



# **GENDER LEARNING REVIEW: MADAGASCAR AND NAMIBIA**

***report-back on main  
findings &  
recommendations***

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# WWF and gender learning

## Context:

WWF commitment to rights-based and community-based conservation; within that, commitment to integrate **gender perspectives, mainstreaming, and equality**

**But ‘what’s actually going on?’**



# January 2020: visits to communities in Madagascar and Namibia









Complemented by conversations  
with programme managers and  
country coordinators in Indonesia,  
Kenya, and Uganda

## Primary purpose:

provide a field- and evidence- based  
'finger on the pulse' assessment of the  
ways in which WWF gender goals are  
(or aren't) taken up in/realistic for on-  
the-ground conservation activities



## **Gender learning review** (*not a country-office evaluation*):

- Provide a snapshot of the nature of gender mainstreaming, inclusion and participation
- From this, develop forward-looking recommendations that could guide/ inform strategies for strengthening gender mainstreaming, inclusion and participation

# Brief note on methods:

## DESK REVIEW

- preceded the field component

## IN NAMIBIA & MADAGASCAR

- meetings/ interviews with management/leadership committees (CBOs/CMCs) **PLUS** 'ordinary members'
- where possible, 'all-community' w/m meetings **PLUS separate** w/m meetings
- 'soft script' (semi-structured) interview questions/discussion points (discussions recorded)

# Into the field we go!





**IS GENDER EQUALITY SEEN TO  
BE A POSITIVE GOAL?**

# Extent of awareness;

## Is gender equality a positive goal?

**YES!** Almost universally: good awareness of general goals of gender equality, and **'yes, it is good'**

- Many men quite eloquent about this.. 'men and women are the same, should have the same opportunities' ... 'We are all human'... 'We have same needs'... etc
- Women adamant (desperate) as well as eloquent...they want to be involved...they feel as though they're already on frontlines of conservation.. they want a purpose in their communities (and in life)

- And it's the law! National gender legislation is (roughly) known; it matters! women's integration (e.g., in parliaments, police, armies) seen as positive models



- Gender equality is 'inevitable' and signifies change and modernity in society



# **POSITIVE GOAL FOR COMMUNITIES/ MEN/ WOMEN?**

*Human rights/ social justice  
dimensions*

# Gender equality good for communities/ men/ women?

- General view that if women are involved on same terms as men, and in the same or complementary activities, the community as a whole is better off: community relations, harmony

- Women VERY eager to participate and contribute equally: personal growth; feeling of contributing to larger cause; gets them away from being 'stuck' at home; self-respect; empowerment
- Being involved as equal partners in conservation brings them more equality/ 'respect' in other community and household domains

- Women being active can serve as role models to other women/girls in the community;
- Women's conservation groups aim to be agents of change



- These enhancements of women's roles generally expressed positively by men, but some concerns about men not sharing possible opportunities (e.g., training programs)

**DOES (WOULD) GENDER EQUALITY  
ENHANCE WORK/ FORMAL  
STRUCTURES OF CONSERVANCIES?**

## Yes:

- Core value: exemplifying principles of equality (discussed previously)
- Diversity and expansion of views, good for problem-solving
- Having all members of community involved: increases 'stake' in conservation
- Women can tap into women's community networks for information and opinions
- Women (might be) more honest and transparent – financial management esp

Widely expressed position was that **women and men should and do have same opportunities** to participate in leadership/management positions in CBOs/ CMCS



But is there *really* equal  
participation and inclusion of  
women and men in the  
conservation work/  
CBOs/CMCs?

# No:

- in reality, strong male-skew to leadership (CBOs, Madagascar; CMCs, Namibia)
- and strong male-skew to participation in meetings, decision-making bodies etc

**Table 1:**  
**Percent women in Namibia Conservancy management and employment**

|                                                                                                                                                                      | 2018 | 2017 | 2016 | 2015 | 2014 | 2013 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Conservancy management committee members                                                                                                                             | 33%  | 34%  | 39%  | 33%  | 35%  | 34%  |
| Chairpersons                                                                                                                                                         | 17%  | 15%  | 14%  | 14%  | 15%  | 15%  |
| Treasurers/<br>financial managers                                                                                                                                    | 41%  | 44%  | 41%  | 46%  | 39%  | 44%  |
| Staff members<br><i>staff employed directly by conservancies e.g. game guards, rangers, treasurers, managers, cleaners, office administrators, book keepers etc.</i> | 25%  | 26%  | 29%  | 30%  | 30%  | 26%  |

- Namibia: women about one-third in management committees; note stronger representation in finance positions
- Reports on membership meetings: very male dominated, comparatively few women attend even in communities where women and men are demographically equal or women in the majority
- Madagascar findings very similar
- Other country offices report similarly

# Why this rhetoric-reality gap?

Overwhelming explanation is “culture” ...

“tradition”: finding across all countries consulted in this review

- A. Women socialized to not speak in public; to not engage in debate/ disagreement with men; to be silent. Until recently, women weren't ‘allowed’ to speak in public. Men are socialized to be the decision-makers and public engagers.
- B. From above, women don't put themselves forward for office



C. From above, women have lack of confidence, little experience in public speaking, reluctant to speak (or even make eye contact)

D. Both women and men expressed concerns about women 'straying' from their households and family duties; or concerns that they would be *perceived* as bad wives/ mothers or neglecting their household duties

General take-away:

passive explanations;

‘not much one can do’;

cultures change slowly;

traditions *do* change, but often one-by one

# But, structures too... for example:

A. Men willing for women to take on public duties, but **unwilling to take on household duties** to relieve time/labour burdens

B. **Specific, spatial dynamics** of AGM meetings (Namibia): often crowded with men, women feel intimidated/ marginalized

**C. Information-chain impediments:** some women said they are simply not told about the meetings by men, or are told at the very last minute

**D. Land tenure favors men:** men then become main decision-makers in terms of land use, wildlife etc

**E. Traditional (religious) authorities:** *could* be powerful allies and agents of change, as some are; but most authorize and enforce traditional gender roles

## F. Strategies of equality often known but not used, e.g. :

- quotas (although in one community each in Madagascar and Namibia there was a quota system planned)
- meeting structures that enable equal turns at speaking ('zebra protocols' etc)



# Rangers, guards, shepherds

Ranger workforce *very* heavily male-skewed

Deep end of the pool of traditional attitudes about women as rangers/ community shepherds/ guards.

Several observations to the effect that women guards could be (are) more effective than men because women are less likely to escalate conflicts with poachers into physical confrontations – they're more likely to use negotiation. Also:

- different observational experience
- different community communications/ information networks (important in anti-poaching)

Most of the men, while cautiously accepting that women could and maybe should take these positions, also said:

- women don't apply for these positions
- they aren't trained;
- they couldn't do the hard work/ field time in difficult terrain;
- they would find the field work too arduous;
- they're not strong enough;
- it's dangerous for them to go too far from home;
- women wouldn't know how to deal with dangerous animals

Most of the women said:

- they DO apply for these jobs and they are preemptively dismissed/not considered
- they have as much skill and experience dealing with dangerous animals as men, it's part of their everyday work and life
- they have considerable physical strength and navigate difficult terrain all the time
- they WANT these jobs
- the problem, women say, is not their capacity, but the attitudes of men

Enabling structures of gender equality missing that could support women's integration into ranging:

- Uniforms;
- Facilities incl toilets
- Safeguards on safety
- Employment policies and practices (eg paternity/maternity leave) not in place

*Which men would benefit from too*

**DOES (COULD) GENDER  
EQUALITY ENHANCE/  
CONTRIBUTE TO  
CONSERVATION?**

# Yes!

- broadens base of community support/ engagement/ involvement; creates a sense of common cause
- increases labor pool available (eg, mangrove planting) – and funding/ income for this
- complementarity



- both men and women are already *de facto* ground observers of environment/ animals/ conservation; m + w have skills and observational knowledge ('citizen scientists')
- many villages are demographically dominated by women (men migrated and/or aging):  
women *are* the ones with eyes and ears on the ground
- women are teachers of their children – they can teach about conservation, anti-poaching; children will follow example of their mothers

One way to probe for this is to ask if women/ men bring different skills/ strengths/knowledge/ attitudes to conservation.. Does it expand the skill set to bring women more fully into conservation?

Generally hesitant to attribute different m/w 'attitudes/ behaviours/views'; general assertion of 'sameness'

...but some examples from community conversations:

- women are the frontline observers of the environment; they know what is going on on a daily basis, sometimes more *locally* than men;
- women have a greater sense of aesthetic;
- women are more future-oriented (children?);
- women have a stronger sense of sustainability;
- men are physically more aggressive and (often unintentionally) can be more destructive to natural resources;
- men's geographic range is wider (e.g., they can fish many miles from shore), so they can spread potentially destructive activities over a wider area;
- women are more protective of the environment;
- *maybe* different attitudes to wildlife;
- women can be mediators/ defuse conflicts/ community reconciliation;
- maybe different priorities in allocating/ managing scarce resources

*(research needed!)*

# Distinctive role/ potential growth for **women's conservation groups**

e.g.:

- The **Women's Desk** of the #Khoadi//Hoas Conservancy: Women decided they needed a channel for their voices. Goal: improve the lives of women living in the area. “Women Against Crime” (domestic violence) initiative, meetings to share experiences; plans for crafts support; helping the most vulnerable (incl toiletries)

“Women are the light. But our light is  
under a blanket.”



# Women for Conservation Group Namibia

2018: women reps from 6 Conservancies



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- Women for Conservation: Founded to give women a channel for their voices. Many of the women are single mothers; hoping for collective action to improve their lot
- 5-year dream: to be a national force for betterment of women and conservation

In Madagascar:

- Women's "radio listeners" project;
- Women's association: tree nursery/  
alternative to mangrove charcoal

# WWF ROLE?

# WWF?

- General observation in communities that WWF didn't *initiate* gender equality in conservation, but their continuing support and advocacy is key
- Partnering with WWF gives community partners opportunities to introduce gender considerations -- and legitimacy/ visibility
- Tangible funding and technical support for projects (incl governance)
- Important contribution is to 'be present' on a continuous basis, to be visible in the communities, and to be consistent and repetitious with the messaging about the benefits – to both men and women – of gender equality. The ground does shift. Persistence counts. Consistency counts.

# TOP-LINE FINDINGS

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The broad overarching finding from country conversations is that gender equality is widely seen to be:

- increasingly known and accepted, even widely welcomed;
- good for women (and, somewhat more tentatively, for men);
- good for Conservancies/CBOs, communities;
- good for conservation;
- an (inevitable) part of the legal mechanism of modern societies;
- an unstoppable social trend in which communities and conservation efforts need to be participants.



- WWF gender commitments are having demonstrably positive effects: for women and men, for communities, for conservation governance, and for conservation itself
- WWF credibility can, with partners, bring social change in communities
- WWF credibility can bring change within global conservation circles

Considerable good will and interest in equality, but significant gaps between aspirations and reality...stiff challenges, structural and attitudinal, including resistance

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## WWF network

- It is not clear that there is a unitary network-wide understanding of the necessity of gender equality, not just as an instrumental lever for better conservation, but as a foundational human right
- Senior-level leadership commitments and advocacy on gender need to be visible (not just as positioning equality as an instrumental lever for better conservation, but as a foundational human right)

- WWF's public-facing media (e.g., website) give very little visibility to human rights and esp gender commitments: **gender audit?**
- More WWF network-wide sharing of best practices and 'lessons learned' would be of great benefit

## Country office support:

- country offices want *ongoing* and repeated gender trainings;
- more gender enhancement funding and country office budget support, incl making provision for targeted funds for gender programming



- Clarify and make consistent the role of country offices in tracking ('enforcing'?) compliance by partners on gender equality mandates in partnership contracts -- and in internal partner staffing profiles
- Develop and promulgate consistent accountability metrics

- within WWF country offices, general eagerness for gender work, but need more clarity on mission and purpose;
- individuals doing gender work often feel isolated and sidelined within country offices/partners (and overall WWF priorities)

# What communities want and need from WWF (in conjunction with partners):

## 1) Bringing change to communities and through partners by expanding the WWF comfort zone:

- engage with the *structures* that limit gender equality:  
land tenure; traditional authorities; girls' education
- support and leverage influence to amplify  
*national- level* gender mandates, and support gender  
equality institutions outside conservation circles;

## 2) Economic support:

- more, and more diverse, economic opportunities/incubators (esp women's economic opportunities – crafts but not only crafts);
- support for local initiatives;
- targeted funds for women's groups and projects;
- brainstorming on bringing economic opportunities to remote and poorly-serviced regions; tourism is a fickle prop

### **3) Community trainings (*frequent and repeated*):**

- for men about their own patriarchal attitudes and behaviors
- for everyone, gender equality and rights trainings – not only for leadership levels
- for adult men and women on basic literacy and numeracy
- for women on public speaking
- higher-level skills (internet? accountancy?)
- equal-participation meetings strategies and management
- conservation knowledge and principles
- citizen science (?)
- cross-fertilization/ best practices exchanges/ trainings

# Support women's groups

- Don't leave men behind, but support women in catching up
- Partner with women's groups to gain broader exposure within communities; women's desks and women's groups might be particularly strategic partners for conducting trainings
- Add visibility and credibility to these strategic partners

# Research and gender-disaggregated data

What gets counted 'counts'; what gets officially noticed then is important

- Gender-disaggregated data is essential throughout all conservation activities:  
e.g., income flows; benefits; projects;
- Attitudinal/ perception surveys



# TOP-LINE RECOMMENDATION

Demonstrably positive effect:  
'keep doing it, and more of it'

WWF impressive leadership in highly  
un-gender conscious fields of  
environment / conservation

Thank you

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