

Report on Gender Mainstreaming in SPS Research for the Period 2020–2021

CCICED Secretariat¹

Executive Summary

In 2018, the CCICED Executive Committee identified gender equality as a cross-cutting theme and research priority. To support the integration of gender considerations as part of the Special Policy Studies for 2020–2021, the CCICED Secretariat International Support Office prepared this report.

The purpose of this report is two-fold: first, to highlight some of the research findings and recommendations of CCICED’s 2020–2021 research work specific to gender, drawing on the final research papers from the Special Policy Studies; second, to provide recommendations for mainstreaming gender perspectives in the forthcoming phase of the research.

Three key findings of CCICED’s recent work are: (a) gender equality is an important issue that cannot be ignored—if progress on the SDGs is to take place, gender equality is seen as a “multiplier of sustainability”; (b) gender equality awareness and action must be mainstreamed into environmental policies, strategies, and programs; (c) women have an important role to play as **stakeholders** (through the participation of women in consultations or involvement of women’s business associations or community groups) and **agents of change** (women as leaders of social networks, as gatekeepers and communicators, as conscientious consumers, or as entrepreneurs). While there is a strong acknowledgment that gender equality is important and must be addressed, the *how* remains a significant challenge.

Gender Equality and the International Framework

China’s domestic and international commitments to gender equality and sustainable development include:

- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW 1979)
- United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development and Agenda 21 (UNCED 1992)
- United Nations Conference on Women and Platform for Action (Beijing 1995)
- Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)
- 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and SDGs
- China National Program for Women’s Development (2011–2020).

Parties to the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** have also recognized the importance of involving women and men equally in UNFCCC processes and in the development and implementation of national climate policies that are gender-responsive by establishing a dedicated agenda item under the Convention addressing issues of gender and climate change and by including overarching text in the Paris Agreement. There have also been calls to engage women’s groups and national women and gender institutions in developing and updating climate policies, plans, strategies, and actions.

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SDG 5 is a **standalone goal** for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. It includes promoting women's access to natural resources and enabling technologies, as well as increasing women's participation in environmental decision-making processes. It calls on, among other things, SDG 5.5, ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life, and SDG 5.A, undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance, and natural resources, in accordance with national laws. The goal also seeks to eliminate all forms of gender-based discrimination in all areas of social, political, and economic life and fight stereotypes.

SDG 5 is also a **cross-cutting priority** because it is not only connected to other goals but can also accelerate progress towards them—for instance, for goals related to climate change, health, energy, oceans, and ecosystem management. For example, SDG 13 on climate action highlights the utmost importance of women's greater inclusion in climate change-related planning. In addition, addressing the gender perspective is significant for SDG 3 on health and environment, SDG 7 on energy, SDG 11 on disaster risk reduction, and SDG 15 on ecosystems and forests. The cross-cutting priority of gender equality within other SDGs provides multiple opportunities for men and women to benefit more equitably from China's progress toward achieving these goals. SDGs are substantially less likely to be attained if 50% of the population is not considered or listened to.

CCICED's 2021 Gender-Related Work Through Special Policy Studies (SPSs): Key Observations

This section presents key observations on the importance of gender equality within each SPS research area, as identified through gender guidance notes. The section also identifies opportunities to further advance gender equality within environmental policy development and governance.

Biodiversity

There is currently a global drive to integrate gender perspectives into biodiversity approaches, exemplified by the *CBD Gender Plan of Action 2015-2020*, demonstrating its importance. Women and men generally have different roles in using and managing natural resources because of gender norms. Understanding these roles is a key to combating biodiversity loss and ensuring equitable access to limited and life-giving resources, especially in developing countries. Gender-differentiated responsibilities vary from region to region. Still, in many communities around the world, women act as primary caretakers and natural resource managers, procuring water and firewood, managing waste, and providing health care, often through plant-based medicines. Women's activities are directly impacted by biodiversity loss, and the related impacts on women's lives in terms of health, safety, and education reinforce unequal rights and access to decision making. As such, it is critical that women are engaged in all stakeholder consultation processes regarding biodiversity conservation; that sex-disaggregated data is used to inform the design and monitoring of conservation measures; and that the differing risks, costs, and benefits to women and men are considered within planning and implementation.

The *2021 Special Policy Report on Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Conservation* has very effectively integrated key gender equality concepts and context relevant to post-2020 biodiversity conservation. The importance of gender equality to biodiversity conservation is first introduced in the Executive Summary and Background and is addressed at length in a gender-focused section of the report within Section 7.4, Gender Gaps. The gender section of the paper provides a thorough overview of gender and

biodiversity and associated initiatives relevant to post-2020 biological conservation, as well as key commitments and recommendations made in this area. It makes clear its importance to discussions at the Convention on Biological Diversity 15th Conference of the Parties (COP 15). Importantly, gender equality is also included in Recommendation 4.

In addition, a *Gender, Biodiversity and Ecosystems* working paper was produced in association with the SPS that provides an excellent overview of gender and biodiversity and associated initiatives. This working paper offers an impressive source of in-depth information on gender and biodiversity for reference, along with the above SPS.

Future research areas could include showcasing a gender analysis of a biodiversity conservation measure, demonstrating the importance of collecting and analyzing sex-disaggregated data, and consulting with women and men to understand how their different gender roles intersect with the ecosystem. Additional research could highlight the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on women and girls, women's critical roles related to biodiversity, and the need to ensure women's voices and leadership are included in recovery and resilience efforts.

Global Climate Governance

The link between climate change and gender equality is not new. There is considerable research looking at the impact of climate change on communities, and women more specifically. Improvements in gender equality have been found to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of environmental policies, enhance economic growth and sustainability, and ensure the protection of the basic human rights of both women and men. The impacts of climate change and its associated security risks have important gender dimensions that shape how men and women of different backgrounds experience or contribute to insecurity. An increasing amount of literature now suggests that the impacts of climate change and related disasters exacerbate gender differences. Women tend to be affected more adversely by climate change than men. In fact, the risk of not considering gender is that policies or initiatives unintentionally aggravate existing inequalities or hamper efforts to address climate change and environmental degradation.

Despite this evidence, there remains limited research when it comes to the role of gender—and of women specifically—in climate governance, and more pointedly, emissions management and reduction and connected areas such as climate finance, green technology, and green recovery. Evidence from the ground also suggests that the impacts of climate change are leading to significant socio-economic shifts, including transforming traditional gender norms that determine economic activity, social relationships, and leadership. If carefully managed, shifting social norms can create entry points for women's economic empowerment, as well as for their participation in decision-making, conflict prevention, and peacebuilding.

The *2021 Special Policy Report on Global Climate Governance and China's Role* has integrated gender considerations in an effective way. The paper acknowledges the link between gender equality and sustainable development and recognizes the importance of gender equality in tackling global climate change. The report views gender equality as an important cross-cutting issue that “should be mainstreamed into all climate change policies, strategies and programs.” In doing so, the paper includes a specific section on gender analysis in which the authors consider gender implications in three particular areas of work: 1) gender and climate as cross-sectoral; 2) women's participation in the carbon-neutral job market; and 3) women's safety and transportation. This section presents an important contribution to the climate governance analysis by looking specifically at data from a gender

perspective and by providing specific recommendations for ensuring equity in opportunities and outcomes for women and men as part of green and low-carbon development.

Additional areas of research for the future could include the gendered dimensions of different policies around carbon pricing, renewable energy development policy, and green finance; further looking at how infrastructure developments and the expansion of commodity trade impact women and men differently, and how women may suffer disproportionate consequences, especially when they are members of already-marginalized and vulnerable communities; improving the quantity and quality of participation of women and women's organizations in climate change governance; and investing in women's skills and capacity by supporting capacity development of different groups, including communities and women's organizations, around climate risks awareness as well as adaptation and mitigation.

Global Ocean Governance

Gender equality is recognized as essential for the effective protection of oceans, the sustainable management of ocean and marine resources, and the accomplishment of the SDGs. However, there is still very little data and research on these issues—an area of opportunity for this SPS. The contributions of women in ocean governance continue to be routinely ignored or underestimated in research, management, and policy. For example:

- According to UNESCO, women today account for only 38% of the world's researchers in ocean science, and the rate is even lower for women from developing countries.
- The maritime industry is almost completely managed by men. In 2016, only one of the top 100 seafood companies was run by a woman.
- Although many initiatives have been adopted at the global, regional, and national levels to advance opportunities for women in emerging sectors such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and the Blue Economy, the participation of women from least-developed countries (LDCs), landlocked developing countries (LLDCs), and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) remains low in these sectors. More efforts must be mobilized to enhance their participation.

The *2021 Special Policy Report on Global Ocean Governance* effectively highlights the importance of considering “gender-related aspects of ocean activities and management” and touches on the role of women in greening the blue economy—including looking at how women's participation in decision making can be strengthened. Two special task force reports were also developed looking at establishing China's sustainable fisheries policy and marine pollution. These areas provide an important opportunity to incorporate gender issues as they relate to sustainable fisheries and marine pollution. Some entry points include the following:

- Conducting research on the gendered dimensions of a disruption in the nutrient cycle.
- Undertaking an assessment of the impact of mercury from a gender perspective. As part of the assessment, consider 1) the importance of sex-disaggregated data to understand the impact of mercury pollution on diverse populations and 2) looking specifically at research on the effects of mercury pollution on women and children.
- Promoting a multistakeholder approach to ensure the participation of women and vulnerable populations in policy development and decision-making processes.
- Raising awareness of the linkages between chemical exposures, the effects on human health and the environment, and gender differences in risks and impact.

- Supporting women’s improved access to, use, and control of marine resources, including fisheries.
- Enhancing women’s participation and role in ocean governance decision-making processes, with women as agents of change at all levels.
- Targeting women as specific beneficiaries by increasing awareness of the roles of women and men in the sustainable management and use of resources.
- Investing in women’s skills and capacity by supporting the capacity development of different groups, including communities and women’s organizations.

Global Green Value Chains

Global value chains (GVCs), including global green value chains (GGVC), impact women and men in different ways given their different gender roles as consumers, producers, and workers—often to the disadvantage of women. Some of the main ways GVCs impact women differently than men as workers and producers include the following:

- Expanded employment opportunities for women in lower value-added sectors and for men in higher value-added sectors.
- Perpetuation of a gendered division of labour in which women are relegated to low wage, low skill jobs with limited protections and excluded from decision-making and leadership positions.
- The tendency for women producers to have less access than men to resources required to meet the standards of export markets, such as technical training, credit, land, or skills.

To develop systems and initiatives that support the development of GGVCs and that promote the circular economy, it is important that attention is paid to the different roles women and men play within GGVCs and that policies and programs are implemented in a gender-responsive manner that considers women’s and men’s unique perspectives, needs, and capacities. This is important to ensure a “Do No Harm” approach and to promote gender equality *and* sustainable development within GGVCs. It is also important to enable mechanisms that support GGVCs that capitalize on women’s capacities to promote green consumption and production practices, particularly given the evidence of their greater interest and willingness to prioritize environmental and sustainability considerations within their practices.

Understanding the roles, needs, and capacities of women and men within GGVCs can be done by conducting gender-sensitive value chain analyses or gender analyses of processes relevant to GGVCs. The results of these analyses could then be used to inform the development of gender-responsive legislation, policies, and practice towards GGVCs, which promote rather than hinder gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls while also supporting green outcomes.

Future SPS research could include examining the impacts of legality and traceability systems on both women and men by doing a gender-sensitive value chain analysis that looks at women’s and men’s different and distinct roles within GVCs, how these intersect with traceability measures, and how policy development could take gender considerations into account and thus mitigate risk and contribute to equitable benefits. It would also be useful to demonstrate gender considerations within GVCs using a case study or example—such as the apparel sector in which women tend to be concentrated—and how gender-related challenges could be mitigated within GGVCs. Research could also explore the capacity of women to influence the circular economy, given their roles as consumers and producers and greater interest in behaviours related to environmental outcomes.

Green Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

Women and men are impacted differently by infrastructure projects, including the green BRI. While there are many benefits to such projects, they can also have negative social and economic impacts, such as loss of livelihoods, land, or community displacements. Due to rigid gender roles and gender inequalities in access to resources, input into decision-making, and access to their rights, women are often disproportionately impacted by such projects.

Environmental and social frameworks for green BRI investments, including risk assessments and environmental management practices, are made more effective and equitable by mainstreaming gender considerations within their policies and practices. Gender mainstreaming allows for the development of approaches that account for and mitigate the impact on and different needs and capacities of both women and men. A key part of this process is stakeholder consultations that include women and girls, women's organizations, or other organizations representing their interests. This process helps to ensure that neither women nor men are disproportionately impacted and can equitably benefit from and contribute to the initiative. Not doing so risks implementing approaches that exacerbate gender inequalities and disproportionately impact the most vulnerable groups, including women, while neglecting to capitalize on their capacities.

Gender-sensitive impact assessments, including those focused on environmental impacts, can be effective in reducing the adverse social impacts of development and entail ensuring that the environmental impacts of a project are assessed using an intersectional gender lens. That lens can assess the different impacts on women and men from diverse backgrounds based on gender roles and their different needs, capacities, and perspectives. Gender impact assessments can be standalone or part of environmental or social impact assessments.

In recent years, multilateral institutions and international investment banks have strengthened their approach to managing the environmental and social risks and impacts of investment projects through the establishment of environmental and social frameworks and policies. These frameworks guide the integration of environmental and social considerations throughout all phases of investment projects. Gender equality and inclusion are increasingly integrated throughout environmental and social policies and practices, including within stakeholder consultations, to ensure projects are gender-sensitive, gender-responsive, and inclusive. Mitigation measures can enlist the full participation of women and men from diverse backgrounds by drawing upon their unique capacities and knowledge.

Similarly, women and men are affected differently by investment projects within the resource development and utilization industries due to their different gender roles and expectations within communities: women often bear the brunt of negative impacts, including those related to the environment. As such, it is necessary for investment projects in these areas to use mechanisms to identify, respond to, and mitigate the different impacts on women and men.

The first draft of the *2021 Special Policy Report on Green BRI and 2030 Agenda* contains a text box entitled "Transparency Plus: Special considerations regarding gender and ethnicity." This section provides a good overview of gender roles as they relate to greening the BRI and emerging DFI considerations, particularly as it relates to consultations with the community, drawing out some important lessons.

Future research could highlight progress made in relation to the integration of gender considerations into BRI eco-environmental management practices, either standalone or integrated within

environmental or social management mechanisms, or to propose a standardized system for integrating gender considerations meaningfully into environmental management guidelines for green BRI projects. In addition, it would be useful to develop case studies that demonstrate standards and tools that jointly address the assessment and management of gender impacts of infrastructure projects to bring attention to the interconnectedness of gender and environmental impacts, which could be applied to greening the BRI.

Green Finance

The integration of gender considerations and the promotion of gender equality is important to the development and implementation of green finance. As a result of gender norms, women and men have different roles in the use and management of natural resources and are impacted differently by conservation measures. Despite the importance of biodiversity to women's lives, women are often excluded from participating in decision-making and capacity-building that informs biodiversity initiatives due to discriminatory gender norms. Understanding women's and men's different roles, needs and capacities, and incorporating them into the design, implementation, and monitoring of green finance initiatives are important for addressing biodiversity loss.

Finance instruments incorporating the nature-positive principle can be strengthened by incorporating objectives that promote gender equity. Lessons and approaches can also be drawn from innovative finance instruments such as gender-lens investing and blended finance instruments that integrate the gender-climate nexus, requiring accountability on both fronts, which are important models of how gender equality and biodiversity considerations can be promoted amongst environmentally - and socially conscious investors. Ensuring women's access to biodiversity agricultural subsidies not only helps to support conservation outcomes but also contributes to gender equality by providing resources for women to expand their livelihoods, addressing a key barrier to women's economic empowerment.

Gender considerations are effectively integrated into the *2021 Special Policy Report on Promoting Conservation and Biodiversity Finance*, which highlights the recognized links between biodiversity, gender roles, and gender equality and brings attention to the complementarity of gender mainstreaming in the nature-positive principle. The intersection between women and green finance is given a focused approach in section 3 - Encouraging institutional investors to focus on women's rights when developing eco-protective finance, and section 5 - Focus on supporting women farmers. This integration is further reflected in the inclusion of gender-focused policy recommendations, such as a focus on women farmers, and gender-integrated policy recommendations, such as the inclusion of gender considerations into nature-aligned funds.

Future research could take a close look at how biodiversity agricultural subsidies could take gender considerations into account, based on a gender analysis, to ensure that access to and the benefits of subsidies are equitably shared and support women to expand their livelihoods while protecting biodiversity. Additionally, the importance of gender mainstreaming within biodiversity protection mechanisms resulting from debt swaps could be examined. Doing so would allow considering structural and sociocultural gender-related barriers that women commonly encounter and that inhibit their access to their rights, participation in decision-making, and access to and control of resources. Case studies or gender analysis of a range of green finance mechanisms would also be worthwhile subjects.

Green Technology

The shift to sustainable green energy is an opportunity to tackle gender inequalities and discrimination within society and promote inclusive and equitable communities and cities. The sector of innovation and technology provides unprecedented opportunities to reach women as well as others who are most likely to be left behind. This is key as women and girls continue to bear the brunt of increasing climate-related disasters, yet they are rarely able to affect change. Recognizing women's important roles both in the reproductive and productive spheres of society in the areas of water, energy, transportation, construction, land, and food, it is critical to consider their needs and perspectives and involve them as full stakeholders and innovators in green development. In fact, creating a gender-responsive environment and realizing the potential of women are two of the paramount goals for urban and community-level development in China.

Opportunities for the advancement of gender equality will require a gender analysis to identify the roles of men and women in the sector and the constraints and opportunities to women's participation as well as access to and benefits from resources and decision making. It could also look at how women and men can contribute to the design and implementation of green technologies. This is even more important considering the under-representation of female innovators in the green tech space: women make up only 1% of leadership positions in tech today, meaning they still don't have a legitimate seat at the table in the tech and innovation space. A recent study by UN Women also found that the following barriers sustain a gender gap when it comes to innovation and technology: limited market awareness and investment in innovations that meet the needs of women, gender-blind approaches to innovation, and under-representation of women as innovators and entrepreneurs.

The need to make the green transition diverse and inclusive is becoming increasingly apparent, and governments can use the shift towards sustainable energy to tackle systemic gender discrimination within societies. In doing so, it will be important to capture key best practices in terms of gender policies for green technology as well as for green product research and development. Additionally, documenting global experiences in terms of gender-sensitive green technologies at city and community levels would be critical. Success will mean women are contributing to the transition on an equal footing with men.

The *2021 Special Policy Report on Major Green Technology Innovation and Implementation Mechanisms* effectively introduced and discussed gender considerations in a standalone chapter. The chapter, entitled *Gender and Population-Group Perspectives: Sharing and Public Participation*, includes a section on the role of women in green community development and a section on community renewal that is favourable for elderly people and children. The section on women specifically is extremely relevant, as it not only underscores the role of women in green lifestyles, but it also emphasizes the necessity of women's engagement and leadership "to improve the government's capability in responding to climate change," and "the opportunity to address gender gaps and discrimination, and promote inclusion and equality" by using technology-driven green transition and involving more women.

Future research could consider further supporting women's improved access to, use, and control of green technologies and innovations by, for example, enhancing their participation and role in green technology decision-making processes as agents of change at all levels. Another area could be targeting women as specific beneficiaries by increasing awareness of the roles of women and men in the sustainable management and use of green technologies. Finally, future research could consider investing in women's skills and capacity by supporting the capacity development of different groups, including communities and women's organizations.

Green Transition/ Consumption

Green transitions, including green consumption and production, provide opportunities to tackle systemic gender-based inequalities and enable societies to reap the benefits of a more diverse workforce. Green transition and sustainable social governance policies have many gendered implications.

The burden of green or sustainable consumption is usually placed on women, based on their roles in the reproductive sphere of society, including childcare; the stereotype of women being nurturing, primary consumers; and the linkages made between femininity and nature. Several areas of consumption have a strong gender dimension, and studies in developing countries have found major differences between women's and men's consumption preferences. Additionally, international literature indicates women are key decision makers and drivers of consumption in urban and rural areas (making 85% of purchasing decisions in some European countries).

The *2021 Special Policy Report on Green Transition and Sustainable Social Governance* recognizes the importance of considering the gender dimensions of sustainability given women's and men's differing patterns of production and consumption, and the differentiated impact of this production and consumption. The report also includes a section on gender, which provides an important overview of Germany's, Sweden's, and Japan's approaches to gender equality as they relate to sustainable societal development. Finally, the report also includes a specific recommendation to promote gender equality in all aspects of product development and use.

It would be important for future research to include a gender analysis that includes sex-disaggregated data for both green production and green consumption, highlighting differences between key regions in China as well as between the rural and urban settings. Other aspects of the research could look at factors that influence women's participation in green growth and explore gender differences in consumption patterns and priorities, as well as how to target messages on green lifestyle, the role of women's organizations, and the role of women-owned businesses in the green industry.

While conducting the research of relevant international experiences, it is suggested that this includes documenting pertinent policy experience and good practice related to the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment in each of the sub-areas of research on green transition. For example, national and local policies and practices of related industries such as iron and steel, construction material, and automobiles will need to consider gender issues, as well as women's roles, needs, and capacities more specifically. For the automobile industry, it will be important to consider where women are located with the upper and lower reaches of the supply chain while ensuring that women business leaders are involved in the development of eco-design tools.

Recommendations to CCICED for the forthcoming research phase

To strengthen the integration of gender within the SPS topics, we recommend adding the following considerations to the current process:

- **Consideration should be given to commissioning a dedicated gender analysis for each SPS topic.** This should be done at the early stages of identification of the research topic and prior to the development of a detailed research outline, which would facilitate where and how gender should be considered within the topic. Integrating gender considerations at the planning stage is

easier and more effective than if introduced at a later stage and can help to set the stage for the research.

- **Based on the SPS-specific gender analysis, gender training sessions specific to each SPS should be carried out with SPS team members.** This should be carried out early in the research process, prior to the formalization of the research outline, to inform the identification of gender-focused areas of the research and the integration of gender considerations across the study.
- **Each SPS should be encouraged to commit to integrating gender considerations throughout their paper as a standard of practice.** This should be done using gender-sensitive language and sex-disaggregated data, as well as highlighting gender aspects where relevant. For example, SDG 5 should be referenced in each paper, and the linkages to other SDGs defined and explained (see Climate SPS as a good practice). In addition, each SPS should recognize women's underrepresentation in natural resource decision making and leadership and ensure that all stakeholder consultations involve women or women's organizations and include specific provisions for how they will be involved. Each SPS should also recognize the link between gender-based violence and environmental governance and include specific references to how to mitigate it.
- **Consideration should also be given to mandating the inclusion of a section of each SPS focused on gender equality and its intersection with the relevant topic.** The gender-focused sections that were carried out in some papers were very effective at addressing gender-related issues in-depth. If the necessity of focused sections was identified early, prior to and during the formulation of the initial SPS outline, this could also enable the identification and inclusion of SPS team members with the interest and capacity to carry out gender-focused research and drafting of relevant sections.
- **Appoint a gender focal point for each SPS team.** The gender focal point should have an interest in gender-related issues and an adequate level of authority to encourage other SPS research members to integrate gender into their respective research. The focal point would also be the primary point of contact for the contracted gender specialists.
- **Consideration should be given to mandating the inclusion of a gender-focused case study or example within each SPS.** Such practical tools would greatly assist the understanding of team members and readers of the relevance of gender considerations within each SPS topic.
- **Consideration should be given to mandating the inclusion of a minimum of one gender-focused recommendation in each SPS.** This is important to ensure that the gender dimension is not neglected as the recommendations are addressed. It is inefficient to include gender within the text but not within the recommendation for achieving or contributing to results and recognition at the higher levels. In addition, team members should be strongly encouraged to integrate gender considerations within other recommendations.