

An abstract graphic of a tree. The trunk is a vertical braid of blue, yellow, and white lines. The canopy is composed of many wavy, curved lines in the same color palette, radiating from the top of the trunk.

WORLD SURVEY ON THE ROLE OF
WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT 2014

**GENDER EQUALITY
AND SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT**

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The World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, on the theme of “gender equality and sustainable development”, was first issued by the United Nations in 2014 as a Report of the Secretary-General (A/69/156).

ABOUT THE COVER

The cover depicts the three dimensions of sustainability – environmental, economic and social, as three separate sections of a braid that interweave and intersect, becoming one. The braid is a symbol of strength and interconnections, and thus alludes to a comprehensive approach to sustainable development. The cover image, taken as a whole, is a representation of a woman, reminding us that a commitment to gender equality and the realization of women and girls’ human rights is fundamental to achieving sustainable development.

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PREFACE

The immense social, economic and environmental consequences of climate change and loss of essential ecosystems are becoming clear. Their effects are already being felt in floods, droughts, and devastated landscapes and livelihoods. Among those most affected are women and girls, given the precariousness of their livelihoods, the burden of securing shelter, food, water and fuel that largely falls on them, and the constraints on their access to land and natural resources. As the global community grapples with the challenges of sustainable development and the definition of the Sustainable Development Goals, the *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development* 2014 asserts the central role of gender equality. It charts the rationale and actions necessary to achieve sustainable development.

Linking gender equality with sustainable development is important for several reasons. It is a moral and ethical imperative. Efforts to achieve a just and sustainable future cannot ignore the rights, dignity and capabilities of half the world's population. To be effective, policy actions for sustainability must redress the disproportionate impact on women and girls of economic, social and environmental shocks and stresses. Finally, women's knowledge, agency and collective action has huge potential to improve resource productivity, enhance ecosystem conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, and to create more sustainable, low-carbon food, energy, water and health systems. Failure to capitalize on this would be a missed opportunity. Women should not be viewed as victims, but as central actors in moving towards sustainability.

The *World Survey* does not attempt to cover the exceedingly wide range of aspects of sustainable development. It identifies a select

range of issues that are fundamental to women's lives and are strategic for achieving gender equality and sustainability. It analyses patterns of growth, employment generation and the role of public goods; food production, distribution and consumption; population dynamics and women's bodily integrity; and water, sanitation and energy.

Three criteria are employed to assess the likelihood of policy actions achieving gender equality. Do they support women's capabilities and their enjoyment of rights? Do they reduce, rather than increase, women's unpaid care work? And do they embrace women's equal and meaningful participation as actors, leaders and decision-makers?

The *World Survey* 2014 is a serious and thoughtful contribution to our understanding of how gender equality relates to sustainable development. This is a resource that strengthens the hands of policy actors in different parts of the world – whether in government, civil society, international agencies, or the private sector. It is my firm hope that it will lead to policies and actions that enhance gender equality and the full enjoyment by women and girls of their human rights.

The *World Survey* will be presented to the General Assembly in October 2014.



Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka
*Under-Secretary-General
and Executive Director, UN Women*

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UN Women would like to thank a number of experts and representatives across the United Nations system for their inputs into *The World Survey on the Role of Women in Development 2014: Gender Equality and Sustainable Development*.

The contributing authors who developed background papers that formed the basis of the chapters of the publication include: Melissa Leach and Lyla Mehta, Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex (United Kingdom); Elissa Braunstein, Colorado State University (United States); Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, The New School (United States); Elizabeth Hartmann, Anne Hendrixson and Jade Sasser, the Population and Development Program, Hampshire College (United States), and Isha Ray, Energy and Resources Group, University of California at Berkeley (United States).

In order to ensure that the *World Survey* reflected a balanced range of experiences and the diversity of policy, advocacy and research activities around gender equality and sustainable development, UN Women organized several consultations to receive guidance and input on the content of the report.

An initial brainstorm on the key issues in gender and sustainable development was organized

Hammarhjöld Foundation (formerly, United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service).

Subsequently, a two-day concepts and methods workshop was organized at UN Women headquarters in New York with presentations by experts on various key topics identified at the brainstorm. Participants at this workshop included Andrew Fischer, International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University (the Netherlands); Sakiko Fukuda-Parr; Elizabeth Hartmann; Anne Hendrixson; Melissa Leach; Michael Levien, John Hopkins University (United States); Anita Nayar; Isha Ray; Dianne Rocheleau, Clark University (United States); and Margarita Velasquez, Regional Centre for Multidisciplinary Research (Mexico).

An expert group meeting was organized jointly with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome in late February 2014, to review and discuss the first drafts of the background papers, on the basis of which the authors made revisions for a second draft. Apart from the authors, the attendees included researchers and practitioners with expertise and experience on the different thematic areas covered: Denisse Cordova, FIAN International (Germany); Wendy Harcourt; Marjorie Mbilinyi, Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (Tanzania); Mohan

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