

# IUCN's Gender Policy Statement

Adopted in April 1998<sup>1</sup>

## **Introduction**

This Gender Policy statement was submitted to the 48th meeting of the IUCN Council 27-29 April 1998 and was endorsed with subsequent modifications.

In summary, the policy statement calls for the promotion of equity and equality as a crucial factor for environmental sustainability and an integral part of all conservation efforts. It presents the goals of equity and equality in the context of IUCN's overall mission and provides a brief conceptual framework and the rationale for the consideration of equality issues in environmental work. Furthermore it calls for an effective mainstreaming strategy to integrate a gender perspective in a broad socio-cultural context, into IUCN's Policies, Programmes and Projects

## **Mainstreaming Gender in IUCN A Policy Statement**

IUCN's mission is to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.

### **What is Gender**

IUCN understands that gender refers to the attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the socio-cultural relationships between women and men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context specific and changeable. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in activities undertaken, access to and control over resources as well as decision making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context which also takes into consideration factors such as class, race, economic status, ethnic group and age.

Therefore IUCN understands that adopting a gender perspective means focusing on both women and men and their relationships with each other and natural resources. In addition, it means working with a global perspective that allows for and appreciates regional diversity. IUCN further understands that mainstreaming gender means creating an enabling working environment that in turn attracts and helps to retain gender sensitive staff.

### **Why Gender is essential to the sustainable use, management and conservation of natural resources.**

IUCN recognises that gender equality and equity are a matters of fundamental human rights and social justice and a pre-condition for sustainable development and the achievement of its mission. In the use, management and conservation of natural resources women and men have different roles and responsibilities, which vary greatly from region to region. Women often make their contributions to the family, community and society with unequal access to, control over and benefits from resources and resource use. This inequality often exists in a context of discrimination and unequal power relationships.

Therefore IUCN understands that gender relationships and the environment means achieving a better analysis of patterns of use, knowledge and skills regarding conservation and sustainable use

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<sup>1</sup> The Work Plan was also adopted.

of natural resources. Only with a gender perspective can a complete picture of human relationships and ecosystems be built up.

IUCN recognises that working with a gender perspective means analysing and understanding the differential roles and responsibilities, relationships, needs and visions of women and men (as well as other relevant differences such as those between ethnic groups, classes and age). Furthermore, working with a gender perspective also means going beyond recognising gender differences to working towards more equitable relationships between women and men.

IUCN's commitment to gender equality and equity is Union wide and is an integral part of all policies, programmes and projects. IUCN considers that its commitment to gender equality and equity means building a Union that understands the issues and whose policies respect diversity.

### **Mainstreaming Gender in IUCN**

A long process of recognition of issues of gender, beginning in 1984 culminated in a resolution to the 1996 World Conservation Congress. This resolution called for, among other things, IUCN to "integrate gender perspectives across the IUCN Programme".

IUCN understands that mainstreaming gender perspective is achieved through a process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including policies or Programmes, in any area and at all levels. This process makes women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres so that women and men benefit equally and equitably and inequalities and inequities are not perpetuated.

IUCN believes that to create a diverse and representative Union, able to address the fundamental issues in its mission, mainstreaming gender must be accompanied by an effective Equal Opportunities Policy that addresses all issues of equality and equity in IUCN and policies and practice, of which gender is one important element.

In order to implement this mainstreaming policy, there will be implications for management priorities and systems, the process of decentralisation, organisational structure, culture and behaviour, programming and project cycle management, the balance between global and regional policies and Programmes, skills mix and resource allocation. IUCN regards its commitment to mainstreaming gender to be a challenge and one to which it dedicates itself fully.

Together with the adoption of this mainstreaming gender policy statement, the action plan for mainstreaming gender in IUCN that has been developed will be implemented. The Director General, President and Commission Chairs assume full responsibility for its implementation. In addition IUCN understands that full implementation of the Policy and the Action Plan requires the involvement and commitment of all individuals in all parts of the Union.

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