

SDG 15

PROTECT, RESTORE AND PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE USE OF TERRESTRIAL ECOSYSTEMS, SUSTAINABLY MANAGE FORESTS, COMBAT DESERTIFICATION, AND HALT AND REVERSE LAND DEGRADATION AND HALT BIODIVERSITY LOSS

Sustainable Development Goals seen from a feminist approach



In 2009, thanks to the initiative of the Institute of Human Rights of Catalonia, the Declaration of Emerging Human Rights was approved. The declaration recognizes “the right to live in a healthy, balanced and safe environment, to enjoy the biodiversity present in the world, and to defend the maintenance and continuity of their surroundings for the future generations”*. Even so, we are facing a serious climatic and ecological crisis.

Every year, 13 million hectares are deforested and land degradation causes the desertification of 3,600 million more. The gradual extinction of species threatens biodiversity and the balance of ecosystems. The capitalist model of production is perpetrating **ecocide**, which has differential impacts on the most vulnerable groups, especially on women who globally have a strong **vital dependence** on the territory.

What is the link between women and sustainable forest management?

Forests and forest stands around the world still protect 80% of the living species that we know of. **Gender roles** determine how forest resources are used; while men make up the majority of the workers in the forest industry, which extracts and markets timber, according to FAO, of the 850 million people engaged in collecting fuelwood for households, 830 million of these are women. Women are linked with forests, which enables them to carry out reproductive tasks (cooking, heating, cleaning), but also for their knowledge about medicinal plants, to diversify family diets and as a productive activity.

Faced with the need to improve sustainability in **forest management**, FAO recommends expanding community tenure and management of forests by engaging the participation of women, who have traditionally been excluded from **land ownership** as well as the decision-making about land, and have suffered unequal access to production loans and other forms of assistance.

In Catalonia, 64% of forest stands are privately-owned and lacking proper management for the most part. Furthermore, 40% of the species of community interest are in decline and 58% of the habitats have an unfavorable conservation status. Rural **social and environmental sustainability** depends on a greater involvement by women within the territory, as they currently represent only 20% of the primary sector and 28% of those who own land.

How does desertification affect women and their Sexual and Reproductive Rights?

The IPCC report on *Climate Change and Land* (2019) refers to the more than 500 million people who live within areas affected by desertification and its major impacts on women, especially in **agriculturally dependent** areas (Felipe, 2019). It must be noted that, according to Silvia Federici, women are responsible for 70% of **subsistence agriculture** on a global scale. In regions such as Central America and Niger, climate migration is happening due to desertification and the inability to grow crops.

Frequently, women facing **climate migration** deal with multiple forms of discrimination (related to gender, poverty, racialization, and migration) and have a higher risk of suffering **sexual violences**. When migrants end up in camps for displaced people, their right to privacy is violated and they do not have access to basic sanitary

* <https://www.idhc.org/arxiu/recerca/DUDHE.pdf>



products to address their specific needs during pregnancy, breastfeeding or menstruation.

Furthermore, **desertification** signifies the scarcity of water, a resource that usually women assume the responsibility for in most countries in the Global South. According to the WHO, in 8 out of 10 households with water off premises, it is the women who are responsible for fetching it. Water scarcity implies an increase in the number of hours spent in collecting water and entails girls missing school to accompany their mothers as well as the lack of time for other productive activities.

In order to mitigate **water scarcity**, it is essential to protect and restore water-related ecosystems such as forests, mountains, wetlands, and rivers, as well as having women's **participation** and **knowledge**, recognizing the link between water and **reproductive work**, and the importance of community-based management. Experience demonstrates that involving women from the planning phase is more likely to lead to success (United Nations).

What is the role of women in ecosystem conservation?

Women have a crucial role in the struggle for territory and biodiversity. Their survival and means of subsistence linked to ecosystems as well as the multiple vio-

lations of their Sexual and Reproductive Rights caused by **extractivism**, have led them to rise up to defend the **"body-territory"** binomial and to frequently lead in the struggle for land and life. Despite the increasing stigmatization and criminalization, both by transnational corporations and from within communities themselves, the struggles such as those of Berta Cáceres, Maxima Acuña, Wangari Maathai or Vandana Shiva have become models and have strengthened and promoted ecofeminism as an alternative to the extractivist model. Between 2012 and 2014, women defenders of land, territory, and natural resources were the most attacked group of **women human rights defenders**, suffering 525 attacks**.

Women are also trained in the preservation of ecosystems by the nature of their daily lives. In the words of Yayo Herrero, "the history of women has led them to learn lessons that serve to face destruction and make life possible (...) and [which] has allowed them to construct knowledge related to parenting, food, agriculture, ethics, environmental defense, etc."

Legislation Catalonia

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.
- Universal Declaration of Emerging Human Rights, 2009.
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979.
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995.
- European Habitats Directive, 1997.
- Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia, 2006.
- Law 17/2015, of 21 July, on effective equality between women and men.
- Law 6/1988, of 30 March, on forests in Catalonia.
- Law 42/2007, of 13 December, on natural heritage and biodiversity.
- Law 12/1985, of 13 June, on natural areas.
- National Plan for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Catalonia, 2019.

Legislation Ecuador

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948.
- United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, 1992.
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 1979.
- ILO's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention (No. 169), 1989.
- Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995.

- Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development.
- Political Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador, 2008.
- Environmental Management Act, 2004.
- Law on Water Resources, Uses and Exploitation of Water, 2014.
- Forestry and Conservation of Natural Areas and Wildlife Law, 2004.
- National Plan for Good Living, 2013-2017.

Ecuador is one of the most biodiverse countries on the planet and protecting it is essential for meeting the SDGs. This diversity is threatened by extractivism, both from oil fields in the Amazon forest that threaten the Sapara, Shuar, Achuar, Waorani, Taromenane and Kichwas communities and by mining operations in other parts of the country. The destruction of forests and desertification, as well as the militarization that often comes with the presence of these extractive industries, have great impacts on women because of their dependence and vital and economic link to the territory, and due to the criminalization for defending the environment, the evident sexual division of labor, and sexual violences.



** Mesoamerican Registry of Attacks to Women Human Rights Defenders

Elaborated by:



With the support of:



More information on: www.agenda2030feminista.org