

## KEY OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### From the third consultation & survey on Beijing+30 for CSOs of Europe and Central Asia

#### **Accelerating the Beijing Platform for Action and holistic overview in ECA region, Clustered Area – Participation, accountability, and gender-responsive institutions and Environmental conservation, protection, and rehabilitation**

#### OVERVIEW

In 2025, the global community will mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and 10 years of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Adopted by all UN member States in 1995, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPfA) stands as a cornerstone in the global pursuit of gender equality. This comprehensive blueprint outlines a clear path to empower women and girls, making it an indispensable framework for progress worldwide. Addressing 12 critical areas of concern, from participation, accountability, and gender-responsive institutions to environmental conservation, protection, and rehabilitation and ten other areas, it offers a roadmap for achieving gender equality across all facets of life.

The BDPfA calls for the increased participation of women in all areas of public and private life, particularly in leadership and decision-making roles, recognizing that women's involvement leads to more inclusive and representative governance. It urges the removal of barriers that prevent women from fully engaging in political, economic, and social spheres and advocates for measures and reforms to ensure equal access. Accountability is another key focus, with the BDPfA emphasizing the need for robust mechanisms to monitor progress in gender equality, including the establishment of transparent processes, the development of indicators, and the collection of gender-disaggregated data to assess the impact of policies and programmes on women. Additionally, the BDPfA stresses the transformation of institutions to be more gender-responsive, advocating for the creation and enforcement of laws, policies, and programs that actively consider and address the different needs and experiences of women and men. The BDPfA also highlights the importance of strengthening institutional mechanisms, such as national women's machineries, to coordinate and support the advancement of gender equality across all sectors, ensuring their effective functioning as crucial for sustained progress.

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) will undertake a crucial review and appraisal of the implementation of the BDPfA at its sixty-ninth session in 2025. This review will also serve as an opportunity to assess how the Beijing Declaration has contributed to the realization of the 2030 Agenda. UN regional commissions have been invited to undertake regional reviews and convene regional intergovernmental meetings, which will feed into the sixty-ninth session of the Commission. The regional reviews include consultations with key stakeholder groups, one being civil society, to assess regional challenges and provide feedback and insights on the implementation of the BDPfA. The first consultation with civil society was held on 30 May 2024 under the theme "Inclusive Development, Shared Prosperity, Decent Work"; the second was held on 25 June 2024 under the theme "Accelerating the Beijing Platform for Action and holistic overview in ECA region, Freedom from violence, stigma, and stereotypes, Peaceful and inclusive societies".

The third civil society consultation, held on 10 September 2024, focused on progress over the last five years in increasing women's representation in decision-making roles, noting policies like quotas and affirmative action that have led to higher percentages of women in certain political positions. Participants noted that the active involvement of civil society was crucial. The challenges faced in the ECA region remain, such as ongoing gender stereotypes, hate speech and violence, financial and structural barriers, and the lack of strong institutional gender equality mechanisms. The role of institutional structures and machinery was also highlighted as key to strengthening diversity and inclusion in decision-making at all levels. Establishing permanent platforms for



## SURVEY ADMINISTRATION AND RESPONSE

During and after the consultation, participants were invited to submit their responses to the survey. 30 CSOs completed the survey. These responses offer valuable insights into the topic areas. The survey results provided additional inputs to the outcomes of the consultations.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CSO REPRESENTATIVES

The CSO representatives who participated in the survey are a unique segment of the population. These individuals, including many women's and girls' rights activists working in challenging environments, possess specialized knowledge and firsthand experience that are critical for understanding the nuances of the issues at hand. The expertise of these respondents ensures that their insights carry significant weight and relevance.

## SURVEY DESIGN AND INSIGHT GENERATION

The survey captured detailed qualitative data to enable respondents to elaborate on specific challenges and provide nuanced perspectives. Such detailed feedback is valuable for understanding complex issues and offers a depth of insight that might be missed with more simple or quantitative survey designs.

## DIVERSITY AND RANDOM SAMPLING

It is important to highlight that the 30 respondents are a random representation of a diverse range of CSOs across many countries of the UNECE region. The insights gained from this consultation and survey will be instrumental in shaping future strategies and interventions in these critical areas of **"participation, accountability, and gender-responsive institutions"** and **"environmental conservation, protection, and rehabilitation"** for the women in the region.

## Accelerating the Beijing Platform for Action and holistic overview in ECA region

The below points with regards to accelerating the implementation of BDPfA and responding to regional challenges are highlighted during the consultation meeting and in the survey.

### Significance of Beijing+30 Review Process:

- 2025 marks the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, 25th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and 10th anniversary of the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals, where SDG 5 will be placed under review at the High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development.
- This convergence of milestones presents a great opportunity for civil society, young people, and adolescents to advocate for systemic change and implementation of unfulfilled promises.

### Regional Challenges:

- The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing inequalities and created new challenges for women and girls in the region.
- The ongoing war in Ukraine has significant implications for women's and girls' rights, peace, and security in the broader region.
- Natural disasters and economic crises have disproportionately affected women and girls, highlighting the need for gender-responsive approaches to crisis management and recovery.

### Civil Society Engagement:

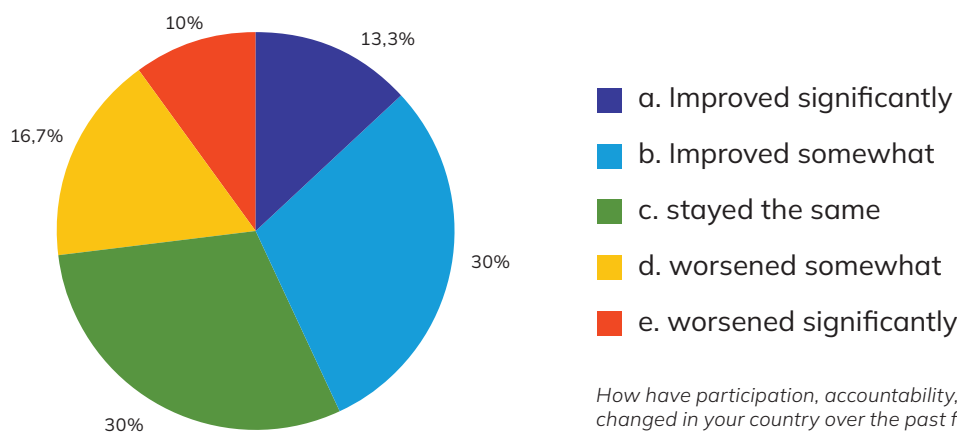
- Civil society, woman-led, youth-led, and girl-led organizations, networks, movements, collectives, and groups play an important role in monitoring progress, identifying gaps, and pushing for accountability in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.
- The consultation process provides an important platform for civil society to share experiences, best practices, and recommendations to shape the Beijing+30 review process.

### Review Process Challenges:

- The review process must effectively capture and address the complex regional issues that have emerged or intensified in the past five years.
- Ensuring meaningful civil society and youth participation in national and regional reviews remains a challenge, particularly in contexts where civic space is shrinking.

## PARTICIPATION, ACCOUNTABILITY, GENDER-RESPONSIVE INSTITUTIONS

### Feminist Activists' Voices



In the past five years, a range of new support services and resources aimed at enhancing participation, accountability, and gender-responsive institutions have emerged across various sub-regions of UN ECE. Moreover, several countries have implemented successful strategies to enhance participation, accountability, and gender-responsive institutions, as affirmed by 43.30% of the respondents to the survey. Civil society organizations have made important strides through their advocacy, despite broader anti-feminist sentiment growing in the region.

Despite some progress in some countries, such as the establishment of support agencies and the implementation of quotas, significant challenges persist in ensuring participation, accountability, and gender-responsive institutions. Factors hindering progress include limited funding, political instability, and lack of cooperation from authorities. While there have been advancements in combating violence against women, gaps remain in providing comprehensive support services and implementing effective prevention measures.

Overall, the results indicate a complex picture of progress in these areas. While some positive developments have been observed, significant challenges remain in legislative effectiveness and policy implementation. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that considers both legislative reforms and effective policy implementation strategies to ensure that the benefits of these changes are realized for all marginalized groups.

## KEY FINDINGS:

**Barriers to Women's Economic and Political Participation:** Women face significant barriers, including lack of social security, precarious employment, and limited access to finance, all of which hinder their economic opportunities and political participation. Structural obstacles like gender pay gaps, traditional gender roles, and underrepresentation in decision-making persist. These issues are compounded for women who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, marginalization, and violence, limiting their ability to engage and lead in meaningful political life. Implementing quota systems, like Moldova's double quota, has proven effective in increasing women's political representation. Ensuring that women, including young women, are placed in electable positions on candidate lists is essential for the success of these quotas.

**New Support Services and Resources:** Over the past five years, nearly half of survey participants acknowledged the introduction of support services aimed at enhancing participation, accountability, and gender-responsive institutions in their countries. Successful strategies, such as Moldova's "double quota" system, have increased women's representation in politics by ensuring positions of influence. Strengthening institutional gender machinery, such as in Ukraine, has enabled coordinated efforts across sectors to promote gender equality.

**Consultation Platforms and Digital Tools:** Consultation platforms between civil society, young people and decision-makers are vital for promoting gender-responsive/transformational policymaking. These mechanisms ensure that women's and girls' perspectives, in all their diversity, are consistently integrated into policy discussions. Regional collaboration and advocacy have also strengthened the voices on women's and girls' issues. The survey highlights the promise of digital tools in advancing women's and girls' participation when designed inclusively and participatory.

**Intersectionality and Inclusive Decision-Making:** Addressing intersectionality requires meaningful involvement of diverse women and girls in decision-making from program design and development through to implementation, monitoring, and governance. This ensures that policies reflect the needs of marginalized groups and that solutions are comprehensive and inclusive.

**National Action Plans and Gender Responsive Institutions:** Some action plans focused on women, peace, and security have been successful in integrating gender concerns into policy areas. Effective monitoring and stakeholder engagement are critical for sustained progress. Strengthening gender responsive institutions through dedicated, adequate, and sustainable budget allocations and expertise supports coordinated gender equality work across sectors.

**Intersectionality in Decision-Making:** participation of women and girls in all their diversity, including young women and women and girls from marginalized, racialized groups, in decision-making from the outset ensures that policies and programmes address multiple and intersectional discrimination effectively.

## LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY CHALLENGES:

- 1. Political Shifts and Anti-Gender Movements:** Political instability, lack of governmental cooperation, and shrinking space for NGOs have hindered the effectiveness of gender equality reforms. The rise of well-resourced anti-gender and anti-rights movements poses further threats, particularly targeting LGBTQIA+ communities, human rights defenders, and gender activists, creating a hostile environment that undermines progress in gender equality.

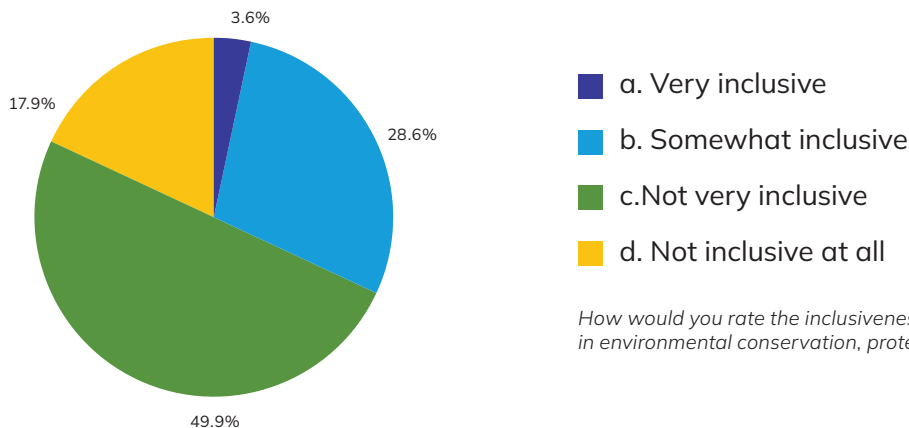
2. **Impact of War and Conflict on Women's and Girls' Participation:** Ongoing war and conflicts in the region severely affect women's and girls' ability to participate in decision-making processes. In war/-conflict recovery, women's voices are often marginalized, yet their involvement is crucial for fostering social cohesion and dialogue. Programming that integrates humanitarian, development, and peace efforts is essential to enhance women's and girls' leadership in these contexts.
3. **Underrepresentation due to Caregiving and Disability:** Women with caregiving responsibilities and women and girls with disabilities remain underrepresented in decision-making spaces. These women face additional challenges that hinder their participation in political processes, despite efforts such as gender quotas. There is a critical need to make decision-making forums inclusive and accessible to all women.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Encourage exchange between experienced women and young leaders to foster intergenerational feminist and rights-based dialogues. Establish international and independent monitoring groups to oversee and report on gender-based violence in politics, ensuring state commitments are upheld despite growing anti-gender and anti-rights movements.
2. Ensure women's access, participation, and leadership to all decision-making processes, and budgeting for inclusivity from the beginning. Adopting intersectional approaches to address multiple forms of discrimination, including discrimination based on work and descent is essential for effective policy outcomes.
3. Promoting gender-responsive policymaking and addressing structural barriers are key to securing political gains. National action plans, particularly those focusing on women, peace, and security, need regular monitoring, consultation and engagement with independent NGOs to ensure successful implementation.
4. Emphasize the importance of engaging local women's and girls' organizations, networks, movements, and collectives in policy making through systematic consultation platforms. Local and grass-roots engagement is essential to ensure that policies are responsive to the needs of diverse communities and people.
5. Digital tools and approaches show promise in advancing women's and girls' issues and participation, particularly when used to address intersectional forms of discrimination, pointing to a crucial need to eliminate the gender-digital divide. Inclusivity from the design and implementation to monitoring and governance of these tools is crucial for maximizing their impact.
6. Building permanent coalitions to counter anti-gender and anti-rights narratives and promoting dialogue between generations are vital. These coalitions, rooted in rights-based feminist principles, can ensure that women's and girls' voices are included in political processes from the outset.
7. A comprehensive approach that integrates legislative reforms with effective policy enforcement is needed to ensure lasting progress in gender equality. Political will, coupled with intersectional approaches, can help overcome structural barriers and benefit all marginalized groups.
8. Moving beyond the mere engagement participation of men and boys towards accountability. Patriarchal systems, societies, traditions, and cultures continue to perpetuate inequalities, marginalization, and violence that disproportionately impact women, girls, and persons of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION, PROTECTION, AND REHABILITATION

### Feminist Activists' Voices



*How would you rate the inclusiveness of your country's policies toward women in environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation efforts?*

The inclusiveness of national policies toward women's involvement in environmental conservation, protection, and rehabilitation efforts reflects significant room for improvement. Only a small percentage of respondents (3.6%) view these policies as "very inclusive," with a more optimistic 28.6% indicating that policies are "somewhat inclusive." However, half of the respondents (49.9%) believe that policies are "not very inclusive," while an additional 17.9% perceive them as "not inclusive at all." These findings suggest that while there are some strides toward inclusivity, the majority still view the policies as insufficient in addressing gender gaps within environmental programmes.

The primary challenge seems to lie in the lack of dedicated frameworks to ensure gender equality in environmental matters. Although certain efforts have been made, as reflected in the responses, more needs to be done to include women in both the design and implementation of policies related to environmental conservation. Further, the underrepresentation of women in decision-making roles, combined with prevailing cultural norms and political resistance, exacerbates the lack of inclusivity in policy structures. The perceptions of limited inclusivity underscore the need for a more gender-responsive approach in crafting and implementing environmental policies. Women's representation in decision-making processes related to environmental conservation, protection, and rehabilitation remains significantly low, with only 14.8% of respondents affirming adequate representation.

### KEY FINDINGS:

#### Barriers to Women's Participation in Environmental Efforts

Women face significant challenges in environmental conservation, protection, and rehabilitation. Only a small percentage (3.6%) of respondents perceive policies as "very inclusive." The majority view policies as lacking inclusivity, with cultural norms, stereotypes, political resistance, and safety concerns being primary barriers. Women are underrepresented in decision-making processes, especially in leadership roles, contributing to ineffective policy frameworks. This underrepresentation is compounded by a lack of education, training, and access to funding.

#### Impact of Political Instability

Political and economic instability further limits women's participation in environmental efforts. Nearly half of the respondents noted that instability diminished women's roles due to increased vulnerability and reduced their access to decision-making mechanisms. However, for some, instability had no significant impact, likely reflecting pre-existing barriers to participation.

### Gender Inequality in the Green Transition

There is a growing concern that women may be excluded from the economic green transition. The diversion of resources towards military spending instead of gender equality and climate initiatives exacerbates this disparity. Additionally, unpaid labor for women, particularly in crisis situations, remains a persistent issue, as women often bear the brunt of domestic responsibilities during environmental crises.

### Regional and Community-Based Initiatives

While some countries have seen progress through NGO-driven efforts, initiatives aimed at increasing women's participation are not yet widespread or effective. Grassroots efforts, particularly in rural and vulnerable areas, have shown promise, with women playing key roles in climate change adaptation and social issues.

### Environmental Impact on Marginalized Communities

Climate change disproportionately affects women and girls in the Global South, particularly Indigenous women and those in marginalized communities. There is an urgent need for decolonial approaches to climate justice and increased attention to the intersection of environmental degradation, gender, and socio-economic vulnerabilities.

### Corporate Responsibility and Gender-Sensitive Climate Policies

There is a lack of accountability for corporations contributing to environmental degradation. Moreover, there is insufficient integration of gender perspectives in climate policies. Gender-responsive budgeting and policy integration remain underdeveloped, limiting women's full participation in environmental strategies.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Strengthen international cooperation to hold corporations accountable for human rights and environmental damage, ensuring they cannot evade responsibility by moving to more lenient jurisdictions. This includes affirming compliance with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and all ILO frameworks, implementing them in a gender-responsive manner.
2. Develop gender-responsive climate policies and budgeting frameworks that equip women and girls with the necessary resources and skills to fully engage, participate, and lead across environmental initiatives. Apply an intersectional approach to climate policies, addressing the specific needs of women and girls from diverse groups, including migrants, refugees, forcibly displaced persons, Indigenous people, farmers, sea-dwelling persons, rural persons, LGBTQIA+ persons, and other marginalized communities.
3. Invest in capacity building for NGOs, grassroots communities, especially women and girl-led groups, organizations, networks, movements, and collectives, and local and regional authorities and governments to build local resilience and address climate change at its source and to implement gender-responsive climate policies effectively. This includes supporting women farmers, rural women and girl initiatives and other local initiatives. Provide opportunities for Indigenous and rural women and girls to participate in high-level climate justice decision-making, ensuring their voices shape, influence, and strengthen policies and programmes. Protect women and girl human rights defenders and environmental human rights defenders, in all their diversity, from attacks, threats, "red-tagging", reprisals, deportation, imprisonment, and intimidation.

4. Promote women's involvement in the energy sector and climate change initiatives to ensure their active participation and leadership in the just green transition. Support women-led social entrepreneurship that addresses environmental challenges, particularly in marginalized communities. Facilitate women's involvement in cross-border water diplomacy to manage shared water resources effectively.
5. Encourage collaboration among countries to develop joint strategies that raise awareness and mobilize larger populations toward feminist action for climate justice, amplifying national efforts.
6. Strengthen partnerships between governments and civil society and youth-led organizations (CSOs) to develop gender-responsive climate policies, ensuring comprehensive and inclusive strategies.
7. Implement decolonial approaches in climate action, recognizing the disproportionate impact on women and girls in the Global South, and the disproportionate role of the Global North in the climate crisis, ensuring equity in climate responses.
8. Actively engage young people and adolescents in climate initiatives, recognizing their vital role in driving long-term sustainability.
9. Prioritize the collection of disaggregated data (by sex, gender, age, disability, etc.) to inform policy decisions, ensuring that gender-responsive approaches are based on accurate and comprehensive information.