and physical abuse, among others ([Koot & Veenenbos, 2023](#)).

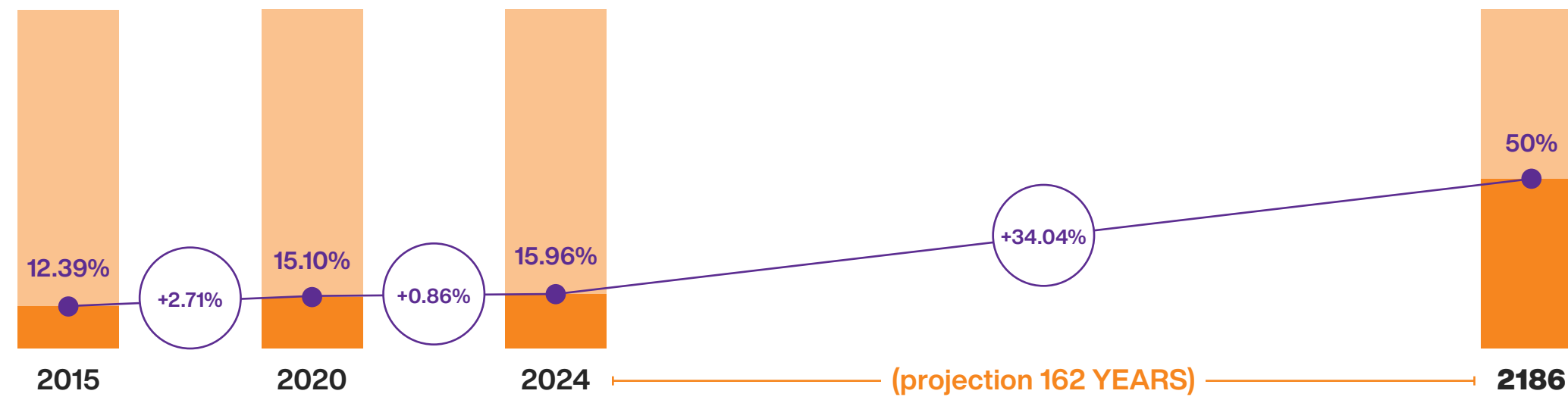
- **Women contribute substantially to environmental results, while shouldering the multiplied burden of care work.**

Around the world, women fulfil more than three-quarters of unpaid care and domestic work ([UN Women, 2023a](#)). Every day, 16 billion hours are spent conducting unpaid care and domestic work – the monetary value of this work is estimated to exceed 40% of GDP in some countries ([ILO, n.d.](#)). A study finds that the formalisation of the care economy could create three times as many jobs as construction while producing 30% less greenhouse gas emissions ([Women's Budget Group, 2022](#)). Gendered care work is also a major factor why women are frequently relegated to informal, insecure and dangerous work across environment-related sectors – in a study of women with engineering degrees, 17% of thousands of women who left engineering careers did so citing the lack of supportive environments for women's caregiving work ([Fouad et al., 2017](#)).



### How long will it take to reach gender parity in environmental decision making?

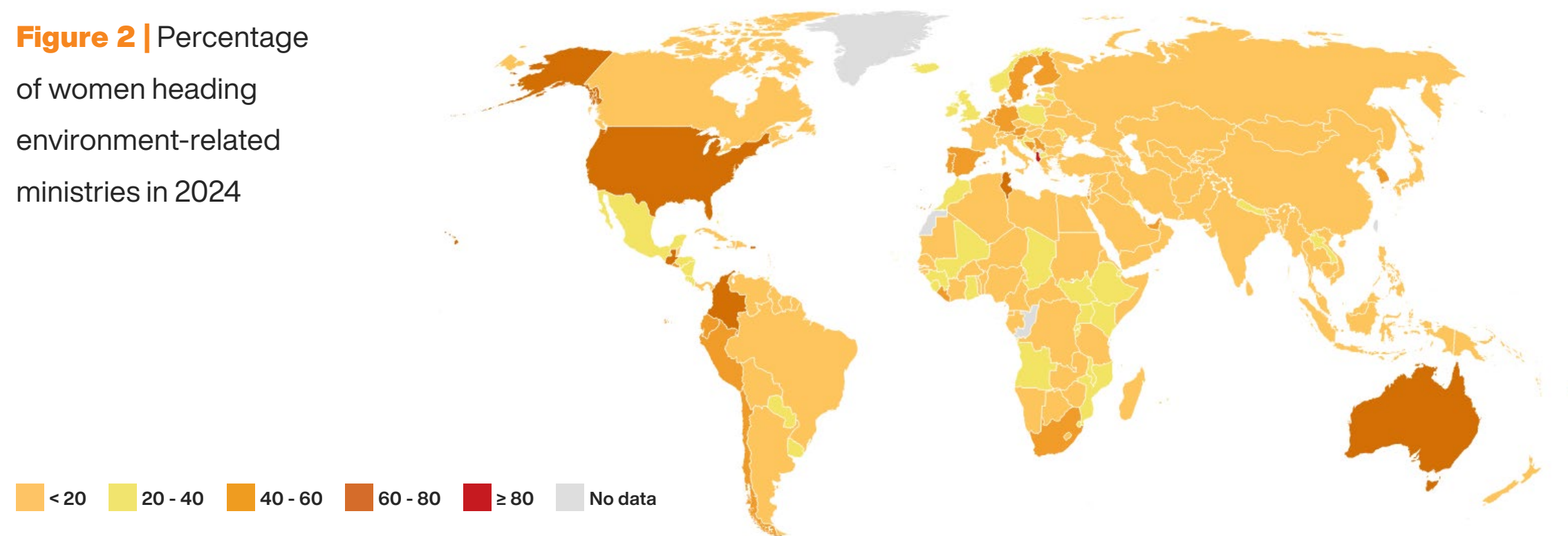
**Figure 1** | According to IUCN research conducted over the last ten years,



... it will currently take 162 years for women to reach gender parity in leading environmental ministries

### Women leading environment-related ministries in 2024

**Figure 2** | Percentage of women heading environment-related ministries in 2024



**Two indigenous women (1.27% of all women) are leading environment ministries in 2024**

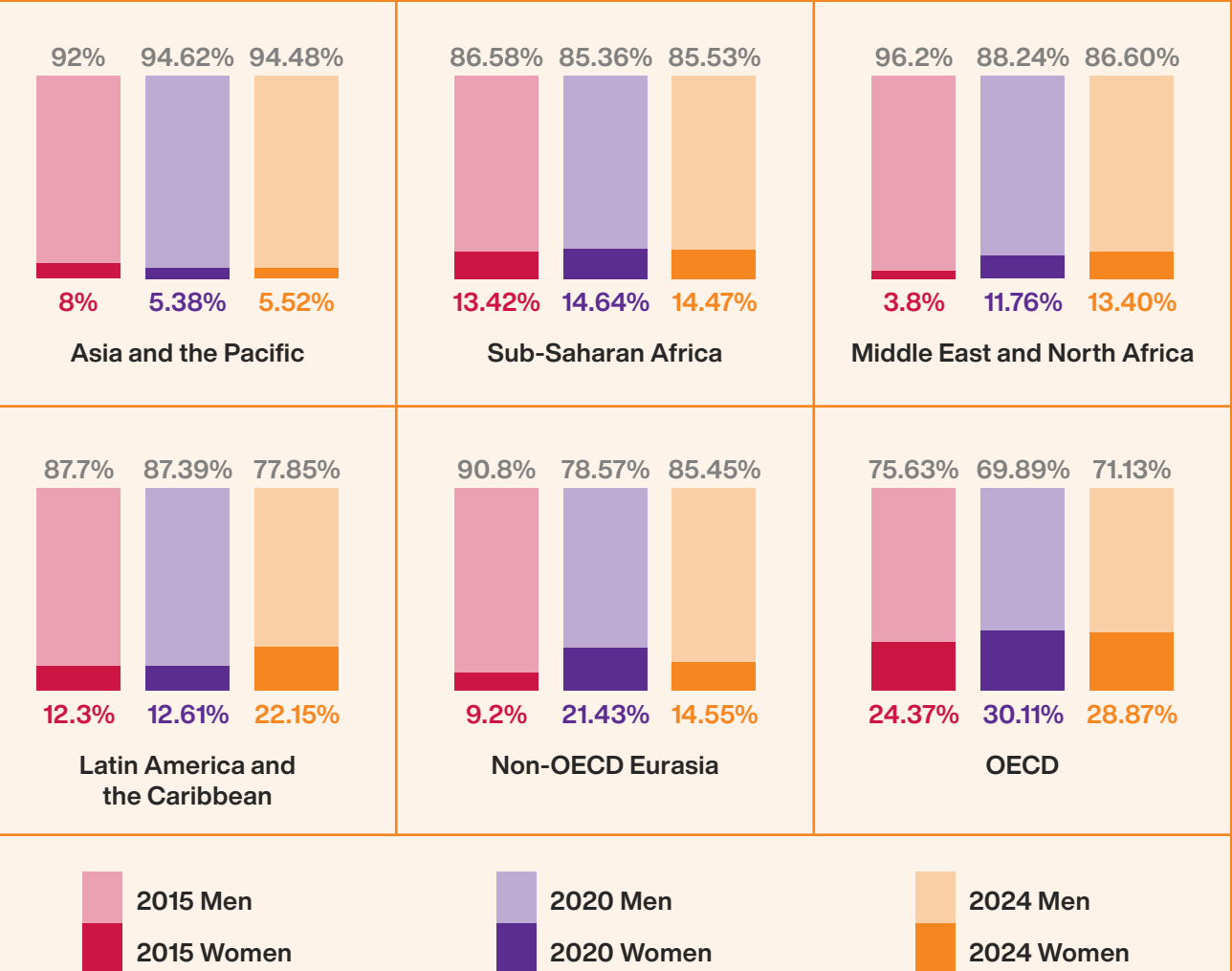


**Deb Haaland,**  
Secretary of Interior, United States – First Native American to serve as a cabinet secretary



**María Luisa Albores González,**  
Secretary of Environment and Natural Resources, Mexico – Indigenous Tzeltal

### Trends in women heading environment-related ministries across regions



**Figure 3** | Regional breakdown of women and men heads of environment-related ministries in 2015, 2020 and 2024

**Note:** Environment and environment-related ministries include ministries of environment, forestry, fisheries, water, oceans, agriculture, land, energy, climate, transportation, infrastructure, works, housing and development.



## Sustainable development and conservation are important pathways to advance gender equality and women's empowerment

Environmental conservation and sustainable development target most of the environmental and societal challenges that disproportionately affect women, compared to men, such as poverty, food insecurity, water scarcity, pollution and global warming, among others. When gender considerations are included in conservation and sustainability efforts, these disproportionate impacts are better recognised and addressed, delivering multiple benefits for people and nature and contributing to progress toward gender equality and women's empowerment across multiple areas of life.

- **Existing evidence suggests a positive relationship between fulfilling women's land rights and food security (Meinzen-Dick et al., 2019).**

Various research in the Philippines, Brazil, Mexico and Malawi has shown women tend to invest more in household needs such as food, health, education, nutrition and children's overall wellbeing when their income, economic influence and household bargain power increases (FAO, 2011). In Malawi, a study found that when women gain access to microcredit, they spend 0.41MK (Malawi Kwacha) more in food compared to women without access to microcredit; in contrast, men with access to microcredit spend 0.33 MK less in food compared to men without access to microcredit (Guha-Khasnobis & Hazarika, 2007).

- **Gender considerations for urban spaces can improve urban efficiency and safety while addressing the gender-differentiated impacts of clean air, safe water and sanitation, among other considerations.**

Investing in safe and efficient public transport contributes to cutting carbon emissions while simultaneously benefiting women, who are more dependent on public transportation

than men – a study of 19 major cities in six continents shows that women are on average 21% more likely than men to use public transport to travel to work (Goel et al, 2022). In the United States, public transportation saves 63 million metric tons of carbon dioxide annually (National Academy of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2021). Smart public lighting, including energy-efficient street lights with smart sensors can reduce security risks for women who feel significantly less safe than men in public spaces (Ossenbach, 2020). In Jakarta, Indonesia, block leaders who deliver information and persuade people to participate in sustainable environmental management in their community are mostly women. They are role models due to their environmental literacy, their persuasive skills, their interest in having a prosperous and healthy family, and their ability to manage household waste (Asteria et al., 2016).

- **Supporting Indigenous women's engagement and leadership in conservation and sustainable land use improves women's rights.**

The indigenous organisation Ujamaa Community Resource Team in Tanzania reached over 1,500 indigenous women across 55 villages through its Women's Rights and Leadership Forum, building women's knowledge and skills on land rights, governance and natural resource management – resulting in women winning local governance positions while investing funding in sustainable development (Ujamaa, 2022). In Mexico, from 2013-2015, the National Network of Indigenous Women Weaving Rights for Mother Earth and Territory reached and educated women who had been systematically excluded from environmental policy making – resulting in 21 (from zero) Indigenous Nahua women

obtaining agrarian certificates and becoming community leaders (WEA, n.d.). In Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal and Vietnam, following REDD+ trainings delivered by RECOFTC for both women and men, Indigenous and rural women emerged as relevant and successful leaders who began advising their communities on best practices regarding sustainable community forest management and tackling issues such as illegal logging, which enhanced the status and value of women in their communities (RRI, 2019).

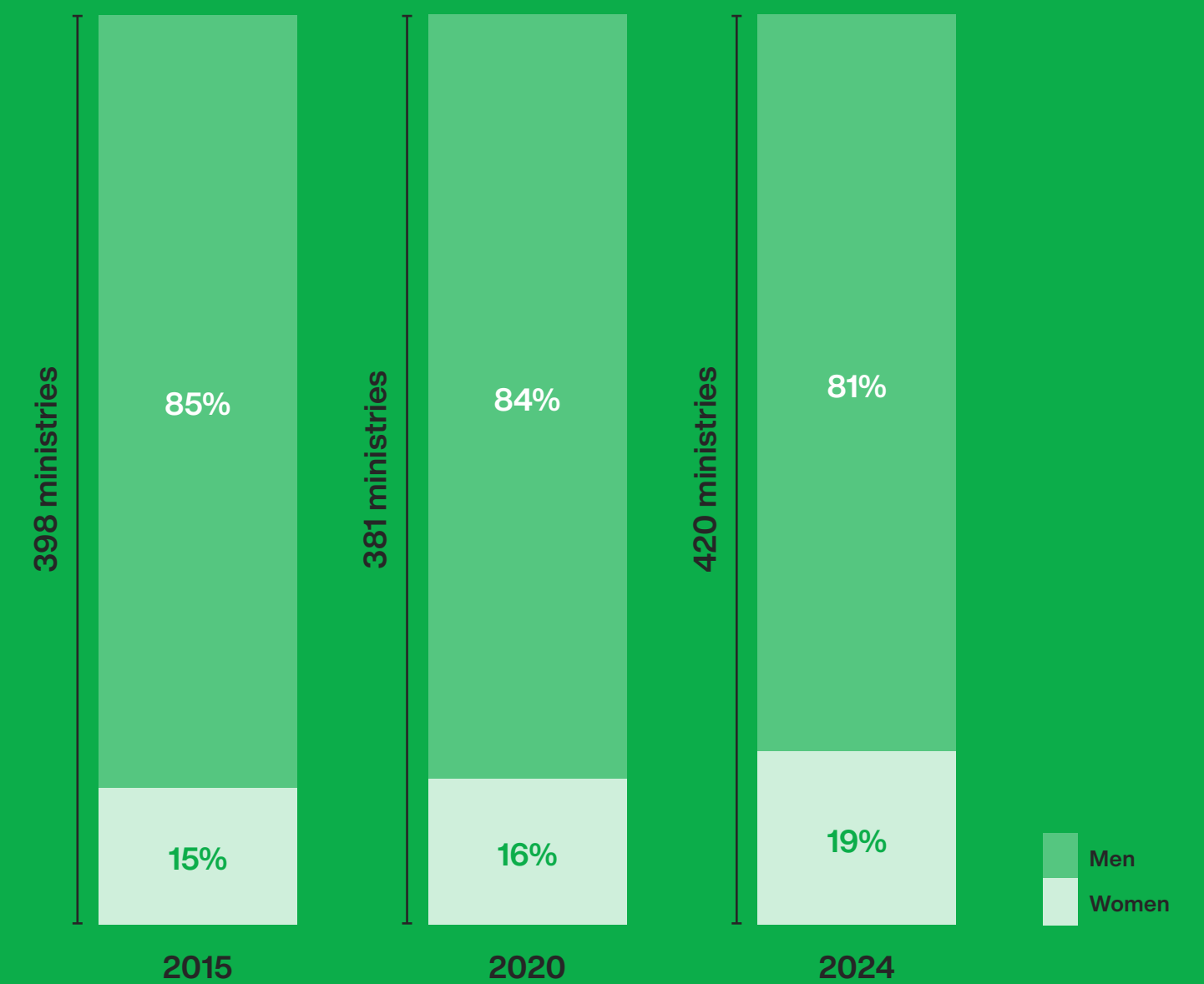
- **Gender-responsive guidance for environment projects can improve women's livelihoods and quality of life –**

An example of gender mainstreaming in mitigation measures in Cambodia, showcased on a gender mainstreaming capacity-building toolkit for policymakers, shows how the inclusion of gender considerations led to the empowerment of women as agents of change, building women's and men's resilience response equally and an increase in income through home gardening. Home gardening helped participants (56% of whom were women) earn an average income of 30,000 - 50,000 riel per day selling vegetables in local markets (Dutta, 2015). In Nigeria, a watershed management project mainstreamed gender – as a result, for the first time women participated in decision-making processes as leaders in male-dominated management committees and in the design, construction and maintenance of the reservoir. Women experienced a 45% reduction in cases of diarrhoea – and the time women take to collect water was reduced so they could spend more time on income generating activities and going to school. In complement, male community members were sensitised to the necessity of women and the benefits of their participation (United Nations, 2006).

# Lands

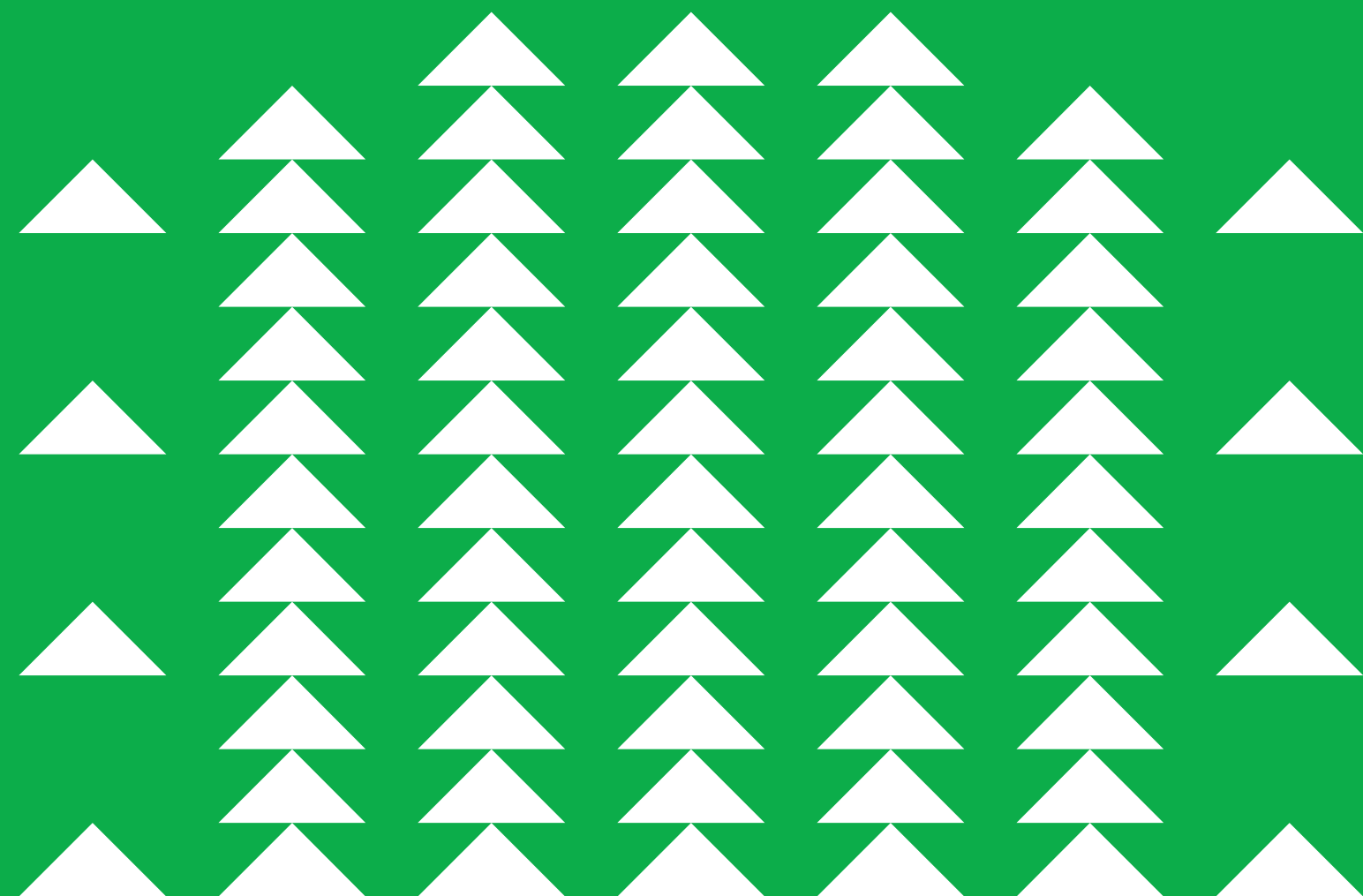


## Trends in women heading land-related ministries over time



**Note:** Land ministries include those focusing on land, food, agriculture, environment, natural resources, forestry, biodiversity and/or wildlife.

**Ecosystems are being destroyed and degraded at an alarming rate, and land biodiversity is in decline globally. Communities and wildlife that depend mainly on ecosystems and natural resources are facing the consequences, as they are directly affected by both encroachment and unsustainable, often illegal, exploitation. Biodiversity and landscapes must be restored, protected and conserved.**



To achieve this, gender equality must be at the core of sustainable solutions to ensure that women's unique knowledge and experiences are part of the solution and both women and men can equally benefit from them. Women's roles in production landscapes also include livelihood strategies and rural economic activities that are essential to the wellbeing of their families and communities. The role of women in subsistence agriculture often includes activities such as tending to animals and crop production, which are beneficial to both nature and people. The role women play often results in more diverse crops and herbs, improving nutrition and contributing to sustainable landscape management. Rural women also fulfil key roles to support their communities' agricultural production, such as seed selection, livestock breeding, fish processing and post-harvest labour. Their knowledge of these activities and use of land, water, fauna, flora and fungi must be considered in any biodiversity and conservation initiative. Women's unique experiences and skills can contribute to a better restoration and conservation of ecosystems and species.

Although women are unique knowledge-bearers, their inclusion in environmental programming is often limited, which in turn undermines their potential to develop innovative sustainable conservation strategies. The agricultural sector is underperforming due to constraints faced by women, such as their limited access to finance and agricultural inputs. This hinders their capacity to invest in more sustainable practices, including adaptation to climate change, and consequently, hinders their productivity and affects the potential of agriculture to reduce poverty. In urban environments, global warming, air pollution, water, and accumulated waste affect urban populations in different ways. Already marginalised populations, including women, living in high levels of poverty and lacking the capacity to adapt, are disproportionately affected by these environmental challenges. Women's roles in waste management, greener and safer urban spaces activism, and water and sanitation are often unrecognised and unpaid.



● **Women’s meaningful engagement in natural resource management improves conservation on the ground.**

A study analysed that women hold greater plant knowledge – with women identifying 238 plant species compared to 229 by men – and they also share this knowledge more widely as horizontal knowledge-transmission was measured at 73% for women and 61% for men ([Vieira Da Costa et al., 2021](#)). In Madagascar, the inclusion of women in mangrove planting teams, a job they had been previously excluded from, led to a 95% improvement in mangrove protection and planting rates; lessening conservation efforts and broadening community support for conservation ([Seager, 2021](#)). In India, women have been found to be effective contributors to forest and landscape coverage – in one case women’s participation was associated with an increase of 24% in the probability of controlling illicit grazing, an increase of 28% in the probability of controlling illicit felling, and an increase of 28% in the probability of forest regeneration ([Agrawal et al., 2006](#)). Another case studying 431 households in eight villages in India’s West Bengal state, found that villages with women-only forest protection committees tend to have higher social capital and better ‘livelihood performance’ than villages with mixed gender or no forest protection committees ([Das, 2012](#)). In Nepal, all-women forest governance groups have better forest regeneration and canopy growth than other groups, despite receiving much smaller and more degraded forests. Concretely, 90% of the all-women committees received forests with thin or patchy canopy relative to 69% of the other groups. Nevertheless, there was a 29% greater probability of forest regeneration being very good and 51% higher probability of an improvement in forest canopy with all-women committees ([Agarwal, 2009](#), [Leisher et al., 2016](#)). In India, the “Hargila Army” – founded by Dr. Purnima Devi Barman – is an all-female volunteer group who protect Hargila nesting sites, increasing nests by 793% (from 28 to more than 250) ([UNEP, 2022a](#)).

- **Women's economic empowerment in environmental livelihoods increases prosperity and returns on investments.**

In Côte d'Ivoire, an increase of 10% in income from female-controlled crops corresponded with a 2% increase in household food consumption. Yet, a similar increase in male-controlled crops only increased household food consumption by 0.6% ([Harris-Fry et al., 2020](#), [Duflo & Udry, 2004](#)). In Burundi, investing in gender equality in agriculture brought a \$5 return for every \$1 invested, compared to a \$2 return for every \$1 invested in agriculture programs that ignored gender equality ([CARE, 2021](#)).

- **Women make up nearly half of the agricultural labour force and are crucial for sustainable land use.**

Women comprise, on average, 43% of the agricultural labour force in developing countries – ranging from 20% in Latin America to over 60% in countries such as Mozambique or Sierra Leone ([FAO, 2011](#)) and 80% in Tanzania ([OECD, 2022](#)) – as compared to 31.6% in Europe ([Eurostat, 2020](#)) and 28.1% in the United States ([USDA, 2023](#)). In Indonesia, a study found that women's participation in agriculture significantly increases household farmers' probability to adopt sustainable agricultural practices and their participation significantly improved organic fertiliser and bio-pesticide adoption ([Muhaimin et al., 2023](#)).

- **Studies find that women can be as efficient as men when provided the same resources.**

Using an exogenous switching treatment effect regression (ESTER) model to estimate the effects of gender on maize productivity in Ethiopia, a study found that if female-headed households received the same level of returns to their productive resources as male-headed households, that alone would increase their productivity by 42.3%, closing almost completely the 44.3% productivity gap between male and female households ([Gebre et al., 2021](#)). A study from Africa suggests that women adapt as well or more effectively than men to changes that affect their farming, considering women farmers have less access to land, credit and improved seeds, among others ([Perez et al., 2015](#)).

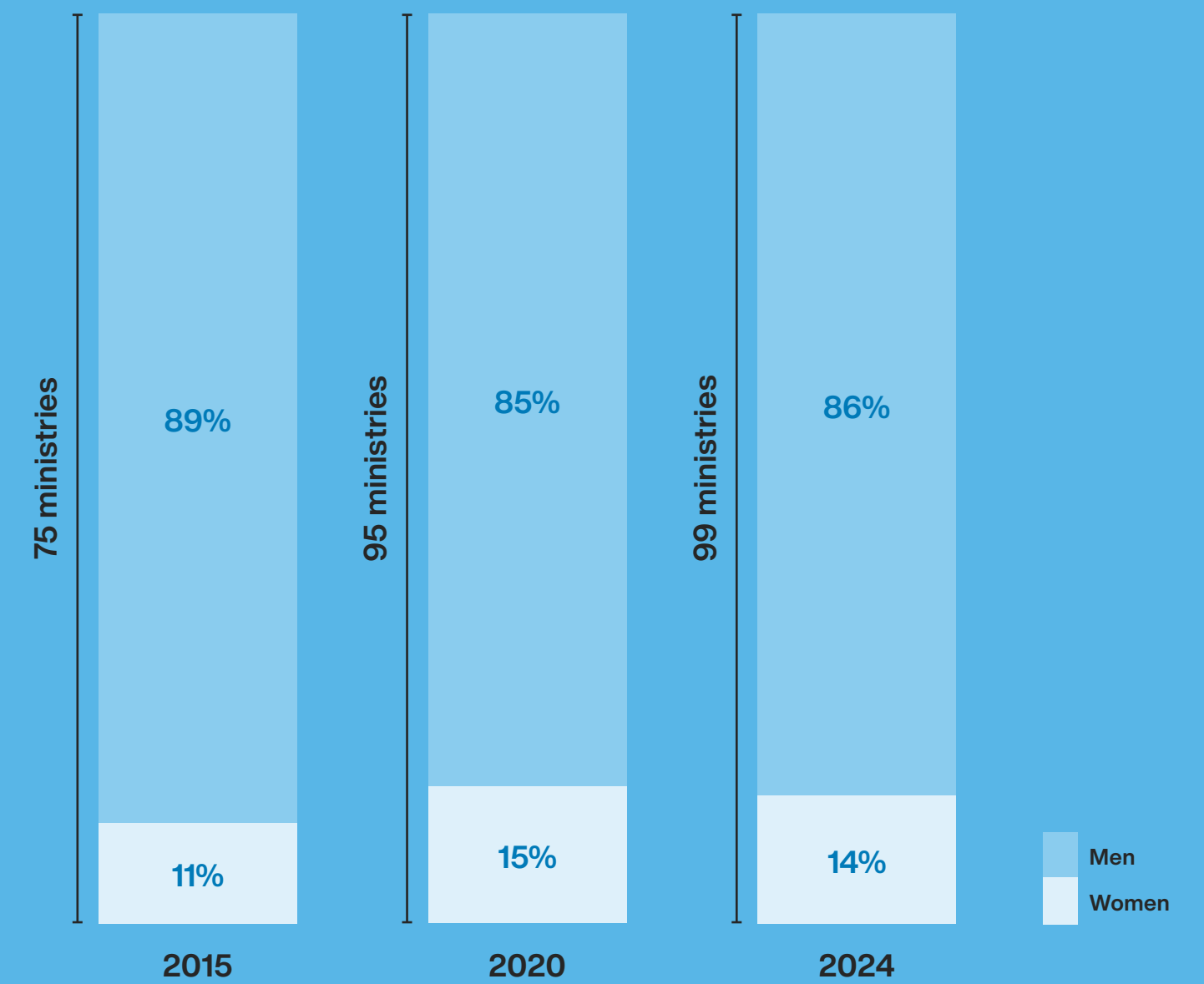
- **Women's unique knowledge, experiences and roles help protect and restore ecosystems, conserve and recover species, and promote long term sustainability.**

Indigenous communities and rural women conserve and manage biodiverse ecosystems more effectively when their rights, such as their right to equally participate in natural resource management and governance, are recognized ([OHCHR, 2021](#)). In Bolivia, a crop production project succeeded due to the traditional knowledge and skills women provided on crop and seed storage, and in accessing markets, to improve crop production and prevent risks caused by climate change. As a result, more than 100 technologies and practices were developed or reintroduced ([Angulo-Thorlund, 2008](#)). Also women Yapuchiris, an Aymara word that means 'master' or 'leader' farmer, store a very wide quantity of potato varieties, grain seeds, and other species, including medicines, and know under which conditions and where to sow every species and variety – contributing to the design of new strategies for risk management ([Angulo-Thorlund, 2008](#)). Indigenous women leaders from Kenya, Nicaragua and the Philippines are planting trees along the river, collecting pine needles and using them to reforest the area, reviving Indigenous seeds and setting up seedbanks, preserving food, learning new handcraft techniques and saving to invest in rain-harvest systems ([World Bank, 2022](#)).

# Water

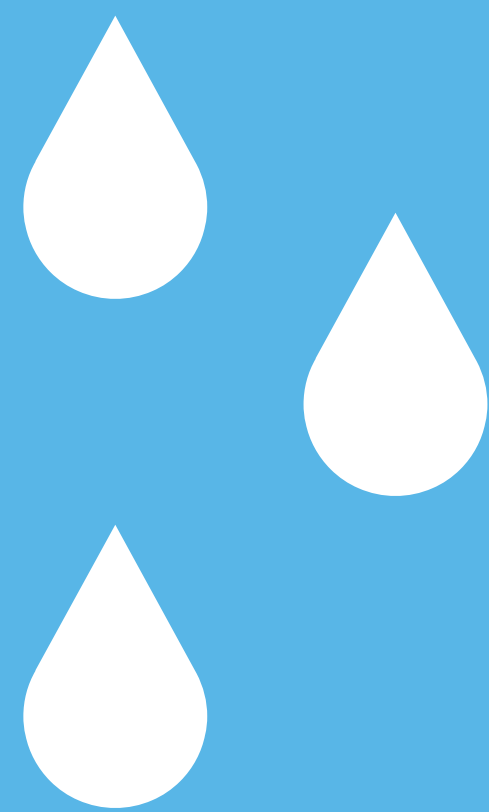


## Trends in women heading water-related ministries over time



**Note:** Water ministries include water, irrigation, hydraulics, or related ministries, as well as fisheries ministries in landlocked countries. Four coastal countries' ministries of fisheries and aquaculture have been included in both the water and oceans sectors.

**Freshwater systems and habitats are a source of life for humans, providing food, water and livelihoods for millions of people around the world. Freshwater biodiversity is disappearing, and water systems are drying up or becoming too polluted for both wildlife and human use. With an unprecedented 83% decline in freshwater biodiversity and wetlands disappearing three times faster than forests, water use and mismanagement are driving ecosystem degradation and fragmentation, as well as species loss.**



Being mainly responsible for the collection, sustainable use, management, and storage of water for household use and irrigation, women heavily rely on healthy freshwater systems – which often hold cultural and spiritual values for communities. As such, women are guardians of freshwater systems and possess essential knowledge that can contribute to the restoration and conservation of freshwater systems. Their roles, experiences and knowledge are crucial to adapt to climate change and environmental degradation.

When women are equally represented in water policy decision-making, their access to natural resources can be more fully realised – particularly if their rights to land are addressed – while also better addressing their individual and collective needs. Together, these approaches reduce their vulnerabilities to environmental changes and climate hazards. However, current water management policies are insufficient and inequitable: they fail to include gender considerations and needs, and they do not account for the importance of women’s role and knowledge in the collection and sustainable use and management of water, and in the protection and restoration of freshwater systems. As a result, women are often excluded from decision-making and benefit-sharing over water and associated ecosystem services. Water governance can account for women’s experiences and perspectives and provide them with decision-making and advisory positions.



- **The world of women is tied to water.**

Each day, women and girls collectively spend 200 million hours collecting water ([UNICEF, 2016](#)) – in 7 out of 10 households where water is not readily available, women and girls are responsible for collecting and managing its use – which impacts economic and educational opportunities ([UNICEF & WHO, 2023](#)). A study in Tanzania showed a 12% increase in school attendance when water was available within 15 minutes, in comparison to more than half an hour away ([UNICEF, 2016](#)).

- **Despite the importance of water roles in the daily life of women and girls around the globe, legal and social barriers still prevent their full engagement in the water sector.**

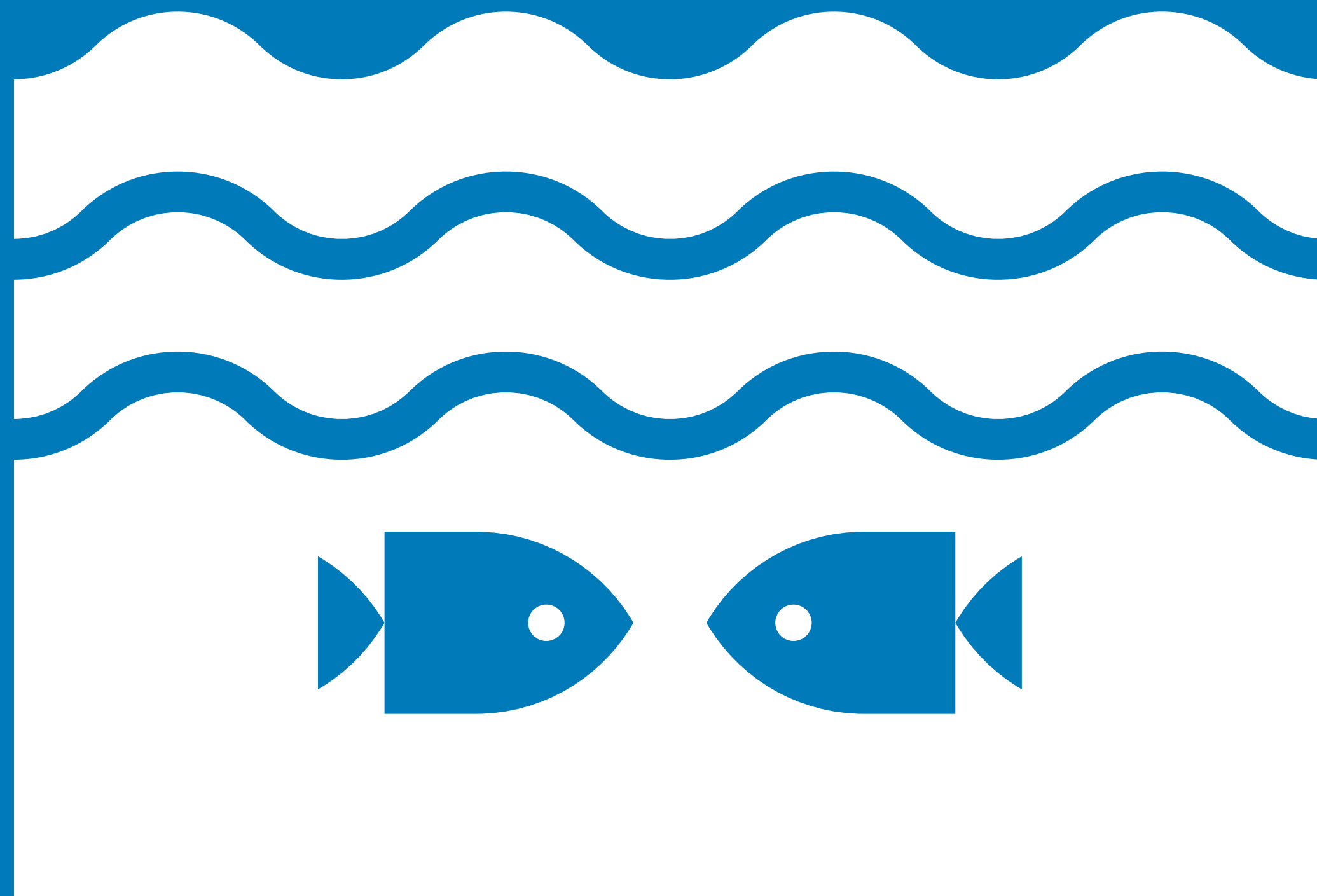
Currently, less than 17% of employees in the water sector are women ([UNESCO WWAP, 2021](#)). In 20 countries, women still face restrictions to perform certain tasks in the water sector ([World Bank, 2023](#)) and less than 50 countries have laws or policies that specifically mention women's participation in rural sanitation or water resources management ([UN-Water, 2021](#)).

- **Women help protect, restore and promote healthy freshwater systems and habitats.**

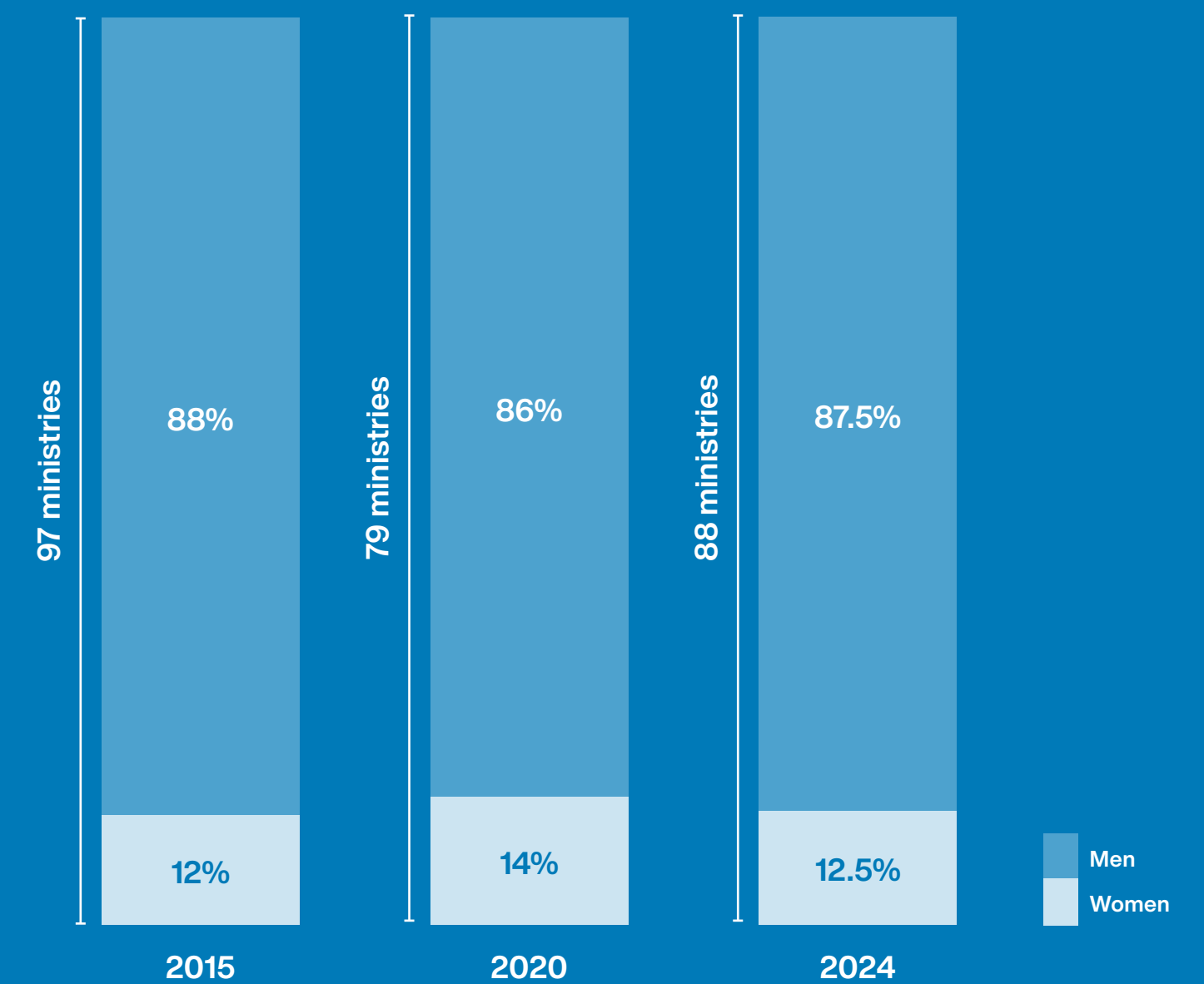
In Uganda, the percentage of women in water user committees is considered a top-10 golden indicator in rural water performance ([Naiga, 2020](#)). In the Kumaon Himalayan mountains, male out migration in search of employment has left women in charge of land and water management, becoming responsible for protecting their ecosystem from the impacts of climate change and looking for new innovative adaptation and resilience actions. For instance, they reintroduced traditional water conservation practices and developed their own indigenous rainwater harvesting system. Men now recognize them as legitimate land managers ([Tiwari & Joshi, 2015](#)). Research on 44 water projects across Asia and Africa show that water services will be better sustained and used by the communities if both men and women are involved in shaping water policies, while a study of 121 rural water supply projects found that women's participation was strongly associated with project effectiveness ([UNDP, 2006](#)). In Java, Indonesia, women were the ones providing the technical solutions to design problems in the existing water system, driving change in long-held beliefs of women's lack of technical skills and improving their participation in the community's water systems ([Thomson et al., 2017](#)). In Zimbabwe, a water source rehabilitation project that included women in maintenance training and deciding appropriate technology and sites for new water points resulted in a higher sense of ownership and active involvement through which women established a savings scheme to buy spare parts, increasing the total number of rehabilitated water sources by increasing the number of targeted boreholes by more than four times ([Katsi, 2006](#)).



# Oceans

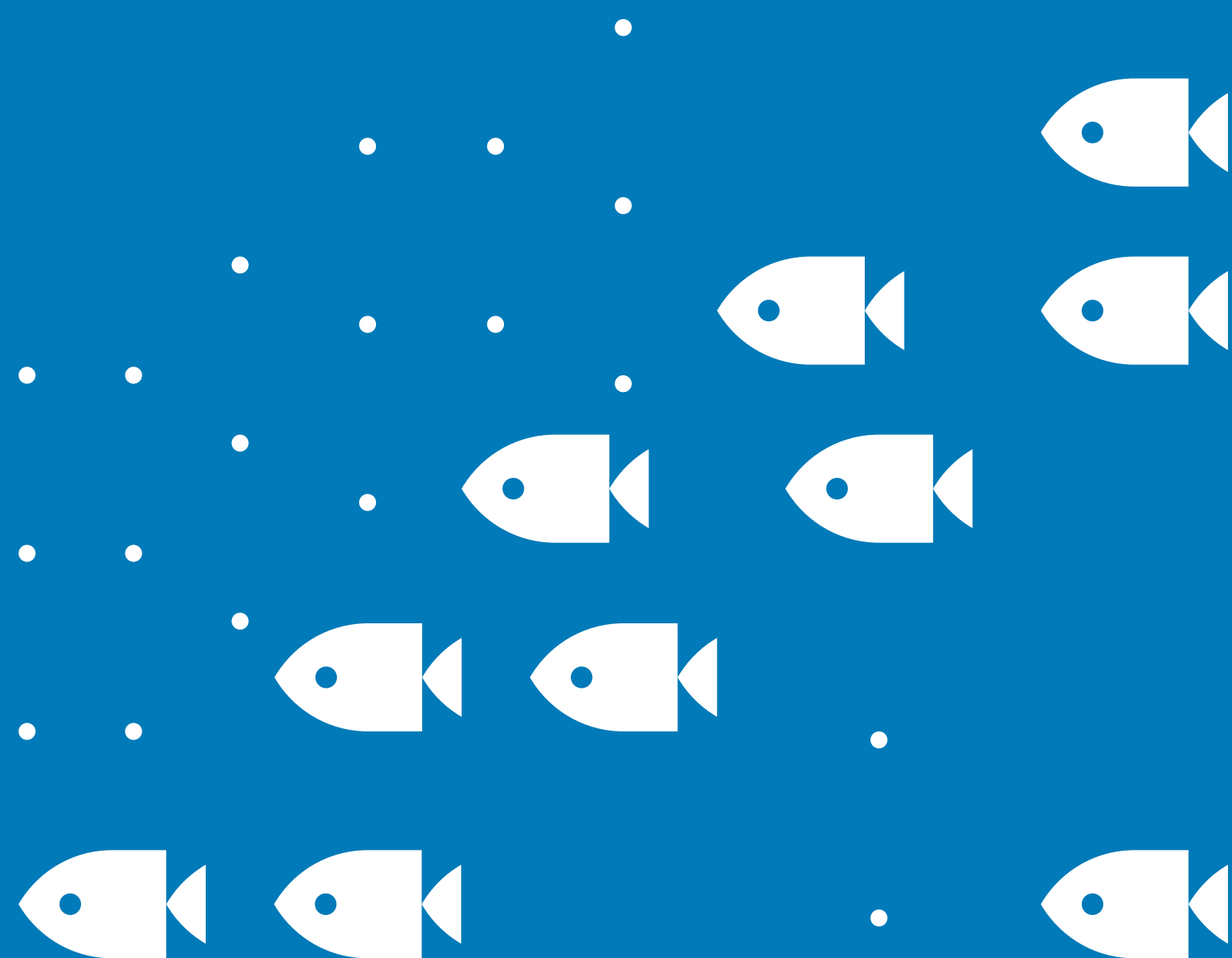


## Trends in women heading ocean-related ministries over time



**Note:** Ocean ministries include ocean, maritime or sea ministries, as well as fisheries ministries from coastal countries.

**As oceans generate approximately 16% of animal protein for the human diet (UNEP & GWA, 2019) and play a key role in the regulation of temperatures and production of oxygen – blue capital is the cornerstone of the livelihoods, economies, and cultures for many.**



Women play essential roles in the fisheries sector – they support the collection of fish nearshore, fish processing and sales, both finances and logistics for fishing expeditions, while also acting as effective contributors and leaders in coastal conservation. However, as women are highly prevalent in pre- and post-harvesting roles in the fisheries value chain, their work is often less visible and they are vulnerable to the conditions of informal work. Today, marine and coastal resources are deteriorating due to climate change, overfishing, population growth and urban expansion and women are therefore essential for sustainable fisheries, particularly in decreasing post-harvest losses.

Women also contribute to coastal ecosystems management differently, using their gender-specific needs, knowledge and capabilities related to fisheries and aquaculture, in processing and trading of marine products and the management of plastic and other waste. However, their contributions have been historically underestimated and ignored and their representation in decision-making remains low; making ocean and coastal decision-making sub-optimal or derived benefits and outcomes unequal. Their contributions in ocean and coastal decision-making can allow for the emergence of new conservation strategies when women's roles, priorities and knowledge across fisheries and coastal conservation are embodied in gender-responsive natural resource management and decision-making, generating more equitable benefit sharing of marine and coastal resources while improving livelihoods and sustainable food security.

- **Women play many important roles in fisheries.**

Globally, women account for 21% of those engaged in the fisheries and aquaculture harvesting sectors (18% in fisheries and 28% in aquaculture). When accounting for pre- and post-harvesting value chains, women make up about 50% of employees, accounting for up to 85% of employees in certain segments of the processing sector ([FAO, 2022b](#)). In Africa and Oceania women account for 56.8% and 50.4% respectively of those engaged in small-scale fisheries ([FAO, Duke University & WorldFish, 2023](#)). In Nigeria, women make up 73% of the fisheries workforce and 72% in India ([FAO and WorldFish Center, 2008](#)). Women account for the majority of important seafood sectors, such as seaweed and shellfish harvesting but are excluded from decision-making and support programmes ([IPCC, 2022](#)).

- **Women are essential for sustainable fisheries.**

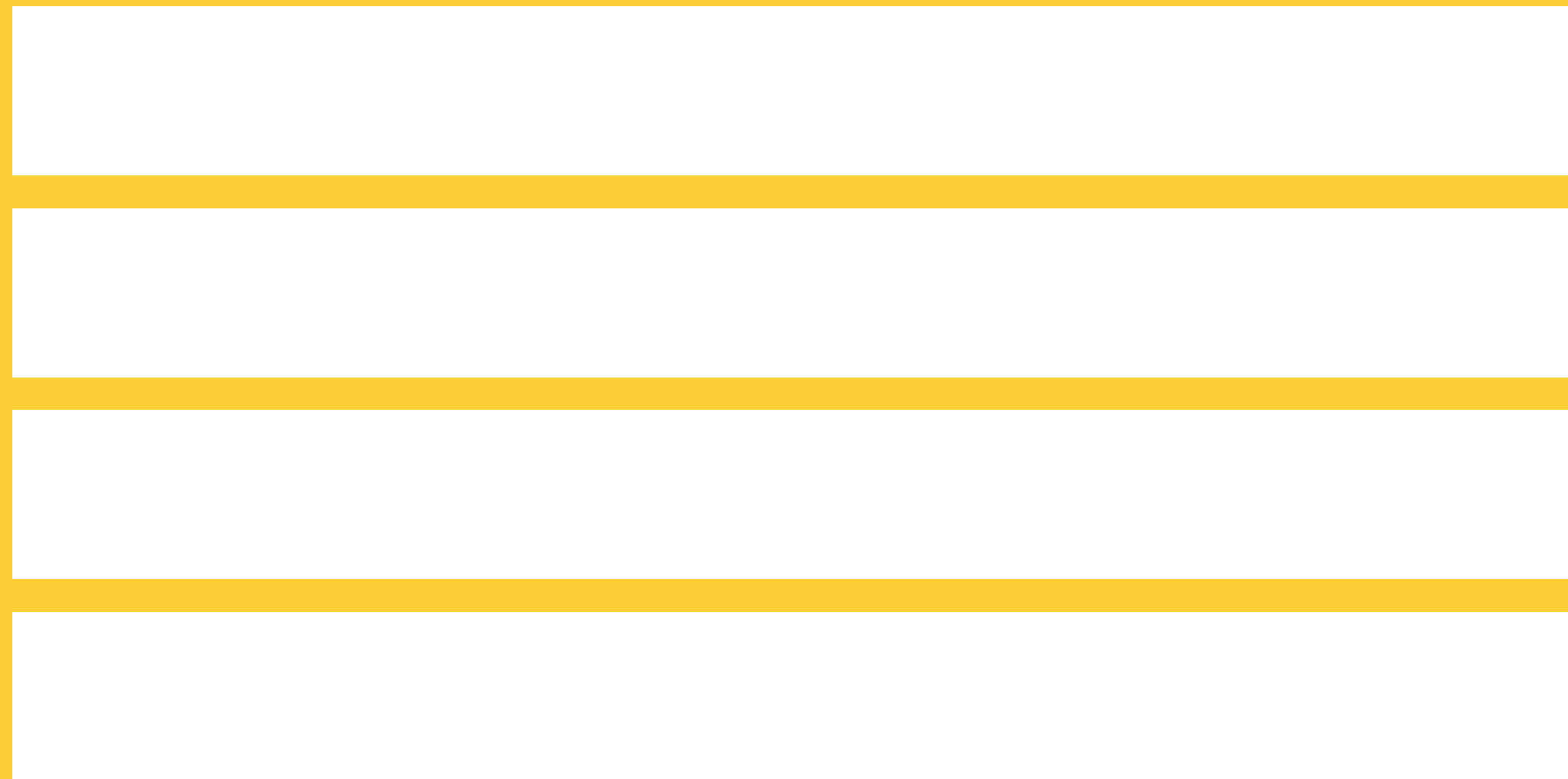
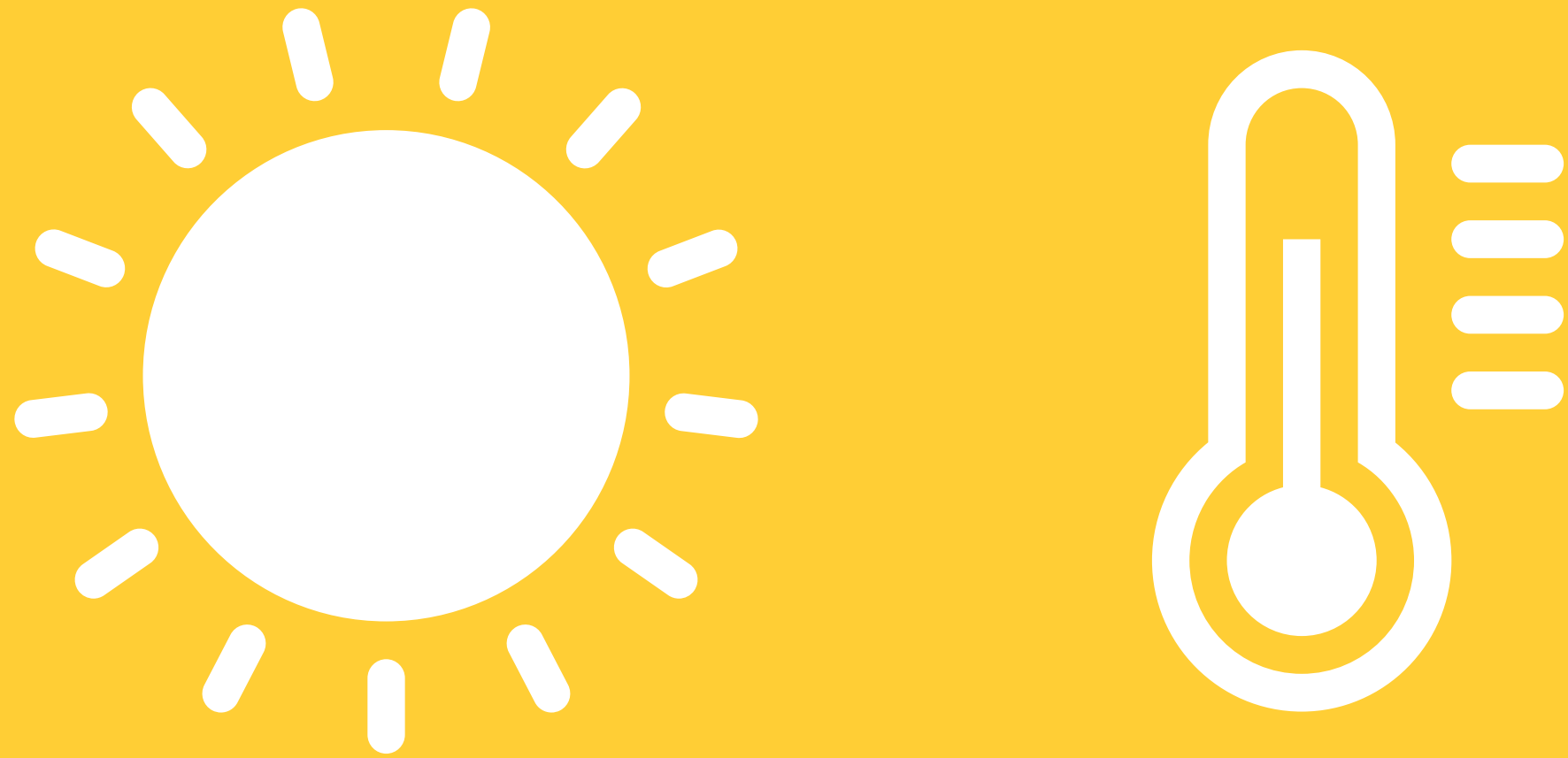
In Ghana, women are knowledge-bearers and experts on fish processing, and are in charge of fish processing and selling - one of the main economic activities in coastal communities. Their participation in decision-making and advocacy is contributing to effective fish stock management, which includes women refusing to buy “bad (meaning illegal) fish” ([Torell et al, 2019](#)). Fisherwomen are also collaborating with the government and sharing their expertise and insights in pre- and post-harvesting roles to develop fish stock management tools, while also demanding governments to protect fisherwomen rights ([One Ocean Hub, 2022](#)). A study in Fiji provided vital insight into the diversity of fishing habitats and species used by women fishers, including mangroves, coral reefs, mud flats and the open ocean, which are home and nursery areas to many fish and invertebrate species. It was found that women also fish in the open sea and past coral reefs, – areas believed to be male fishing zones - and that they harvest more than 100 species of fish and at least 10 species of invertebrates and seaweed; contrary to the conventional view that women fishers mainly harvest invertebrates and seaweed. One of the fish families favoured by women fishers is grouper – a fish family subject to seasonal bans. If taken into consideration, these findings could shape gender-inclusive coastal ecosystems interventions that do not negatively impact women ([UNEP, 2022b](#)). In the Philippines a gender-responsive marine conservation project measured a 24% increase in fish biomass and a 12% increase in economic benefits, with fisherfolk earning, saving and eating more fish while spending less time fishing – while improving 1.8 million hectares in municipal marine waters via improved local, inclusive governance ([USAID, n.d.](#))



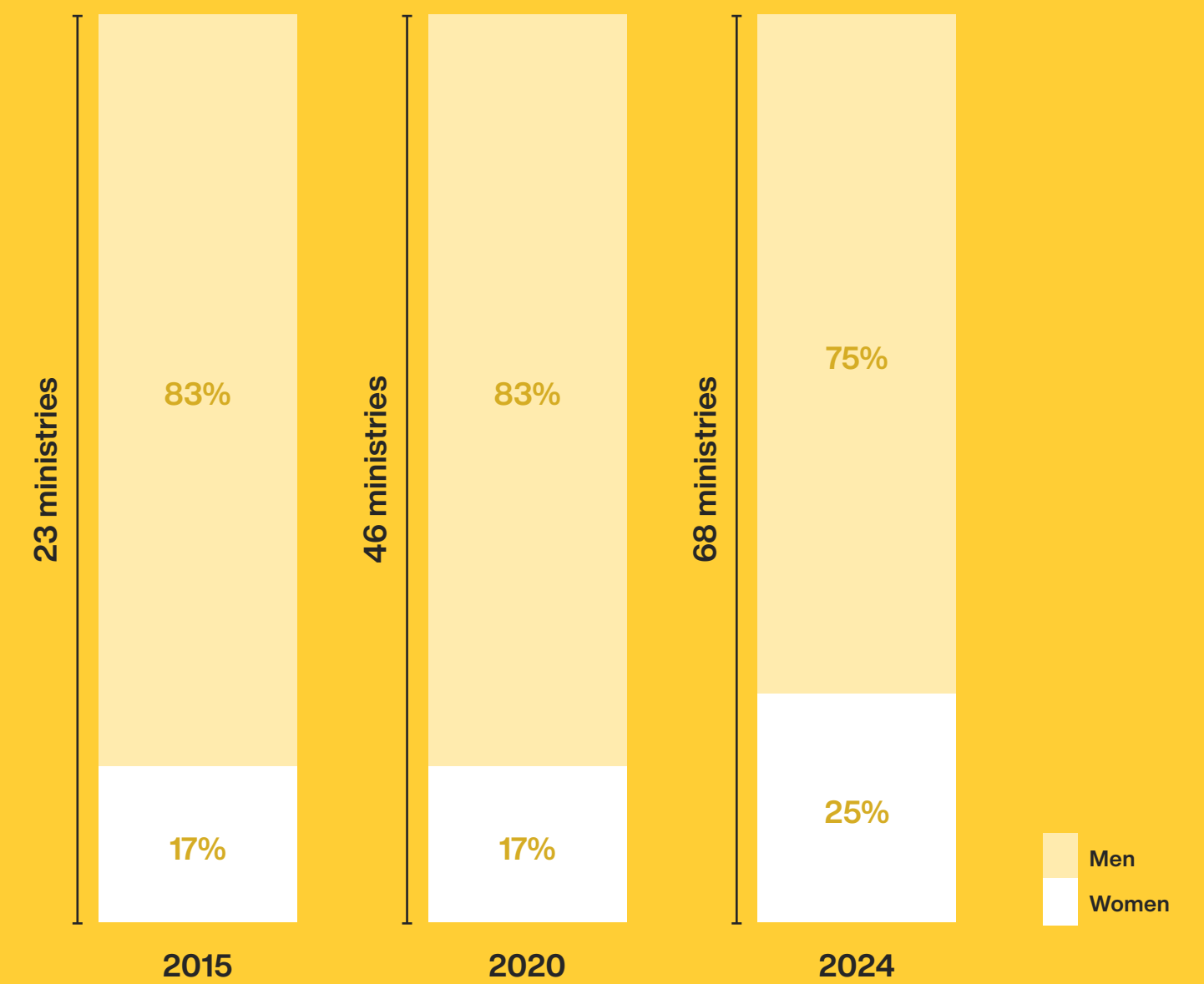
- **Women are essential for the protection of coastal and marine biodiversity and habitat restoration.**

In Guinea, it was found that mangrove conservation requires supporting women as 28-46% of women in three sites harvest mangrove wood for fish smoking and 42% harvest mangrove wood for salt extraction ([Camara et al., n.d.](#)). Similarly, in Kenya’s Kwale County, women report that there was nearly a 100% dependency on mangroves, which “inevitably resulted in their degradation”, so women participated in projects to invest in short-rotation cycle trees as an alternative to firewood and timber needs ([Kawira, 2023](#)). Sri Lanka was the first nation to commit to protecting all its mangroves and its protection schemes rely on providing microcredit to women – who received 2,000 loads and saw a 96% repayment rate. The women invest funds in alternative livelihoods and support mangrove restoration ([Perera, 2015](#)).

# Climate



## Trends in women heading climate-related ministries over time



**Note:** Climate ministries include those using climate, energy transition, ecological transition, net zero, renewable energy or similar terms in their name, as well as ministries on disasters/emergencies preparedness and/or management.

**Greenhouse gas emissions have risen progressively over the past decade; global average temperatures have risen 1°C compared to pre-industrial levels and continue to rise. The impacts of climate change are harming societies, biodiversity, and wildlife, exacerbating existing inequalities and disproportionately affecting certain groups. Gender inequalities can act as a risk multiplier.**

Women and girls are often more burdened and significantly more impacted by climate change, and the unequal control and access to natural resources and other productive assets limits their adaptive capacity to it. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) documents women being disproportionately impacted by water scarcity and salinisation-associated changes – as responsible for securing drinking water and fuel –, by climate change-induced food insecurity and by extreme weather events, among others ([IPCC, 2022](#)). The IPCC also asserts that the “effectiveness of decision-making and governance is enhanced by the involvement of local stakeholders (particularly those most vulnerable to climate change including Indigenous Peoples and local communities, women, and the poor and marginalised) in policies for land-based climate change adaptation and mitigation” and that “increasing social and gender equity is an integral part of the technological and social transitions and transformation towards climate resilient development” ([IPCC, 2022](#)). Science-based assessments and knowledge continually improve understanding and action on how gender-responsive adaptation and mitigation can increase gender equality, women’s empowerment, social benefits and climate goals.

As the Paris Agreement and the Global Stocktake on its implementation call for gender-responsive approaches ([United Nations, 2015](#); [UNFCCC, 2023](#)), nature-based solutions can play a key role in delivering benefits for people and nature, as part of a gender-responsive just transition. With IUCN estimating \$170 million USD in estimated global benefits in ecosystem services, nature-based solutions leverage nature and the power of healthy ecosystems to protect people, optimise infrastructure and safeguard a stable and biodiverse future ([IUCN, n.d. b](#)). Integrating gender-responsive Nature-based solutions within Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and other policy instruments can propel the transformative change needed to achieve effective climate action and gender equality.



- **Gender-responsive climate finance can improve gender equality for women and men.**

Financial institutions in Tajikistan received technical and capacity-building support from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)'s Tajikistan Climate Resilience Financing Facility to improve women owners, business managers and farmers' access to climate technologies – resulting in greater equality at home, with 60% of female borrowers reporting having more influence and decisions about family assets ([EBRD, 2019](#)). In Indonesia, Peru and Tanzania groups with requirements for gender-balanced membership conserved more trees in a Payment for Ecosystem Services interventions and shared the payments more equally compared to groups without this requirement. Gender-balanced groups reduced their tree harvests by an average of about 42 more trees than the corresponding group without the gender quota in the same village ([Cook et al., 2019](#)). Research in Tanzania found that women share water more equitably than men do, especially in times of scarcity. In self-governed watersheds, men with high social standing kept more than half of available water for themselves, depriving others from sizable returns from irrigated agriculture while women were found to share water altruistically by doing the opposite ([Lecoutere et al., 2015](#)). In India, the number of drinking water projects were 62% higher in areas where local councils were led by women ([Fauconnier et al., 2018](#)).

- **The just, green transition offers ample opportunity to uplift women.**

The just transition offers a pathway for women, who compose the majority of those in informal, low-wage and precarious work. For example, in El Salvador, LaGeo, a geothermal energy utility, increased women's participation at its plants and offices by 5% over a four-year period and built women's presence and roles in seasonal workforces, among other approaches. LaGeo's comprehensive and gender-responsive corporate social responsibility programming contributed to preventing vandalism or energy theft during the assessed period, generating millions in savings compared with other utilities ([Gonzales et al., 2019](#)). A study from Nicaragua reveals that rural electrification raised female employment by 23% as women were relieved from time-consuming household chores, enabling them to work outside the home and earn incomes while contributing to the economy ([Grogan & Sadanand, 2013](#)). The Jamaica Power Service increased the number of women working in customer service, finding that customer satisfaction leapt to 70% from a 23% baseline ([IUCN, 2018](#)).

- **Women's empowerment supports the adoption of climate-smart practices and approaches.**

A study in Kenya found that when women have access to credit, they are more likely to invest in climate-smart agricultural practices such as irrigation, water harvesting and improved livestock manure management practices, and there is evidence of a more efficient use of fertilisers. In Nyando, women were more likely than men, by a difference of 45%, to adopt pasture management practices if aware of techniques ([Bernier et al., 2015](#)). A review of 27 publications found that if women's land rights are fully realised, long-term investments and the adoption of more sustainable agriculture and climate-smart technologies are more likely to occur ([Landesa, 2023](#)). For instance, a study of land tenure in Ethiopia found that within female-headed households, a higher gender gap of tenure security (measured as the percentage point difference between male and female quiz scores) decreases the probability of practising soil conservation – meaning that gender gaps in land rights knowledge diminish the probability of adopting soil conservation techniques ([Quisumbing & Kumar, 2014](#)).

- **Though gender-responsive climate policies are relevant for driving change, comprehensively gender-integrated climate plans are still lacking.**

According to a 2021 study by IUCN on Gender and National Climate Planning, out of the 89 studied countries, only 6% of NDCs identify women's organisations or national mechanisms as key participants in implementing a specific activity and only 6% provide a budget and allocate funds to gender specific activities. Likewise, only 11% include indicators specifically about women, that require sex disaggregation or that are used to track progress towards reducing gender gaps, and only 6.7% include gender-based violence considerations. The 20 Parties that did not include gender within their NDCs emitted more than three times the amount of greenhouse gases (GHGs) of those parties who included gender (69) ([IUCN, 2021a](#)). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Network on Gender Equality found that development support targeting gender and climate change nearly doubled between 2010 and 2014. Nevertheless, only 3% of this assistance had gender equality as a primary target, and over half of the assistance for climate change adaptation efforts failed to take women's specific needs and contributions into account ([GGF & Prospera, 2018](#)).





● **Inclusively developed gender-responsive climate policy can enable conditions to support gender equality and women’s resilience and contribute to climate and social goals.**

In Guinea-Bissau, gender-inclusive nature-based solutions projects have been adopted as a result of including gender considerations in the country’s NDC. These include irrigation and diversification of agricultural production by women small-scale farmers. Similarly, a local women’s economic empowerment association operates a “resilience credit” initiative for women, including training on food safety, fruit and vegetable processing and conservation, entrepreneurship and business opportunities in the field of food safety ([Government of Guinea-Bissau, 2021](#)). In Guatemala, nature-based gender-responsive measures have been adopted, including: restoring mangrove ecosystems with the full participation of women’s groups; approving new marine and coastal natural protected areas that sought input from women and their participation during the technical assessment stage; and ensuring that at least 30% of forest areas is under the management of Indigenous and non-Indigenous women ([Government of Guatemala, 2021](#)). Affordable low-cost solar water heating solutions were proposed as a basis for the first gender-sensitive Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA) in Georgia. Since 2009, 400 solar warm water heaters have been installed and are monitored by locally-trained men and women, using local materials and responding to the needs of women living in rural areas, who have less access and control over assets and income. The program reduced energy poverty, environmental degradation and climate change ([WECEF, 2015](#)). In Fiji, a community-based women’s organisation, Women’s Weather Watch, was established after a devastating 2004 flood. Relying on a network of local women leaders “to share updates about developing weather patterns, service provisions, and gaps in quantitative and qualitative data so that disaster management systems are more inclusive and take a strong prevention approach to gender-based violence” this initiative helps women make well-informed decisions during times of crises – as they are usually the first responders during emergencies and are responsible for their families ([Women Deliver, 2019](#)).



# Gender-neutral policies and actions result in gender blindness, which results in widespread negative impacts for people and nature alike

Sociocultural norms regarding gender influence all aspects of life, from the way women and men are supposed to act, to their responsibilities and roles in households and communities. Ignoring gender considerations can contribute to gender inequality. It can perpetuate women's limited political power, limited access to and ownership of land and natural resources, lower opportunities to be financially independent, among others.





- **Gender neutral programs undermine conservation goals and human rights – it is essential to visibilise women’s contributions.**

A study of a gender-blind pasture management policy in Ethiopia shows that side-lining women’s knowledge and needs weakens social learning and the adaptiveness of the management rules undermining the resilience of a social-ecological system ([Aregu et al. 2016](#)). Despite the key role women play in food production and marketing in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, (women provide 60-80 percent of food production and trade), female farmers represent only 17% of the beneficiaries of national private sector-led growth strategies for the agricultural sector ([UNEP, UN Women, PBSO & UNDP, 2013](#)) – and, globally, of the 84 national food policies and plans developed by December 2021, only 4% refer to women as leaders who can play a role in food security and 39% of those policies overlook women entirely ([CARE, 2022](#)). Though women and girls are the primary managers and users of water, only 1 in 5 utility employees are female and average only 24.5% of employees in water and sanitation facilities – and are often only found in administration roles such as customer relations and finance and accounting ([World Bank, 2019](#)). According to a study in Fiji by the Wildlife Conservation Society, Fiji’s patriarchal society favours male decision-making at the village. As a result, women are often not included in decision-making on natural resources management and do not receive equal benefits from commercial fisheries in their customary fishing areas ([UNEP & Gender and Water Alliance, 2022](#)). Agricultural gender gaps cost Malawi USD 100 million, Tanzania USD 105 million and Uganda USD 67 million every year. Closing these gender gaps has the potential to increase annual crop yields by 2.2-7.3% and could lift as many as 238,000 people out of poverty in Malawi, 119,000 people in Uganda, and 80,000 people in Tanzania every year ([UN Women, UNDP, UNEP & World Bank, 2015](#)).

- **The lack of women’s environmental rights recognition relegates them to informal and dangerous work.**

Women often hold the most insecure and low-paid jobs across the value chains and face discrimination and inequalities, for example earning approximately 64% of men’s wages for the same work in the aquaculture sector ([World Bank, FAO & IFAD, 2009](#)). For instance, according to the World Economic Forum, women comprise the majority of waste pickers labour-force in some countries, which exposes them to hazardous chemicals. For example, in Ghana, women account for 64% of itinerant waste-pickers and 68% of washers and sorters in recycling companies ([WEF, 2021](#)). According to an IUCN study on National Biodiversity Strategies, in El Salvador, urban women’s work on sanitation, recycling and water management is often unpaid ([IUCN, 2017](#)).

● **Sustainable fisheries fail when women are not included or engaged in project design and implementation.**

In 2005, the banning of some fishing techniques used by women in the Congo River along the Makotipoko district and the lack of information-sharing to women regarding new practices caused detrimental conservation impacts for the fish and invertebrate resources that women predominantly harvest. Women in fishing communities were not consulted or informed, and they continued using old techniques. A gender action plan was then developed to integrate women's needs and roles in the management of freshwater ecosystems in the Congo River ([FAO, 2007](#)). Women's contributions in onshore fisheries, aquaculture, processing, and trading of marine products, in managing plastic and other waste from urban and tourist growth have been frequently underestimated. For instance, in Bangladesh, a government ban on post larvae shrimp (seed) collection to protect coastal biodiversity failed as there was no consultation with local populations – the majority of whom were women who depended upon the resource and had no alternatives – and the ban's failure worsened as climate-induced higher salinity drove more women out of farming and into shrimp harvesting, doubling seed collection in a six-year period ([UNEP & Gender and Water Alliance, 2019](#)). A study implemented in Mexico noted that fisheries management advisory councils were exclusively composed of men from major fishing organisations – in consequence, local and traditional users, including women wetlands users and “un-permitted” fisherfolk, were excluded from decision-making, resulting in fisheries decisions that were based on inaccurate data that did not capture that more than 50% of artisanal fishing was already conducted without permits. Now “un-permitted,” they had no legal rights to remove poachers from their waters ([UNEP & Gender and Water Alliance, 2022](#)).

● **Women's continued lack of land and property rights undermines both gender equality and conservation.**

Nearly 40% of the world's economies still limit women's property rights ([World Bank, n.d.](#)) and in 123 countries, traditional, religious and customary laws and practices limit women's freedom to claim and protect their land assets ([OECD, 2019](#)). As a result, women make up only 13.8% of landholders globally ([UN Women, 2019](#)), with regional rates varying from about 5% in the Middle East and North Africa to 18% in Latin America and the Caribbean ([FAO, 2018](#)). In addition, only 8 out of 30 countries assessed mandate that daughters, widows, and unmarried women in consensual unions have equal rights to inherit alongside their male counterparts ([RRI, 2017](#)). In Parwech, northern Uganda, despite being responsible for growing 80% of all food crops, only 7% of women actually own land ([UNEP, UN Women, PBSO & UNDP, 2013](#)). Out of 68 countries, by 2022, about 31% protect women's land rights considerably (a score of at least 5 out of 6), while 47% poorly protect women's land rights ([UN DESA, 2023](#)). In Uganda, female victims of forceful eviction described how women were raped in isolated places during eviction ([Womankind, 2018](#)). In 2016, Leena Sharma, an Indigenous woman who wanted to claim the ancestral land she inherited was disappeared, her near-naked body discovered in a remote forest not far from her land ([Gowen, 2016](#)). Conversely, women who own land are up to eight times less likely to experience domestic violence ([Landesa, 2015](#)).



● **The lack of attention to gender equity in policy processes, dialogues and work cultures reentrench gaps in women's accessibility to representational and leadership roles.**

According to a periodic survey implemented by the OECD, only seven out of 38 OECD countries collect gender-disaggregated data related to the environment or environmental policy-making and only thirteen countries consider gender aspects in environmental policy-making ([OECD, 2020](#)). In a study of 30 environmental conferences over a ten-year period, efforts to minimise barriers to attendance were rare, with 47% of conferences held in locations that discriminate against certain identities while less than 10% promoted event safety and accessibility. As a result, piecemeal actions have not resulted in any significant growth in gender equity or diversity initiatives ([Tulloch, 2020](#)). According to a TNC analysis, from 1968 to 2019 only 36% of TNC authors in science literature were women – fewer still were the lead authors. Most concerningly, women from the Global South (often low-income countries) made up less than 2% of authors ([James, 2023](#)). Another study analysing responses from over 900 conservation scientists found that 44% of women feel they have the same opportunities to advance as men – compared to 78% of men who believe women have the same opportunities to advance as them ([James et al., 2023](#)). A recent study performed using data collected from 42 countries on the scientists' perceptions of gender imbalance in marine sciences and conservation found that women are consistently underrepresented in late career stages, occupying only 13 % to 24% of senior positions. Marine scientists perceive this imbalance to compromise their ability to effectively solve conservation problems ([Giakoumi et al., 2021](#)). A three-year study surveying 5,300 women who achieved engineering degrees found 38% left engineering careers or never started due to work cultures that prioritised men over women from the very start – including within studies and internship experiences – and pervasive environments of sexual harassment ([Fouad et al., 2017](#)).

## Gender-based violence is a human rights concern that has detrimental effects on environmental roles, responsibilities and rights

- **Gender neutral conservation actions or women's empowerment initiatives that do not account for gender-based violence can result in gender blindness that can intensify cases of violence.**

A case study reported that 70% of women and girls who participated in a green forum in Cameroon had difficulties in accessing land and microfinance – with 15% of men taking and selling their produce and physically assaulting some over related disputes ([IUCN, 2020a](#)). In forestry, women's economic empowerment initiatives via payment for ecosystem services inadvertently led to increased intimate partner violence as men were not engaged on why women were receiving targeted economic support (IUCN, 2020b). In a climate adaptation and resilience project, men were also not engaged or informed on women's adaptation activities and committed physical violence on spouses (IUCN, 2020b). In Indonesia, a fisheries project focused on building women's financial capacities to engage creditors. The project was aware of gender-based violence risks and paused its work when it found that men were discontent with the financial component to the project as they saw that as men's role, and requested IUCN technical support to respond to findings ([IUCN, 2021b](#)).

- **Gender-based violence challenges women in green sectors and spaces and affects their everyday lives.**

According to a 2020 survey implemented by Women In Ocean Science to female members of the marine STEM community, out of 980 women who participated, 78% of respondents experienced sexual harassment in the

marine science workplace and learning environments ([Women In Ocean Science, 2020](#)). In London, women report, at twice the rate of men, that safety is a barrier to walking in public spaces. Poorly designed public space can increase the occurrence of harassment and threats. Despite green spaces being recognized as places of escape, the fear of violence can present a barrier to accessing them ([Kumar, 2021](#)). Compared to women who have access to a toilet in their household, Indian women who must open defecate have twice the risk of non-partner sexual violence ([Jadhav et al, 2016](#)). Research in Karachi, Pakistan found that 'water mafias' exploit gaps in water service in low-income neighbourhoods by diverting and selling government water supply at much higher prices, causing men to lash out at their wives for what they deem wasteful water practices ([Ahmed & Hussain, 2022](#)).

- **For the first time, the Sixth Assessment Report of the IPCC recognizes and shows how climate change and gender-based violence are interlinked.**

It correlates intimate partner violence with increasing temperatures, and describes various forms of gender-based violence resulting during and after extreme weather events and in the context of water scarcity. As the scientific body of evidence for decision-makers, the IPCC's recognition of these linkages opens new pathways for action ([IUCN & UN Women, 2022](#)). A study conducted in 3 South Asian countries found that high ambient temperature may be associated with the risk of intimate partner violence against women. Intimate partner violence increases 4.5% with each 1°C

increase in temperature annually. It assessed that India is projected to experience a 23.5% rise in domestic violence by 2090 due to rising temperatures based on current findings that for every 1°C rise correspond to an 8% spike in physical violence and 7.3% increase in sexual violence ([Zhu et al., 2023](#)).

- **Early, forced and/or child marriage.**

In Ethiopia, girls in parts of the country most affected by drought and food shortages are increasingly being forced into child marriage, with rates rising by 119% in 2022. ([The Guardian, 2023](#)). A study reported on a region in India, where activists assess that child marriages have increased by 20% due to plummeting agricultural outputs and incomes due to climate change. Gender-based violence is related to the inability to provide higher dowries to supplement lost income, or inability to conceive due to malnourishment ([Sevekari, 2016](#)). In Asia, proximity to water and related climate impacts were found to play a role in influencing the prevalence of both child marriage and intimate partner violence ([UN Women, 2023b](#)).

- **Sexual exploitation in relation to the access, use and management of lands and natural resources violates human rights.**

Women stated charcoal transporters have requested sexual favours as a type of 'payment-in-kind' if the women are unable to pay the demanded price for transporting the charcoal to urban markets ([Ihalainen et al., 2018](#)). In the Kafue River in Zambia, where both women and men work as fish traders, fishermen may

refuse to sell fish to women if they do not engage in sex. Women know that having a 'boyfriend' in fishing camps can help them secure fish on a regular basis at cheaper prices. This practice, known as "sex-for-fish," leads many women to get involved in transactional sex, in which fishermen abuse their position of power over women traders ([Béné & Merten, 2008](#)). Another study found 34% of men in 303 households self-reported they exchanged assets such as fish for sex ([Fiorella et al., 2015](#)). Sex-for-fish is so pervasive that HIV/AIDS transmission rates are 4 to 14 times higher than national averages ([Matthews et al., 2012](#)). In Sierra Leone, a study found that 8% of women and 5% of men surveyed reported experience or knowledge about sexual extortion from women in exchange for land rights ([Transparency International, 2018](#)).

● **Women's income can be appropriated by male partners due to higher levels of tension caused by limited resources resulting from climate change and environmental degradation.**

In Mkomazi Game Reserve in Tanzania, the removal of tens of thousands of livestock (due to eviction) led to more intra-household conflicts, as men tried to appropriate women's income in the face of greater scarcity ([Brockington, 2011](#)). In Uganda, research shows that women can face direct competition with men for communal water resources during droughts ([UNEP et al., 2013](#)). Women's limited knowledge of their land rights and women's subordination to male partners can lead to land grabbing correlated to gender-based violence ([RRI, 2015](#)). In Rwanda and Liberia, several accounts and studies provide evidence of husbands selling land without the wife's consent after physically or psychologically abusing them ([Kaiser Hughes & Richardson, 2015](#); [Jones-Kasey et al, 2015](#)).

● **Women environmental human rights defenders face gender-based violence as a means to silence their activism – in addition to facing threats to their life.**

In 2021, 1 in 10 murdered environmental defenders recorded were women – nearly two-thirds of whom were Indigenous ([Global Witness, 2022](#)). Between 2018 and 2019, in Colombia, there was a 50% increase in the killing of women defenders ([IUCN, 2021c](#)). Indonesian security forces employed by mining companies used gender-based violence, including rape and genital mutilation, against Indigenous women and men to intimidate and force them into fleeing their homes ([Csevár & Tremblay, 2019](#); [Reckinger, 2011](#); [Taylor, 2011](#)).

For more information on gender-based violence and environmental linkages, please visit IUCN's Gender-Based Violence and Environment Linkages Center (GBV-ENV Center) for insights, tools, resources, learning events and more: <https://genderandenvironment.org/agent-gbv-env/>

# Gender equality for a sustainable planet

As the whole of humanity is rapidly facing the growing impacts of the interlinked biodiversity loss, climate change, degradation and pollution crises, the need for women's empowerment and gender equality is now more crucial than ever. Data and examples presented in this publication demonstrate that we already have information in-hand on the value and contributions of women in conservation and climate resilience and how inclusive and gender-responsive sustainable development improves human and women's rights towards gender equality. At the same time, we are witnessing a deceleration of progress towards gender equality, and IUCN projections of gender parity in environmental policy taking 162 years call for reinvigorated action. Though we have data on the positive impacts of gender equality and women's empowerment on environmental action, much more is needed. Accelerating investment in the inclusive production and use of gender and environment data will continue to be essential for better informing conservation and climate policies and actions towards gender equality; as called upon at the first *Global Conference on Gender and Environment Data and its Call to Action* (UN Women, IUCN & WEDO, 2023). As humanity rapidly approaches what the IPCC has identified as a brief and closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all, we cannot afford to wait 162 years to ensure the insights, leadership and voices of all people are contributing to solutions. The time to hasten action on gender equality in environmental conservation and climate action is now.



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