

What's Working to Accelerate Gender Equality in Sustainable Land Management and Ecosystem Restoration?

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Abstract

Restoring nature is key to delivering on international and national ambitions to reduce land degradation and conserve biodiversity, boost renewable energy options and foster sustainable and resilient livelihoods and communities in the face of climate change. Central to realizing equitable restoration is advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, which can unlock greater potential for sustainable development worldwide. Sustainable land management, ecosystem restoration and land degradation neutrality efforts can be powerful opportunities for shifting gender social norms and reforming structures in favor of gender equality – while gender-responsive strategies and results can help improve environmental outcomes too. A global portfolio undertaken of a sub-set of UNDP restoration projects review found that deep-rooted gender barriers and inequalities exist across the environment development nexus. At the same time, the review found that strategic commitments to gender equality in restoration projects and in countries making progress towards land degradation neutral (LDN) targets can help reduce women's vulnerability to climate change impacts, increase their self-worth within their communities, and improve household food and income security. In many cases these changes can be transformational for natural resources-based livelihoods and sustain project impact in the longer term. This work brings together key lessons, country examples and associated recommendations from a global portfolio review, highlighting the persistent challenges in bridging gaps for gender equality and nature – and even more importantly, examples of what's working to accelerate transformative progress on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Keywords: Gender equality; nature restoration; sustainable land management; sustainable development goals; resilient rural livelihoods; empowerment of women and girls