



LOOKING AHEAD Centering gender equity in nature-based approaches can harness synergies among biodiversity, climate, land restoration and equality goals

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Harnessing synergies among global environmental agendas via nature-based approaches critically hinges on land use decisions, which are influenced by social dynamics – including gender.

There can also be trade-offs between gender equality and environmental outcomes, which should be identified and addressed. This hot-topic introduces Nature-based Solutions as a potential mitigation strategy, which can simultaneously support human well-being and deliver biodiversity benefits.

This topic is relevant for all stakeholders and essential to the success and sustainability of nature-based approaches. It is necessary for advancing equity and inclusion of the most vulnerable or marginalized stakeholders, who tend to be left out of decision-making processes despite being highly impacted by decisions related to land use and management.

Overview

Land and nature-based approaches in the agroforestry and forestry sectors provide a unique opportunity to generate win-wins across ecological, social, and economic domains. For instance, the reversal and restoration of deforested and degraded land through the sustainable management of diverse tree species can contribute to biodiversity conservation as well as climate mitigation and adaptation.

Harnessing synergies among global environmental agendas via nature-based approaches critically hinges on land use decisions, which are influenced by social dynamics – including gender. Gender is a key social relation mediating how different actors and stakeholders access, control, use, and manage land and other resources. Centering gender equity in nature-based solutions to climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation can facilitate synergies among efforts to address these wicked problems, and lead to positive human (social) and planetary (environmental) outcomes.

Yet, there is nothing inherently equitable about nature-based approaches; these must be intentionally and strategically developed to address gender and inclusion issues. There can also be trade-offs between gender equality and environmental outcomes, and nature-based approaches used to advance intertwined environmental agendas can pose risks to gender equality that must be explored and mitigated. The linkages, synergies, and trade-offs among gender equality and climate, biodiversity, and land degradation, as well as the approaches that generate desirable feedback loops among these processes, must thus be carefully analyzed and managed.

Relevance to different spatial and temporal levels

Social equity comprises several dimensions. ‘Recognition’ brings attention to the existence, legitimate claims, and differentiated experiences of distinct socio-cultural groups or identities. ‘Representation’ refers to procedural equity, in which marginalized groups are not only recognized but are given a seat at the table and a voice in decision-making processes. ‘Distribution’ relates to the partition of costs and benefits to different groups and individuals, and ensuring that all stakeholders have equal access to benefits and do not disproportionately shoulder the burdens (e.g. of a nature-based initiative). There may be tensions and trade-offs among these dimensions, or in pursuing these dimensions across spatial, governance and temporal scales. For instance, temporal trade-offs may include constraining the resource-based livelihoods of current generations to ensure resource security for future generations. Spatial trade-offs may include instances in which local communities shoulder burdens (e.g. of land-use changes for enhanced carbon sequestration) for the benefit of the global community. Synergies and trade-offs may also occur between equity and other objectives, such as ecological goals.

Keep in mind...

Social and gender considerations are context-specific as social relations and hierarchies are shaped by culture and vary across time and place. Yet, commonalities exist. Place-based power relations mediate different social groups’ access to and interactions with their landscape and related initiatives. There is also diversity within groups, such as women, men or youth, as different facets of social differentiation (gender, age, socio-economic status, ethnicity, and more) intersect to create unique social positions among resource users and managers. Nature-based approaches should recognize this diversity of people and contexts and seek to understand and address underlying power relations.

Key terms

- **Nature-based Solutions (NbS)** - are defined by IUCN as “actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems, that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, simultaneously providing human well-being and biodiversity benefits”.
- **Gender equality** - this “refers to the equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. [...] Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women’s issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development”, as defined by UN Women.
- **Gender equity** - this “refers to the fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men. The concept recognizes that women and men have different needs and power, and that these differences should be identified and addressed in a manner that rectifies the imbalance between the sexes,” as defined by the World Health Organization.

Key references

Elias, M., Ihalainen, M., Monterroso, I., Gallant, B., and Paez Valencia, A.M. 2021. Enhancing synergies between gender equality and biodiversity, climate and land degradation neutrality goals: Lessons from gender-responsive nature-based approaches. Working Paper. Bioversity International: Rome, Italy. <https://cgspace.cgiar.org/handle/10568/114844>