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GENDER EQUALITY AND FORESTRY IN WEST AFRICA: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WEST AFRICAN COUNTRIES

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) region and its fifteen member countries represent a rich diversity of cultures, ethnic groups and ecosystems. The region's biomes include the Upper Guinean rainforest along the southern coast, the drier inland areas of the savannah woodlands as well as the sparser dry forests of the Sahel. It can be difficult to make generalizations across such a diverse region, but there are several shared gender norms as well as common gender-related challenges in West Africa. This brief focuses on the disparities between women and men and girls and boys, specifically in the forestry sector.

This brief was produced under the project – “Global Transformation of Forests for People and Climate: a focus on West Africa” – and draws on a gender analysis conducted to inform and guide the project implementation. Based on literature review and several key informant interviews, this brief presents findings related to gender and forestry which are common to the region. It also proposes recommendations to address gender inequalities in the forestry sector.



What is gender equality?

Gender equality is when women and men enjoy equal rights, opportunities and entitlements in civil and political life. It seeks to address women's specific needs and priorities and ensure equal opportunities in terms of access, control, participation and treatment, with consequent positive changes to transform gender roles and promote equitable relationships between men and women (FAO, 2009).

The five-year project “Global Forest Transformation for People and Climate: a focus on West Africa,” a collaboration between ECOWAS, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), aims to strengthen sustainable forest and land management, address transboundary threats to forests, improve the livelihoods of forest-dependent communities and build climate resilience in fifteen West African countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d’Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. The project is improving knowledge of forest dynamics, facilitating legal reform, and supporting and sharing good community forestry practices throughout the region. The project is designed to support the implementation of the [2013 ECOWAS Convergence Plan for the Sustainable Management and Use of Forest Ecosystems in West Africa](#), aimed at mobilizing political, institutional, financial and technical support to address transboundary forest issues in the fifteen ECOWAS Member States.

Context

In the West Africa region approximately 84 million hectares or 17 percent of the territory is covered by forests (FAO, 2020b). There are large variations between countries, ranging from those with more than half of their territory forested (79 percent in Liberia; 70 percent in Guinea Bissau) to those with under 10 percent coverage (9 percent in Côte d’Ivoire; 1 percent in Niger) (FAO, 2020b). The existing forests provide an important source of energy and livelihoods for the region’s

population, a high percentage of which live below the poverty line. Notably, it is estimated that fuelwood represents about 85 percent of the total energy consumption of West African countries (ECOWAS, 2015). Between 2010 and 2020, the region lost an average of 52 920 ha of forest cover per year (net change) due to uncontrolled logging, bushfires¹, extensive farming, and transhumance pastoralism (FAO, 2020b; ECOWAS, 2013). Understanding the gender dynamics in the forest sector and resolving the related issues are important elements needed to address some of these drivers.

TABLE1: FOREST COVER IN ECOWAS MEMBER COUNTRIES (2020)

Country	Forest area (1 000 ha)	Total land area (1 000 ha)	%
Benin	3 135	11 276	28%
Burkina Faso	6 216	27 360	23%
Cabo Verde	46	403 00	11%
Cote d’Ivoire	2 837	31 800	9%
Gambia	243	1 012	24%
Ghana	7 986	22 754	35%
Guinea	6 189	24 572	25%
Guinea Bissau	1 980	2 812	70%
Liberia	7 617	9 632	79%
Mali	13 296	122 019	11%
Niger	1 080	126 670	1%
Nigeria	21 627	91 077	24%
Senegal	8 068	19 253	42%
Sierra Leone	2 535	7 218	35%
Togo	1 209	5 439	22%
Total	84 064	503 297	17%

Source: FAO Forest Resources Assessment 2020

¹ Fire regimes in West Africa vary across the three major biomes. In the Sahel, fires are less frequent while in the savanna and humid zones, there is evidence of frequent burning. Most fires nowadays are of anthropogenic causes and natural fires are very rare. Some controlled fires are ignited according to current best practices (e.g., use of firebreaks, backfiring, burning at cooler hours of the day), while others for purposes such as land clearing, hunting, and rejuvenating pastures, are often uncontrolled. (personal communication, 2021).

FIGURE 1: FOREST COVER IN WEST AFRICA



Source: SEPAL, 2021

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of FAO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers and boundaries. Dashed lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement.

To address gender inequalities, ECOWAS member states have committed to support women and development under Article 63 of the ECOWAS 1993 revised Treaty. According to this article member states agree to “formulate, harmonize, co-ordinate and establish appropriate policies and mechanisms, for enhancement of the economic, social and cultural conditions of women.” The Treaty further calls for identifying and addressing the constraints that inhibit women and girls’ development, and for the establishment of programs and mechanisms for cooperation and enhancement of their condition. Furthermore, ECOWAS member states have established the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre ([EGDC](#)), a regional agency responsible for promoting gender equality and women and girls’ empowerment in the region and for implementing the ECOWAS Gender Policy. The Centre also promotes women’s access to resources and enhancement of their economic capacities.

Many countries in the ECOWAS region have adopted a number of international and regional legal instruments related to gender equality. These instruments include the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women ([CEDAW](#)), the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ([UNDRIP](#)), the Voluntary

Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure ([VGGT](#)), and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change ([UNFCCC](#)). More recently at the 4th Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly in Nairobi in March 2019, West African countries were among the 193 UN member states that adopted a resolution acknowledging the disproportionate burden of climate change on women and girls but also emphasized the “power of their knowledge and collective action, the need to encourage women’s participation and leadership in environmental decision making- from the local to the international levels- and to support training and capacity efforts on gender mainstreaming and to ensure meaningful participation in global processes.” This resolution also requested the collection of sex-disaggregated data to assess progress in terms of gender equality and women’s empowerment of environmental policies and programmes. The above-mentioned international instruments establish consensus on clear overarching principles and strategies related to achieving gender equality in the region. The current challenge facing many countries is to put these commitments into concrete actions in advancing gender equality and promoting the empowerment of women and girls.

Common gender issues and challenges in the forestry sector

Throughout the region there are a number of common gender barriers that limit women's capacity to exercise their rights and contribute to the advancement of the forest sector to the best possible extent. These findings are based on both a literature review as well as a series of interviews with several key forestry personnel in the ECOWAS member states.

- **Gender issues have been addressed in national policy and legislation but there are gaps in implementation.**

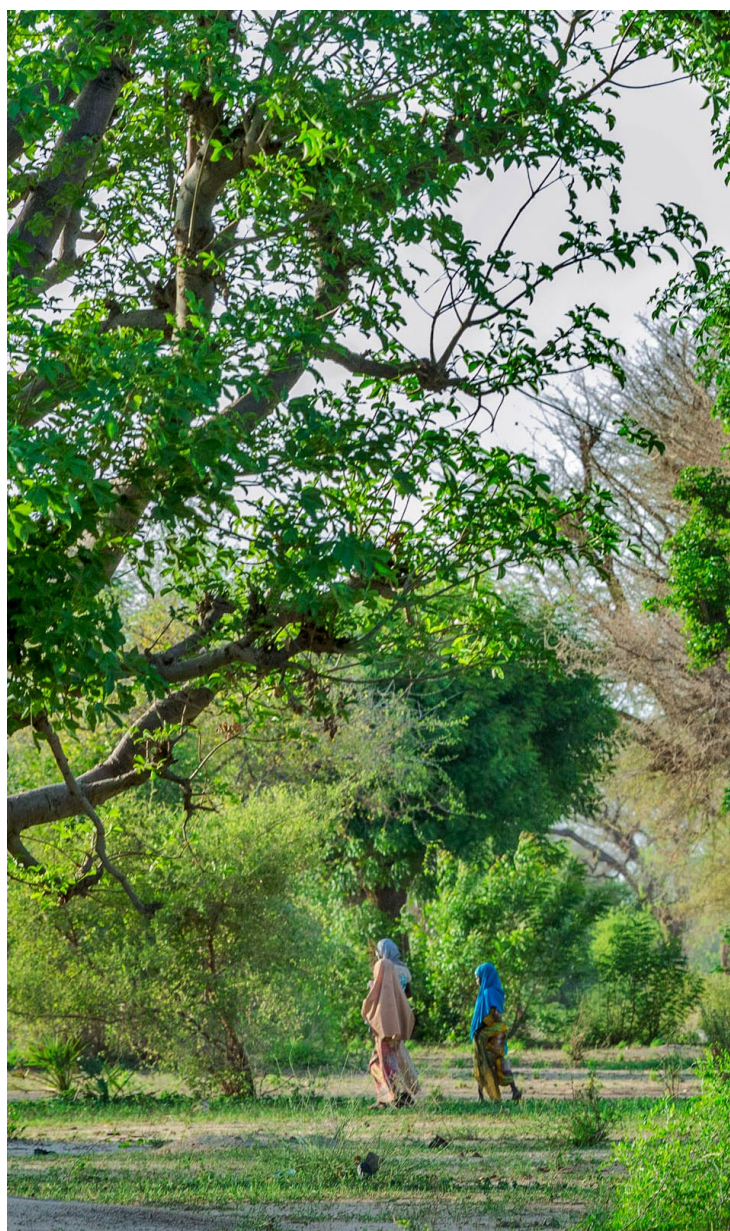
Although legal and policy reforms that aim to overcome gender discrimination have advanced in many countries in Africa, their implementation remains a major challenge. Customary practice and social norms discriminate against women and girls and prevent them from fully achieving their rights (Anoko, 2007).

In many cases, women are not aware of their rights, including their rights to land, forests and trees; to benefit equitably from forest products and services; and to participate in decision making related to natural resources management, among others. In most countries, there are overarching national laws (e.g., constitutions) and strategies related to gender and women's empowerment aiming to enact international commitments ratified by countries. However, there are noticeable gaps in the domestication of various international instruments within the region, as further described below.

Gender-based violence in West Africa

In West Africa, GBV is a growing phenomenon and this scourge is much more profound in conflict and post-conflict environments as it involves mutilation, sexual slavery and gang-rape, particularly of women and girls. For instance, in Cote d'Ivoire, a 2003 study by UNFPA showed that 31 percent of girls admitted to having been forced or coerced into nonconsensual sexual relations. In Liberia, it is estimated that 40 percent of the population was affected by sexual violence during the 14-year period of political instability (1989-2003). In Sierra Leone, UNICEF estimated that over 250 000 women were raped during the 10-year armed conflict that ended in 2002. Failure to prosecute those who commit acts of GBV, chronic poverty, the lack of employment opportunities, and weak rule of law and justice mechanisms all combine to foster increased violence against women and girls. Increased GBV not only has obvious physical and psychological impacts, but also socioeconomic and political consequences, which further perpetuate this cycle of poverty and violence.

Source: (Alago, 2011)



- **Women suffer from work burden and gender-based violence (GBV).**

Rural women in the region play a major role in agricultural production², in addition to having the most responsibility for household tasks, including childcare, cooking, cleaning, and household food security. With the exacerbation of climate change, desertification, and clearing or depletion of forests, women tend to spend more time collecting water and firewood for the household, with less opportunities to invest in education and health or in other productive activities that will contribute to their own advancement.

Rooted in discriminatory gender norms, GBV is used as a form of control, subjugation and exploitation to maintain and reinforce gender inequality. GBV is a violation of basic rights and has long-term impacts on every aspect of a survivor's life, from health and wellness to public participation and economic and political empowerment. Many women and girls in Africa suffer from domestic violence and other forms of GBV. For instance, female

genital mutilation (FMG) affects a very high percentage of women in West Africa.³ The links between GBV and the environment are complex. GBV can both be driven by and impact power imbalances in control over land and natural resources, especially when those resources are scarce or under stress. Women's and youth's access to forests may also be affected by security fears related to GBV. In the formal forest sector, there are accounts of sexual harassment and discrimination that discourage women from joining or continuing to work in the sector.⁴

Non-wood forest products (NWFPs) are particularly important for women's livelihoods and empowerment, but they are not properly regulated, and benefits from their trade are often not fairly distributed.

Women in West Africa rely heavily on NWFPs for their livelihoods and those of their families. Among the products women in the region depend on are shea nut, palm oil, moringa (*Moringa oleifera*), cashew nuts (*Anacardium occidentale*), gum Arabic (*Acacia senegal*), forest fruit juice (*Tamarindus indica*, *Andansonia digitata*), soubala (*Parkia biglobosa*), oysters, and honey. NWFPs are used for household subsistence, but they also provide a source of income for women, who tend to channel their earnings back into support for their families, such as paying for children's education and health costs.

There are noteworthy examples of women's cooperatives and capacity development programs in the region that enhance and support women's capabilities and inclusion in the processing and marketing activities of NWFPs. However, Burkina Faso's experience in shea nut production provides a note of caution for other countries and value chains. When women's businesses become successful and lucrative, such as in the case of the shea nut in Burkina Faso, men tend to step in and control trade, particularly in the formal market (Elias, 2011).

Even though international demand for NWFPs has increased, production chains are long and complex, involving a range of processors, traders, exporters, importers, wholesalers, manufacturers and retailers, who rake off much of the profit, leaving women with little or no increase in income (IFAD, 2008). In the forestry value chains women tend to be collectors,



² Due to the use of hoes (as opposed to ploughs), there is a long history of women exercising control in farming production in Africa (Alesina et al., 2011).

³ Female genital mutilation (FGM) among women aged 15-49 years old is high in many countries in West Africa: 97 percent in Guinea, 90 percent in Sierra Leone, 89 percent in Mali, 76 percent in Burkina Faso and the Gambia, 66 percent in Liberia (OECD, 2016).

⁴ Personal communication during workshop of the Women in Forestry Africa (WiFA) on experiences sharing on 10 December 2020.

Gender balance in Côte d'Ivoire's Forestry Department

While the recruitment process for joining the Forestry Department in Cote d'Ivoire is open to applications from all genders, the Department has only 556 female staff (14 percent) compared to 3 419 male staff (86 percent). The Department operates as a paramilitary force, so longer missions are sometimes required, making it more difficult for women to carry them out, particularly if they have family obligations or if they are pregnant. Although, women do hold some management positions (i.e., Director General, Regional Director, Cantonment Chief) and take part in technical work such as data collection, forest restoration and verification of harvesting and extraction of forest products. Still, there are also some issues of harassment and insubordination by male staff unaccustomed to reporting to a female supervisor.

Source: (personal communication, 2019)

primary producers or sometimes processors, but they are rarely buyers, retailers or exporters. In general women have a very limited share of a product's market value (Neumann & Hirsch, 2000).

In some cases, commercialisation of forest products has led to overharvesting, which in turn has resulted in more stringent laws and regulations to control extraction. These laws and regulations have subsequently limited women's access to forests (Neumann & Hirsch, 2000). Women's role in forestry is often informal and unrecognized. Lawmakers may not realize the differentiated impact of their restrictions on the livelihoods of men and women. One example of this, is the establishment of the Cantanhez Forest National Park in Guinea-Bissau, which local women felt was responsible for malnutrition in the community due to the damage to crops by wildlife (Costa, 2017).

Both men and women in the region are also involved in the collection and sale of bush meat, with men playing a larger role in hunting, while women focus on cooking and sale of bush meat. In many countries of West Africa [almost half of the population is 15 years or younger](#). Youth unemployment and underemployment are major challenges for many national governments.⁵ According to the International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)), young women in Sub Saharan Africa tend to be more disadvantaged than young men in access to work, and they experience worse working conditions than their male counterparts. NWFP activities can provide a great opportunity to create jobs and ease unemployment, particularly for young men and women.

- **Reliance on wood and charcoal for energy needs affects men and women differently; opportunities exist to ensure equal benefits from a more sustainable trade.**

Production of fuelwood and charcoal is a key industry

in the region- affecting forests, with differentiated impacts on men and women and thus providing more opportunities to ensure equal benefits through more sustainable trade. Both men and women face significant risks in the fuelwood and charcoal trade. Men may be at risk from injury during timber extraction (e.g. chainsaw accidents), while women and youth face risks during collection such as GBV or malaria. They may also suffer from respiratory diseases due to smoke inhalation during cooking. In some areas of the region, women and youth may spend many hours collecting fuelwood, particularly as forest cover decreases. At the same time, there are some promising examples of both women and men playing active roles in tree nursery and woodlot management. For example, in Togo the International Tropical Timber Organization and Soka Gakkai are supporting women to establish and manage tree nurseries to assist forest landscape restoration and the production of wood and non-wood forest products for sale in local markets (ITTO, 2020).

- **Access to land, forest and tree tenure security is affected by social norms detrimental to women.**

Africa has a strong body of national, regional and international legal frameworks⁶ that provide for women to own, use, access, control, transfer, inherit and make decisions about land. These also encompass women's rights to secure land tenure and to meaningfully participate in the elaboration and implementation of land laws and policies.

Secure tenure over land for women is critical for poverty reduction, food security, inclusiveness and overall sustainable development objectives. Secured land tenure for women has been linked to important gains in women's welfare, productivity, equality and empowerment (GSARS, 2016b). At the same time, it has a strong empowering effect on women: it reduces their reliance on male

Women's vulnerability in Sierra Leone

Women in Sierra Leone are the major gatherers of fuelwood, fruits, vegetables, nuts and herbs from forests. It is notable that 95 percent of women, in comparison to 85 percent of men, are self-employed or work in the informal sector, defined by more “vulnerable employment”. Those in vulnerable employment are less likely to have formal work arrangements and are therefore more likely to lack decent working conditions, adequate social security and ‘voice’ through effective representation by trade unions and similar organizations. In Sierra Leone, only 5.6 percent of women have waged or salaried work, while 15.5 percent of men hold these positions. Women in agriculture and rural areas have less access than men to productive resources and very little access to credit due to limited financial literacy, poor knowledge of administrative procedures, transportation difficulties and cultural barriers (FAO, 2019).



⁵ Youth unemployment levels in West Africa are among the world's highest, standing at 18.1% in 2005 – the rate being higher for young men (23.1%) than for young women (18.4%). Youth unemployment rates in some post-conflict countries such as Sierra Leone (60%) and Liberia (88%) have been significantly higher (YEN WA & DWP).

⁶ The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discriminations Against Women (CEDAW) ratified by 51 African countries, protects women from discrimination with respect to matters relating to land, housing and property. The Convention invites state parties to ensure women's right to equal treatment in land and agrarian reforms as well as land settlement schemes. The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on Women's Rights, called the Maputo Protocol, prohibits any form of discrimination against women and promotes equal rights for women and men to land and property. The July 2004 Solemn Declaration of African Union Heads of States on gender equality in Africa calls for Governments to actively promote the implementation of legislation to guarantee women's land, property and inheritance rights.

partners and relatives, increases their bargaining power within the household and improves their chances of accessing a wide variety of productive resources, including extension services and credit (FAO and AUC, 2020).

Despite the legal frameworks in place, women in the region face structural barriers to full enjoyment of their land tenure rights, ranging from inadequate legal standards and implementation at national and local levels, to patriarchal and cultural norms and attitudes, discriminatory customary land tenure systems, difficult access to information on land rights, and constraints for access to land administration and legal services.

Due to cultural norms and customary practices, women's rates of land ownership in the region are very low (e.g., 10 percent in Senegal and 5 percent in Mali) (FAO, 2020a). Men overwhelmingly have control over land, trees and related decisions. For example, in Côte d'Ivoire, under the customary system women cannot exercise property rights over land and can only access land through their male relatives (NRC, 2013). In Liberia, women constitute the majority of smallholder producers and the agricultural workforce in general, producing 60 percent of agricultural products and carrying out 80 percent of trading activities in rural areas. However, in comparison to men, women have more limited access to productive inputs, including land (RRI, 2012). Even where laws promote equity, social norms, perceptions and informal rules can have a detrimental impact on women's access to land and other assets (Lambrecht, 2016). Lack of secure tenure makes a woman vulnerable in the case of the death of her husband and reduces her productive capacity. Her access to credit may also be diminished, since land titles can be used as a form of collateral for loans. Even in traditionally matrilineal systems such as in parts of Ghana, land is passed by uncles to their nephews instead of to a wife. Women may be granted lifetime user rights to the land of a deceased husband, but widows are sometimes subjected to "property grabbing," whereby her in-laws seek to oust her from the land using threats, intimidation, or physical violence. Even under statutory law (i.e., the Intestate Succession Law) women in polygamous relationships are made more vulnerable to disinheritance since only the first wife may be recognized (Hughes and Knox, 2011).

- **There are few professional women involved in the formal forestry sector.**

Men dominate labour in the formal forestry sector in all the countries of the region. Few countries have significant numbers of women working in senior level governmental positions related to forestry. Security concerns and lack of means of transport are often important barriers to women's participation in field activities. Gender balance has been a challenge due to lack of awareness on gender issues and of proactive measures to address imbalances;

but also because of cultural norms whereby girls themselves feel discouraged from studying hard sciences such as forestry or seeking work in the sector.

- **Literacy rates and lack of access to technologies and information on forestry constitute important barriers for women.**

In all countries of the region, girls' access to education is more limited in comparison to boys, except in Guinea Bissau where more girls attend primary school and Cabo Verde where more young women are pursuing higher education. The overall reduced access to education for girls and women keeps them at the lower echelon of literacy levels, and this has implications for accessing job opportunities and related information, including notifications regarding vacancies in the forestry sector. For example, in Senegal only 40 percent of women 15 years and older are literate, compared with 65 percent of men (Index Mundi, 2017).

The rates of male and female literacy in rural areas are limited. Women's comparatively lower literacy rates are a reflection of their overall more limited access to education, including university and professional training, which in turn limits their access to jobs in the formal forestry sector. Another important limitation is the access to technology, a gap that is increasing with more widespread use of mobile phones. Women are at a disadvantage compared to men, due to lower ownership and use rates (DW, 2019). Without a phone, women have less access to information related to marketing of NWFP products or to training opportunities.

- **There is a lack of up-to-date sex-disaggregated data to enable monitoring of women's and men's role in the forestry sector.**

While the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have compiled country indexes related to gender (See Figure 2), sex-disaggregated data for a number of countries in the region are missing or are outdated. In the forestry sector, collection of sex-disaggregated data on formal employment in forestry has only begun recently through FAO's Forest Resources Assessment and many countries are not yet able to report. It appears that there has been limited analysis and use of these data to promote women's roles in the sector. Moreover, contributions of women and men to the informal forestry sector have not been properly measured or quantified. There is also limited data on the participation of men and women in capacity development activities in the sector. Furthermore, there is a lack of sex-disaggregated data on the use of forest resources by men and women in the region, as well as little acknowledgement of women's specialized knowledge and skills in relation to forest management and related value chains.

In ECOWAS, a review of sex-disaggregated indicators available at the country level showed that, mostly, only indicators related to land and general employment are sex-disaggregated (see Figure 2). There is no sex-disaggregated data on environment and climate change, value chain, and agricultural household decision mechanisms (FAO & AUC, 2020).

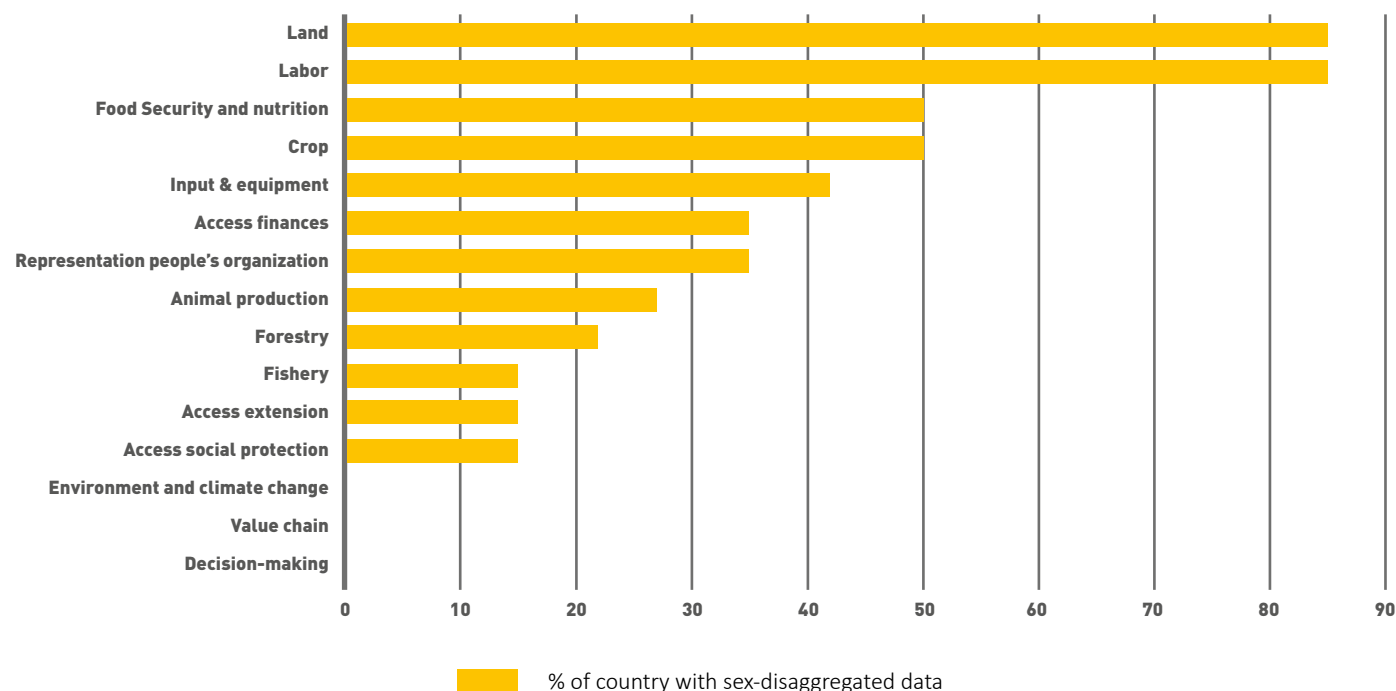
- **Representation of men and women in forest governing bodies is unbalanced.**

Research shows that forest governance institutions with a high proportion of women in decision-making positions have brought about significantly greater improvements in forest conditions (PROFOR, 2017; Aggarwal, 2009). Nevertheless, from the national forestry departments to local community-based forest management committees, women are largely absent from positions of power where decisions are made on forest management (personal communication, 2019; Bouda et al, 2009; Coulibaly-Lingani, 2011). This situation endures despite the fact that women have distinct experience and knowledge about forest resources and play an important role as forest users.

Even when present in governing bodies, women's participation in decision-making is often limited. Governing bodies typically function in a top-down or hierarchical manner that discourages women's participation, due to the persistence of traditional socio-cultural norms.

For example, in Liberia the Community Rights Law, a law aimed to increase the role of forest communities in forest governance and management, mentions women's participation only once (section 4.2) stating that "a five-member Community Forestry Management Body shall manage day-to-day activities of community forest resources [...] at least one member of the body shall be a woman." Since in the local context it is considered countercultural for women to openly disagree with their male counterparts, this limited representation makes it difficult for women to influence decision-making.

FIGURE 2: EXAMPLE OF AVAILABILITY OF SEX-DISAGGREGATED DATA ACROSS AGRICULTURAL SECTORS IN ECOWAS



Analysis of data available in ECOWAS countries shows that over 80 percent of the countries have some data on gender in employment and land ownership. Over 40 percent of countries have sex-disaggregated data on food security, crops access to inputs. There is no data on women and the environment, the value chain and household decision mechanisms.

Source: FAO & African Union Commission

Preliminary conclusions

Tackling gender challenges and constraints across the region requires a tailored approach by country, involving both men and women in awareness raising, capacity development and consultation. The project “Global Transformation for People and Forests: A Focus on West Africa” will continue assessing these gender challenges and identifying good practices to address them, specific for each country and context. The following preliminary recommendations are proposed for consideration, both at national and local levels. These recommendations will be strengthened with lessons learnt and findings from project implementation.

1 Take steps to finalize and implement gender responsive laws and policies.

It is necessary to continue to review laws and policies to identify existing gaps that prevent reaching greater gender equality and women’s empowerment, with attention also to the needs of youth. A gender responsive approach in the analysis of existing legal frameworks will help address the different needs and priorities of men, women, boys and girls. Furthermore, it is recommended to raise gender awareness, among both women and men on their rights related to forests and natural resources where these are already guaranteed in the national legal and policy frameworks. Capacity development on gender issues in relation to legal and policy reform may be useful for policy makers and advisors.

2 Raise gender awareness and design policies to alleviate women’s work burden and reduce the risk of GBV.

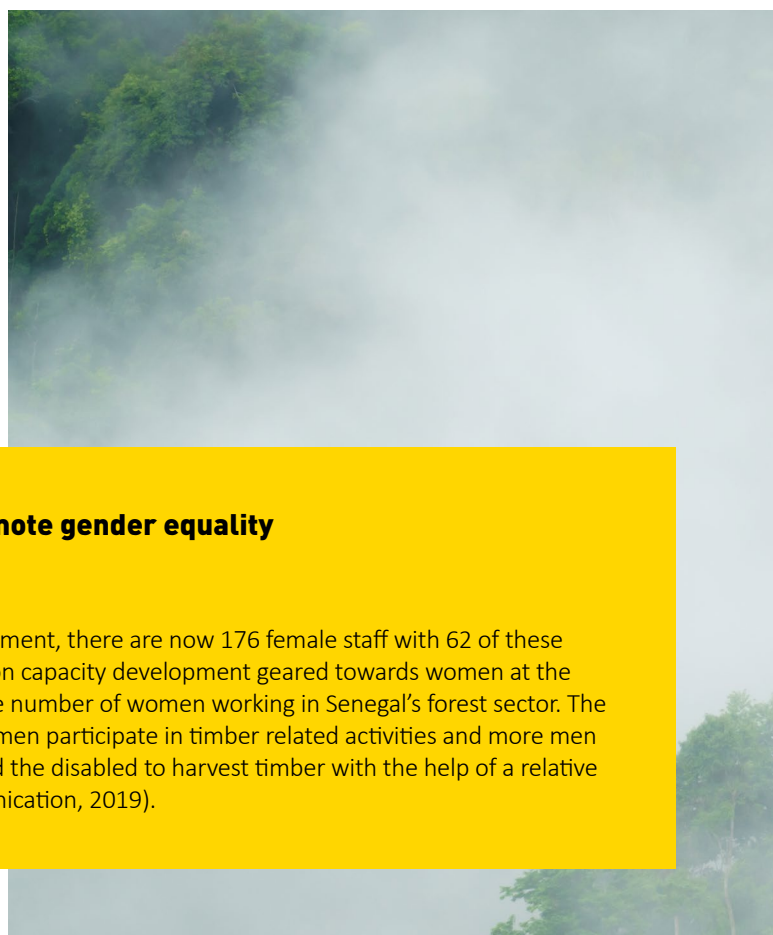
It will be useful to analyze the division of labor between men and women in the forestry sector and to seek ways to reduce women’s work burden by reducing drudgery at the household level and introducing labor-saving equipment and practices in land and forest practices. Meetings in rural communities should be arranged at a convenient time for both men and women, taking into account time limitations of both sexes. The issue of GBV needs to be further studied in rural areas, particularly

in relation to harvesting, processing and marketing of forest products. Helplines and health services for victims of GBV should be made available and accessible in rural communities. Regular awareness raising campaigns on these issues can encourage longer term changes in attitudes and behaviors at the household and community level.

3 Support women’s cooperatives engaged in NWFPs processing and marketing.

Government support is needed for women’s NWFP cooperatives and related small and medium enterprises to form or expand their operations and improve their organizational and leadership skills throughout forest-related value chains. These cooperatives are instrumental for empowering women and making them and their families financially stable. Men may be encouraged to support these women-led initiatives with benefits to the overall household economy. Training and apprenticeships for youth to gain experience in these programmes and initiatives are also important to alleviate scarce employment opportunities.

Essential oils and traditional medicines from the forest may be among products that have good potential for economic empowerment of women and youth. It is also recommended that governments tackle the issue of unsustainable trade in forest products through community interventions to find more sustainable options, while taking into account the differentiated impacts and needs of men and women, boys and girls. Finally, there is good potential to expand women’s



The Senegal Forestry Department’s measures to promote gender equality

Whereas in 1998 there were only two women foresters in the Department, there are now 176 female staff with 62 of these in technical or management positions. There has been an emphasis on capacity development geared towards women at the local level; and new laws on gender parity have led to increases in the number of women working in Senegal’s forest sector. The division of labor in the sector has also become less rigid whereby women participate in timber related activities and more men engage in exploiting NWFPs. There are policies that allow women and the disabled to harvest timber with the help of a relative or substitute to overcome lack of physical strength (personal communication, 2019).

access to credit to grow their small businesses either through traditional savings schemes (e.g., tontines) or through conventional microcredit.

4 Expand models of sustainable gender responsive initiatives to address wood energy needs.

Governments should seek to identify and disseminate in the region successful energy production initiatives and technologies for dissemination and scaling up, taking into consideration the roles of men, women, boys and girls in the trade and related household level activities, to encourage wider adoption. Particularly where fuelwood is scarce, bio-digesters have shown good potential as an alternative energy option to reduce the drudgery of women and free up their time for income generating activities. It is also recommended to support community-based nurseries and woodlots to increase sustainability and accessibility of wood fuel for household use, with consequent benefits for women, men, boys and girls.

5 Boost the security of women's forest and land tenure rights through various measures.

Governments may seek to build awareness on women's tenure rights and clarify and enforce their statutory rights. The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT) and related technical guides can inform this process. In the VGGT's principles of implementation it is stated that 'States should ensure that women and girls have equal tenure rights and

access to land, fisheries and forests independent of their civil and marital status'. Forest and land tenure reform efforts need to involve multiple stakeholders through inclusive processes and ensure that this key principle of the Guidelines is adhered to.

6 Take measures to encourage more young women to undertake forest and land-related studies and to pursue careers in the forestry sector.

Young women may be encouraged to pursue tertiary education in forestry through scholarship programs and quotas for female students. They may be further encouraged through internship opportunities in forestry institutions. Governments can help to overcome some gender bias in forestry departments by mandating a quota for women's representation in hiring as well as in activities such as field inventories, trainings, etc. As a basic first step, sex- and age-disaggregated data for participation in these activities is essential to set a baseline and track progress. Gender focal points or gender teams within the department may be encouraged and resourced. Sexual harassment and other issues of gender-based discrimination should be promptly and appropriately addressed.

7 Practice inclusive and appropriate communication strategies.

Governments should consider women's limited literacy and education levels in comparison to men, as well as their constraints to access technologies and mobile



phones. Communication of forestry-related news and information, including the sharing of good practices, should avoid relying too heavily on the ability to read. Other forms of communication such as radio or illustrative posters in local markets may be considered. Messaging should be clear and straightforward, if possible, also in local/indigenous languages.

8 Increase sex-disaggregated data collection capacity and systems to better monitor women's and men's role in the forest sector

Governments should consider, where appropriate, what forest-related information would be most beneficial for both men and women and integrate these priorities in the sector's research, data collection and monitoring activities. For instance, governments could keep records on women and men's participation in forest inventory activities or analyze gender dynamics related to drivers of deforestation and degradation. Governments can also develop a protocol and guidance to support the collection of sex-disaggregated data and maintain their own accessible databases. It will be important to set clear targets for participation and to adopt a multi-stakeholder approach to achieve these. Governments should also take account of both men's and women's specific knowledge and skills in relation to forestry. For instance, socio-economic surveys in the sector need to take into account women's use of timber and non-wood forest products.

9 Set targets for balanced representation of men and women in forest governing bodies and adopt strategies to meet these targets

While women should not be coerced to participate in forestry sector activities, concerted efforts should be made to reach ambitious targets for participation of women in the whole range of forest activities, from data collection to community-based forestry. Reaching more gender-balanced participation may require specialized additional training for women, scheduling activities conveniently for women, childcare provisions, or increased incentives. At the local level, extension officers need to encourage women's voice and leadership in all aspects of forest management at the institutional level, and with the aim to increase forest businesses led by groups of women.

10 Safeguard women's access to forests and related benefits

Governments should bear in mind the potential harmful effects of regulation on livelihoods of men, women, boys and girls. In particular, women at the local level should be consulted during the review or reform of legislation that might affect their access to resources, services and institutions. In terms of the support provided to community-based forest management and the distribution of benefits deriving from forests, women need to be well-represented in decision making and clear targets should be set and regularly monitored.

The Gola Rainforest cocoa project in the Eastern Province of Sierra Leone

A three-year cocoa project (completed in 2018) was supported by Comic Relief and delivered by Twin in collaboration with Gola Rainforest National Park and the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). Smallholder farmers formed a producer organization to export high quality cocoa beans to the specialty market. The project supported the training of local cocoa officers who established a network of village collection facilities. They also provided training on post-harvest fermentation and drying so that farmers could consistently deliver high quality beans. As farmers improved their knowledge of sustainable farming practices, they integrated rainforest conservation into their cocoa production. Men and women farmers formed groups to increase gender equality by exploring how income and decision-making is distributed within families and households. The farmers have continued to export premium cocoa, giving Sierra Leone new visibility in the specialty market, and a unique origin for the buyer.

See: www.divinechocolate.com/news/guardians-of-the-rainforest

Role of ECOWAS and regional cooperation to address gender and forestry issues

ECOWAS has established its Gender Development Centre, based in Dakar, Senegal, to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the region. The Centre holds great potential to use its skills and experience to contribute to advancement on issues related to gender and forestry. The Centre envisions a larger role in three key areas: training and capacity building; research and dissemination; and improving women's contribution in forest-related

value chains. The Centre can draw on its experience in providing training sessions on gender equality and women's empowerment to a variety of stakeholder groups; its research and publications on gender themes, building on a series of country gender assessments of agriculture and rural livelihoods; and its portfolio related to economic empowerment where the Centre has promoted women's access to resources, the strengthening of economic capacities, and the improvement of visibility on women's contribution to the regional economy.

TABLE 2: GENDER INDICATORS FOR ECOWAS MEMBER STATES

Country	Gender Inequality Index Ranking (GII)*	Gender Development Index (GDI)**	Social Institutions and Gender Index – Category and Value***	Women in Parliament	Female agricultural holders	Female literacy rates (>15 years)
Benin	Ranked 148 (of 189) in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	5 in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	Medium / 40% in 2019 (OECD, 2021)	8.3% since last election in 2019 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021)	n/a	27.3% (males: 49.9%) in 2015 (Index Mundi, 2020)
Burkina Faso	147 (of 189) in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	5 in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	Medium 32% in 2019 (OECD, 2021)	6.3% since last election in 2020 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021)	8.4% in 1993 (FAO, 2020a)	29.3% (males 43%) in 2015 (Index Mundi, 2020)
Cabo Verde	89 (of 189) in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	2 in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	n/a	26.4% since last election in 2016 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021)	50.5% (FAO, 2004)	82.8% (Male 92.5%) in 2016 (INI, 2020)
Côte d'Ivoire	Ranked 153 (of 189) in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	5 in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	High / 43% in 2019 (OECD, 2021)	12.85% since last election in 2021 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021)	10.1% in 2001 (FAO, 2020a)	32.5% (53.1% for men) in 2015 (Index Mundi, 2020)
Gambia	Ranked 148 (of 189) in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	5 in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	n/a	9.4% (Parliamentary Union, 2017)	8.3% (FAO 2001/2)	47.6% (males: 63.9%)(Index Mundi, 2015)
Ghana	Ranked 135 (of 189) in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	4 in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	Medium / 35% in 2019 (OECD, 2021)	14.6% since last election in 2020 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021)	n/a	71.4% (males: 82%)in 2015 (Index Mundi, 2020)
Guinea	n/a	5 in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	Very high / 57% in 2019 (OECD, 2021)	16.7% since last election in 2020 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021)	5.7% in 2001/2002 (FAO, 2020a)	22.8% (males: 38.1%) in 2015 (Index Mundi, 2020)
Guinea Bissau	n/a	n/a	n/a	13.7% since last election in 2019 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021)	n/a	48.3% (males: 71.8%) in 2015 (Index Mundi, 2020)
Liberia	Ranked 156 (of 189) in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	5 in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	High / 47% in 2019 (OECD, 2021)	11.0% in lower house / 3.3% in upper house (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021)	n/a	32.8% (males: 62.4%) in 2015 (Index Mundi, 2020)
Mali	Ranked 158 (of 189) in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	5 in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	High 46% in 2019 (OECD, 2021)	27.3% since last election in 2020 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021)	3.1% in 2004/2005 (FAO, 2020a)	22.2% (males: 45.1%) in 2015 (Index Mundi, 2020)
Niger	Ranked 154 (of 189) in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	5 in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	n/a	25.9% since last election in 2020 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021)	n/a	11% (males: 27.3%) in 2015 (Index Mundi, 2020)
Nigeria	n/a	5 in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	High / 46% in 2019 (OECD, 2021)	5.8% since last election in 2019 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021)	10% in 2001 (FAO, 2020a)	49.7% (males: 69.2%) in 2015 (Index Mundi, 2020)
Senegal	Ranked 130 (of 189) in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	5 in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	Medium 37% in 2019 (OECD, 2021)	43.0% since last election in 2017 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021)	9.1% in 1998 (FAO, 2020)	39.8% (males 64.8%) in 2017 (Index Mundi, 2020)
Sierra Leone	Ranked 155 (of 189) in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	5 in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	High / 48% (OECD, 2021)	12.3% since last election in 2018 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021)	n/a	46.6% (males 69.7%) in 2015 Index Mundi, 2020)
Togo	Ranked 145 (of 189) in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	5 in 2019 (UNDP, 2021)	High / 50% (OECD, 2021)	18.7% since last election in 2018 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2021)	n/a	51.2% (males 77.3%) in 2015 (Index Mundi, 2020)

*Gender Inequality Index (GII) – Calculated for 189 countries, the GII measures gender inequalities in reproductive health, empowerment, and economic status with indicators based on maternal mortality, adolescent birth rates, parliamentary seats, secondary education, and labor market participation. The index measures the human development costs of gender inequality. The higher the GII value, the more disparities between females and males and the more loss to human development. UNDP publishes the GII.

**Gender Development Index (GDI) –This index helps in better understanding the gender gap in human development achievements by providing insights into gender disparities in achievements in three areas: health, education and command over economic resources, using the same component indicators as the Human Development Index (HDI). It presents the gender gap by showing the female HDI as a percentage of the male HDI. The GDI is calculated for 164 countries that are then grouped into five groups based on the absolute deviation from gender parity HDI values. UNDP takes responsibility for publishing the GDI. Based on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the lowest group.

***The Social Institution and Gender Index (SIGI) – This index examines discrimination in the context of social institutions, combining both qualitative and quantitative data providing information on laws, attitudes and practices across 180 countries. It includes a review of both formal and informal laws as well as social norms and practices. The SIGI focuses on four dimensions: discrimination in the family, restricted physical integrity, restricted access to productive and financial resources, and restricted civil liberties. A low score implies a low level of inequality, and vice versa.

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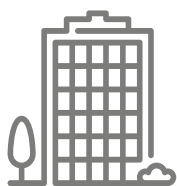
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