

Exploring Gender in the Ramsar and World Heritage Conventions Reports

Women and Protected Areas

EGI Factsheet | July 2016 Edition

The **Ramsar Convention** and the **World Heritage Convention** have established some of the first internationally agreed-upon practices for conserving biodiversity through protected areas. As both Conventions are part of the United Nations, they are required to follow all global mandates on women's human rights, gender equality and gender mainstreaming. As the importance of advancing gender equality for successful conservation is increasingly recognized, knowledge on the status and scope of women's involvement in protected areas management is more powerful than ever. This Environment and Gender Information (EGI) platform analysisⁱ examines the national reports submitted to the **Ramsar** and **World Heritage** Conventions to measure the extent to which women and gender concerns are addressed.

RAMSAR CONVENTION

Purpose: Supporting conservation and wise use of wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, contributing to sustainable development throughout the world since 1971.

Breadth: 169 signatory countries; 2,222 sites

Reports: Countries submit National Reports every 3 to 4 years. National Reports are based on the targets outlined in the Strategic Plans.

Gender overview: The Ramsar Convention's first two Strategic Plans, effective 1997-2008, named *active and informed participation of women* as an objective. Gender was excluded as an objectiveⁱ from strategic plans in 2009. Ramsar situates its work in a broader policy framework, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Ramsar resolutions recognizing the importance of gender considerations.

WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION

Purpose: Promoting international cooperation for the protection of cultural and natural heritage sites of universal value since 1972.

Breadth: 191 signatory countries; 1,031 sites in 163 countries

Reports: The UNESCO Secretariat and the Advisory Bodies to the World Heritage Committee use information from State Party Reports—submitted when an issue arises that may impact a World Heritage Site—to develop State of Conservation (SOC) Reports detailing specific conservation activities, successes, and management difficulties at an individual site.

Gender overview: SOC Reports are not required to provide information on gender dynamics or women's involvement in World Heritage Site conservation. A focus on communities was added to the strategic objectives in 2007.ⁱⁱⁱ

INCLUSION OF GENDER KEYWORDS IN CONVENTION REPORTS

Considering women's and gender issues in protected areas is essential, as women and men have varied reliance upon, control over and access to natural resources and differentiated responsibilities for protecting resources. Recognizing the roles and needs of both women and men in management plans and subsequent reporting is key to effective inclusion and, therefore, effective conservation, sustainable use and management of protected areas. **However, keywords were mentioned in only 16% of Ramsar Convention National Reports and only 1% of World Heritage Convention SOC Reports analyzed.**

FIGURE 1. INCLUSION OF GENDER KEYWORD MENTIONS IN CONVENTION REPORTS

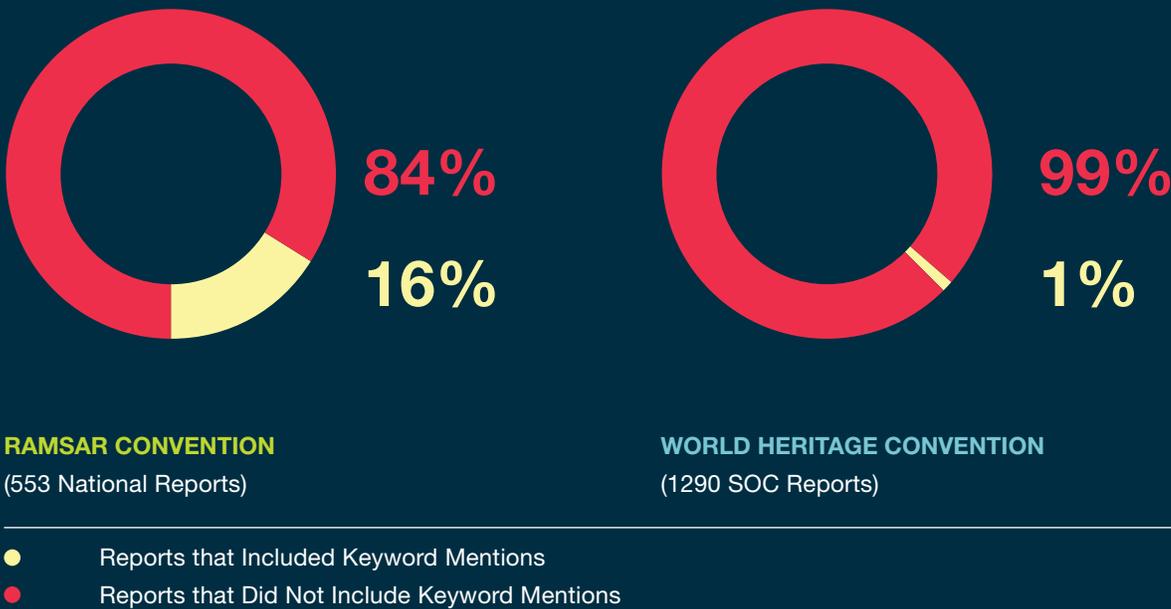
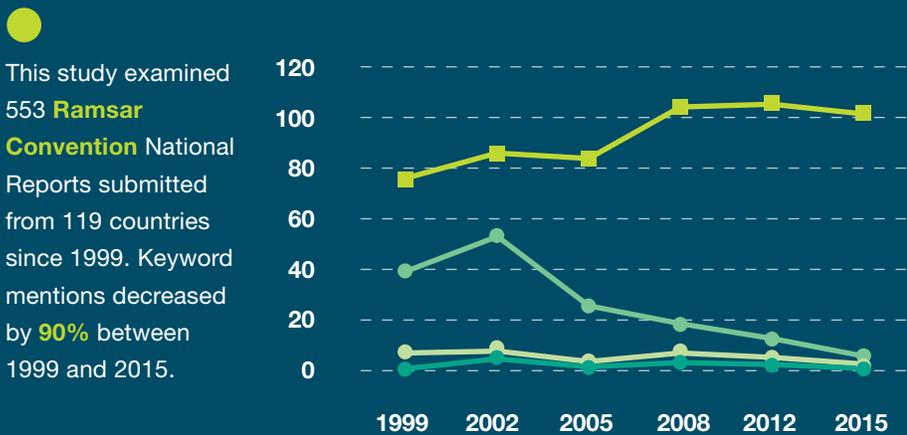


FIGURE 2. GENDER KEYWORDS MENTIONED IN CONVENTION REPORTS



Number of keyword mentions:

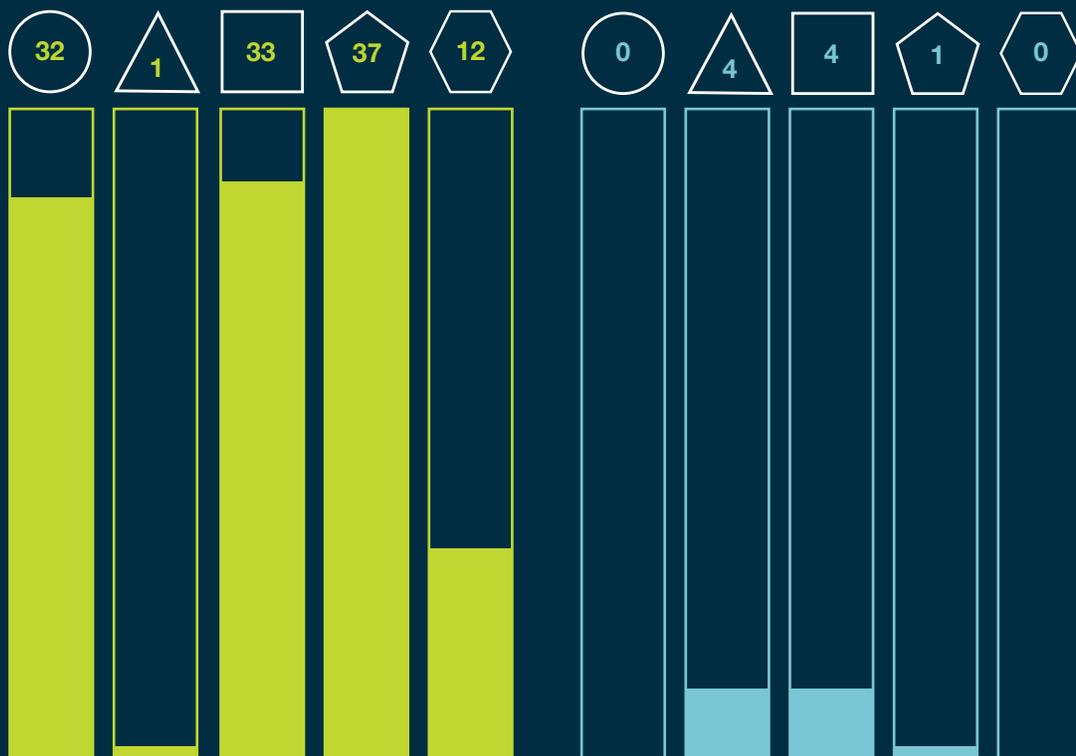
- Women, woman, female, girl
- Gender, sex
- Equity, equality

This study examined 1,290 World Heritage Convention State of Conservation Reports submitted from 83 countries since 1982.^{iv} These SOC Reports contained only **nine gender keyword mentions**, all of just one keyword-- **women.**^v The first mention of women was not until **2006.**

CHARACTERIZATION OF WOMEN IN CONVENTION REPORTS

Nearly half of the reports from both Conventions that contained gender keywords discussed women as stakeholders on management committees or as one of many subgroups that were beneficiaries of education, livelihood and public participation programmes. Only 12 reports (0.7% of the total reports examined) discussed women’s capacity as agents of change to drive environmental and policy change.

FIGURE 3. CHARACTERIZATION OF WOMEN IN CONVENTION REPORTS



RAMSAR CONVENTION

WORLD HERITAGE CONVENTION

Number of reports that viewed women as:

- Grouped with Other Marginalized Communities
- △ Vulnerable
- Beneficiaries
- ⬠ Stakeholders
- ⬡ Agents of Change

EXAMPLE OF WOMEN CHARACTERIZED AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

Recognizing women’s needs as stakeholders and potential as agents of change can simultaneously empower women and increase effectiveness of conservation efforts. The following is an example of women being included as agents of change within a Convention report.

Ramsar Convention National Report, Australia 2012: Research undertaken by Wimmera Catchment Management Authority (CMA) has revealed that women are often the driving force behind environmental conservation activities on farms. In response, Wimmera CMA has sought to harness this interest, build knowledge and capacity and empower farm wives to undertake wetland conservation through an annual “Chicks in the Sticks” event.

MOVING FORWARD

While the importance of a gender perspective has been noted in key environmental conventions and mandates for decades, policies on biodiversity conservation historically have not prioritized action on gender equality. Despite their unique roles, responsibilities and capacities in using and managing natural resources, women are often excluded from participation in the planning, implementation and benefits of conservation initiatives. This not only halts the progress of women's empowerment, it fails to recognize the co-benefits that advancing gender equality can provide toward sustainable development goals.

The decrease over time in keyword mentions in **Ramsar** National Reports and the overall structure and requirements of **World Heritage** SOC Reports show that formal policies and guidelines, such as Strategic Plans and Gender Plans of Action, are important entry points for ensuring that gender is mainstreamed throughout the work under each Convention. Ensuring gender-responsive reporting mechanisms to the **Ramsar** and **World Heritage** Conventions provides the opportunity to enhance effective and equitable planning, management of and benefits derived from protected areas around the world.

- i Find a full report of this analysis at genderandenvironment.org/EGI and <https://portals.iucn.org/union/sites/union/files/doc/ramsar-wh-report-april2016.pdf>
- ii See first, second, third, and fourth Ramsar *Strategic Plans at ramsar.org/library*
- iii UNESCO World Heritage Committee. (2007). *Decisions Adopted at the 31st Session of the World Heritage Committee*.
- iv This study included only Ramsar Convention National Reports from countries with wetlands classified as marine and coastal and only World Heritage Convention SOC Reports for sites classified as *natural* and *mixed*.
- v Mentions of 68 gender keywords relating to *women, woman, female, girl, gender, sex, equity, and equality* in each report were counted and checked for context.

THE ENVIRONMENT AND GENDER INFORMATION (EGI) PLATFORM

The International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Environment and Gender Information (EGI) platform aims—through data and analysis—to convey the value of gender-responsive environmental conservation and sustainable development. By providing new evidence-based information and knowledge products, the EGI platform guides action toward a more just world. Originally launched in its 2013 pilot phase as a composite index, the EGI has evolved into a source for new knowledge creation and dissemination—and for revealing progress and challenges in meeting commitments to women's empowerment and gender equality in environmental spheres.

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July 2016