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# GEM Digest of the Month

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Cereal crop harvesting in Canada. Photo courtesy of D. Ceplis.

The Gender Equality Mainstreaming (GEM) Digest provides a compilation of information and articles gathered on an ongoing basis on gender equality mainstreaming within agriculture, scientific research, rural development, climate change, organizational development and international development. Information is shared with members, colleagues, scientific societies and diverse organizations.

The views and opinions presented are not necessarily representative of the editor.

If you have information to share, please send it to [dinah.ceplis@gmail.com](mailto:dinah.ceplis@gmail.com) to compile and re-distribute once a month.

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## Contents

### Opportunities and Coming Events

1. International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste (IDAFWL) .....2
2. Manitoba Women in Agriculture & Food 2025 Summit. ....2
3. Commonwealth Foundation – Open Grants Call .....2
4. Call for papers - The role of women in achieving food security and agricultural sustainability.....3

### This Month's News

1. UN Women pushes to close 20% global gender pay gap.....3
2. Closing digital gender gap could add \$1.5 trillion to GDP, UN report shows .....3
3. Gender and social inclusion: time to stop outsourcing?.....3
4. How aid cuts are unraveling family planning progress in Mozambique .....4
5. How an oil spill in Mauritius led to a female revolution in farming.....4
6. UNFPA aids pregnant women after Afghanistan earthquake.....4
7. How wild ingredients are transforming school lunches in India.....4
8. Water and aid dry up in Zimbabwe — who will feed the children? .....5
9. School meals surge to half a billion children, but gains are fragile.....5
10. Taliban ban books written by women from Afghan universities.....5
11. The Hidden Toll of Earthquakes on Women Living Under Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan .....6
12. Internet Shutdown In Afghanistan Threatens Women's Education And Human Rights.....6

### Reports, Publications, Resources

1. Gender in climate action training pack: A resource for practitioners .....6
2. Gender training pack for Ethiopian practitioners .....6

3.	Guide to strengthening gender integration in climate finance projects .....	7
4.	What is bodily autonomy and why is it important? .....	7
5.	“Journeys of Black Mathematicians” .....	7
6.	How to write winning funding proposals: a guide for non-profits and consultancies.....	8
7.	International Institute for Sustainable Development Strategic Plan .....	8

[Go to Top.](#) ++++++

## Opportunities and Coming Events

### 1. International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste (IDAFLW)

<https://www.fao.org/platform-food-loss-waste/flw-events/international-day-food-loss-and-waste/en>

Reducing food loss and waste (FLW) helps to protect natural resources and biodiversity, reduce pollution and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and maximize the use of food produced. It is therefore central to securing efficient, inclusive, resilient and sustainable agrifood systems, and to improving food security, nutrition and health.

Embracing innovation and fostering circular economy approaches in agrifood systems to prevent, reduce, reuse and repurpose FLW also serves to create new job opportunities, improve livelihoods and generate financial benefits for a range of stakeholders. **September 29.**

[Go to Top.](#) ++++++

### 2. Manitoba Women in Agriculture & Food 2025 Summit.

<https://mwaf.ca/services/mwaf-2025-summit/>

The Manitoba Women in Agriculture and Food (MWAF) is hosting their 2025 Summit. Join this premier Manitoba event to connect with peers and industry colleagues and learn about the roles and leadership potential of women in the agriculture and food sector. Discover MWAF's new networking approach designed to help you build relationships that empower your farm, business, or career. **October 9 in Winnipeg.** Register by September 28 for early bird rates.

[Go to Top.](#) ++++++

### 3. Commonwealth Foundation – Open Grants Call

<https://commonwealthfoundation.com/grants/annual/>

The Foundation's 2025-2026 grants call is open for applications. Eligible organisations can apply for grants of up to £60,000. We support projects that promote constructive engagement between civil society and government, strengthening the voices of citizens in shaping policy and decision-making across the Commonwealth. Please note that applicants must be not-for-profit civil society organisations registered in an eligible Commonwealth Foundation member country and the average of the applicant organisation's total annual income over the past two years must be less than £2.5m. Projects must relate to one or more of our three priority themes:

- Health justice
- Freedom of expression
- Climate justice

All applications must also demonstrate how gender considerations are integrated into project design and implementation. The deadline for applications is 1pm BST on **23 October 2025.**

[Go to Top.](#) ++++++

## 4. Call for papers - The role of women in achieving food security and agricultural sustainability

<https://www.biomedcentral.com/collections/COL3394>

BMC Agriculture is calling for submissions to our Collection focusing on *The role of women in achieving food security and agricultural sustainability*. This Collection invites research that explores the pivotal role of women in achieving food security and agricultural sustainability. We encourage submissions that address the challenges and opportunities for female farmers, the impact of gender equity on agricultural practices, and strategies to empower women in the agricultural sector. By highlighting these critical areas, we aim to promote inclusive policies and practices that enhance food security and sustainability. **Submission Deadline: 23 February 2026.** Guest Editors: Hom Nath Gartaula, PhD, International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), Philippines and Gabrielle Roesch-McNally, PhD, American Farmland Trust, Oregon State University, USA.

[Go to Top.](#) ++++++

## This Month's News

### 1. UN Women pushes to close 20% global gender pay gap

<https://www.developmentaid.org/news-stream/post/200002/un-women-pushes-to-close-20-global-gender-pay-gap>

Women around the world still make 20% less than men on average, with minority, disabled, and migrant women facing even bigger gaps, UN Women said before International Equal Pay Day on September 18, according to an official statement. The agency called this wage discrimination a violation of women's rights that hurts their financial security and blocks economic growth. Thirty years after the Beijing Declaration promised equal pay, the same problems keep women from earning what they deserve.

[Go to Top.](#) ++++++

### 2. Closing digital gender gap could add \$1.5 trillion to GDP, UN report shows

<https://www.developmentaid.org/news-stream/post/200054/closing-digital-gender-gap-could-add-1-5-trillion-to-gdp-un-report-shows>

Eliminating the gender digital divide would boost global GDP by \$1.5 trillion by 2030 and lift 30 million women out of poverty by 2050, while benefiting 343.5 million women and girls worldwide, according to the Gender Snapshot 2025 report released by UN Women and UN DESA. The report shows the world stands at a crossroads where gender equality remains within reach through targeted investments. However, with only five years left to achieve the 2030 development goals, current trends suggest missing every indicator under the gender equality target.

[Go to Top.](#) ++++++

### 3. Gender and social inclusion: time to stop outsourcing?

<https://odi.org/en/insights/gender-and-social-inclusion-time-to-stop-outsourcing/>

Gender and social inclusion aren't optional; they're the backbone of lasting change. Yet too often this work is outsourced to external parties. The following blog, by Patricia Bamanyaki and Mairi Dupar, explores how to overcome this challenge.

When communities and local civil society organisations apply for external funding, they struggle to articulate the gender and social inclusion (GESI) narrative for funders. They employ outside experts to tell the story and secure the funds. Even when funds are secured, they still have to rely on external experts to deliver on GESI, which comes at a cost and with limited potential for real changes in communities.

[Go to Top.](#) ++++++

## 4. How aid cuts are unraveling family planning progress in Mozambique

<https://www.devex.com/news/how-aid-cuts-are-unraveling-family-planning-progress-in-mozambique-110685>

Mozambique's struggle to curb child marriage and adolescent pregnancy underscores a wider regional challenge: Fragile health systems heavily dependent on foreign aid are faltering just as demand for family planning rises. Unless governments step up with domestic financing and stronger policies, hard-won progress risks unraveling, with profound consequences for gender equality and economic development across Africa, experts warned.

But like many African countries, Mozambique struggles with recurring stockouts of contraceptives and other family planning supplies — problems worsened by donor cuts. UNFPA attributes these gaps to supply shortages; policy and cultural barriers, including age-of-consent laws; stigma and misinformation; and the impact of fragile settings such as conflict and displacement, which disrupt service continuity.

[Go to Top.](#) ++++++

## 5. How an oil spill in Mauritius led to a female revolution in farming

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/aug/26/bringing-home-the-bok-choi-how-an-oil-spill-in-mauritius-led-to-a-female-revolution-in-farming>

When a merchant ship slammed into the coral reef in 2020, turning the sea inky black with toxic fuel and sinking the local economy, a group of local women turned to the land to feed their families. The disaster also threatened the area's economic ecosystem — already weakened by that year's first Covid lockdown — jeopardising the livelihoods of fishers, skippers, boat builders, tourism workers and others dependent on the sea for a living.

The South-East Ladies Agro collective — a team of 10 — has grown a tonne of organic fruit and vegetables on the revitalised acre of land, feeding their loved ones and selling on the surplus in a cycle of self-sufficiency.

[Go to Top.](#) ++++++

## 6. UNFPA aids pregnant women after Afghanistan earthquake

<https://www.developmentaid.org/news-stream/post/199723/unfpa-afghanistan-earthquake-pregnant-women-emergency-response>

An estimated 11,600 pregnant women have been impacted by the earthquake that struck eastern Afghanistan on August 31, 2025. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) deployed emergency teams within hours to provide health and protection services to women and girls, according to a press release from the UN agency.

Afghanistan has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the Asia Pacific region. Pregnancy carries risks even under normal circumstances. The earthquake has created challenges for expectant mothers in remote areas where damaged roads make access difficult, turning pregnancy into emergencies for women who already face health risks.

[Go to Top.](#) ++++++

## 7. How wild ingredients are transforming school lunches in India

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2025/sep/15/state-school-meals-india-meghalaya-foraged-wild-indigenous-foods-menus>

In the remote state of Meghalaya, foraged foods are helping to diversify state-provided menus — and tackle chronic malnutrition. The food has been cooked on-site and is free for everyone, part of India's ambitious "midday meal" — PM Poshan — programme to incentivise school enrolment. Much of the food has been sourced from local farmers, including parents of the pupils, while the rest has been grown in the school's kitchen garden. Across the remote state of Meghalaya — originally part of Assam and home to the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo communities — fresh, locally sourced ingredients such as

millet, fruit and wild greens are used to supplement the carbohydrate-heavy fare of rice, lentils and the occasional egg that dominate the programme's menus.

But it is about more than just appetising meals. Schools organise regular outings to nearby forests to teach the children to identify edible fruit and vegetables from the wild. One goal of the scheme is to restore the relevance of traditional foods to everyday diets. A months-long mapping exercise, conducted with community members, recorded more than 200 edible plant species across Meghalaya.

[Go to Top.](#) ++++++

## 8. Water and aid dry up in Zimbabwe — who will feed the children?

<https://www.devex.com/news/water-and-aid-dry-up-in-zimbabwe-who-will-feed-the-children-110677>

3.5 million children in rural Zimbabwe are experiencing crisis-level food insecurity caused by an extreme 2024 El Niño-induced drought, according to UNICEF. Some 7.6 million people in areas dependent on subsistence farming have been impacted, with food shortages driving more than 22% of children out of school.

United Kingdom-based charity MMI, which began delivering school feeding programs in Zimbabwe in 2018, has responded to the emergency by expanding its reach. Working with two local partner NGOs: Organisation of Rural Associations for Progress, or ORAP, and Mavambo Orphan Care, as well as the Zimbabwean government, it provides more than 179,000 children with one hot meal every weekday of the school year, in more than 350 primary schools.

Pupil enrolments and attendance rise as a result of the food. Providing food was preventing children from abandoning school to seek unskilled jobs to support their families, including herding cattle, working as house maids, or even in illegal mines.

[Go to Top.](#) ++++++

## 9. School meals surge to half a billion children, but gains are fragile

<https://www.devex.com/news/school-meals-surge-to-half-a-billion-children-but-gains-are-fragile-110803>

Nearly 80 million more children worldwide are now receiving school meals through government-led programs than in 2020 — a 20% increase that brings the global total to at least 466 million, according to the World Food Programme.

The biennial *State of School Feeding Worldwide* report, released last week, casts school feeding in a new light. Once seen as a welfare measure for lower-income students, it is increasingly understood as a long-term investment with multiple payoffs: keeping children in school, boosting test scores, improving nutrition, and stimulating economies through job creation and increased demand for agricultural products.

The benefits are well documented. Studies show that children who receive school meals demonstrate measurable improvements in math and literacy, with girls in particular gaining in attendance, health, and well-being. Nearly 70% of governments pair feeding programs with complementary interventions such as school gardens, health checkups, or handwashing facilities.

[Go to Top.](#) ++++++

## 10. Taliban ban books written by women from Afghan universities

<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c0kn7yyzrjgo>

The Taliban government has removed books written by women from the university teaching system in Afghanistan as part of a new ban which has also outlawed the teaching of human rights and sexual harassment. Some 140 books by women - including titles like "Safety in the Chemical Laboratory" - were among 680 books found to be of "concern" due to "anti-Sharia and Taliban policies".

The decree is the latest in a series of restrictions which the Taliban have brought in since returning to power four years ago.

Just this week, fibre-optic internet was banned in at least 10 provinces on the orders of the Taliban's supreme leader in a move officials said was to prevent immorality.

[Go to Top.](#) ++++++

## **11. The Hidden Toll of Earthquakes on Women Living Under Gender Apartheid in Afghanistan**

<https://righttolearn.ca/earthquakes-women-living-under-gender-apartheid-afghanistan/>

Women are disproportionately injured in earthquakes because they are often confined to their homes due to Taliban restrictions on movement. Buildings that collapse during tremors frequently trap women inside, while men may be outside in fields, markets, or workplaces.

In societies where women are already erased from public life, a natural disaster magnifies existing inequalities. The earthquake in Afghanistan is not only a humanitarian crisis but also a stark reminder of how gender apartheid places women at heightened risk. Without urgent international attention to these systemic barriers, Afghan women will continue to bear the heaviest burdens of both political repression and natural disasters.

[Go to Top.](#) ++++++

## **12. Internet Shutdown In Afghanistan Threatens Women's Education And Human Rights**

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/ewelinaochab/2025/09/21/internet-shutdown-in-afghanistan-threatens-womens-education-and-human-rights/>

The Internet ban announced in September 2025 is limited to all internet connections via fiber-optic cable, while internet access on cell phone data is not to be affected at this stage. The ban, which at this stage affects five provinces, Kunduz, Badakhshan, Baghlan, Takhar and Balkh, is the first ban of this sort since the Taliban takeover in August 2021. Despite its limited geographical scope, the ban raises serious concerns. The ban will result in homes, businesses, and offices being left without an internet connection. The ban will affect the rights of women and girls and human rights more broadly.

[Go to Top.](#) ++++++

## **Reports, Publications, Resources**

### **1. Gender in climate action training pack: A resource for practitioners**

<https://cdkn.org/resource/resource-gender-in-climate-action-training-pack-a-resource-for-practitioners>

Climate & Development Knowledge Network CDKN has developed a pack of presentations and exercises for facilitators to use in training settings, to help climate and development professionals to integrate gender perspectives into climate projects and programmes.

### **2. Gender training pack for Ethiopian practitioners**

<https://cdkn.org/resource/gender-training-pack-for-ethiopian-practitioners>

Climate & Development Knowledge Network CDKN has developed a pack of presentations and exercises for facilitators to use in training settings, to help climate and development professionals in Ethiopia to integrate gender perspectives into climate projects and programmes.

[Go to Top.](#) ++++++



### 3. Guide to strengthening gender integration in climate finance projects

<https://cdkn.org/resource/guide-strengthening-gender-integration-in-climate-finance-projects>

Climate & Development Knowledge Network CDKN and WEDO have launched a new guide entitled, *Strengthening gender integration in climate finance projects*. The guide presents a framework of recommendations for strengthening gender integration in climate finance projects, with concrete examples and resources to show how it can be done. The guide also shares broader enabling factors and recommendations to inform advocacy and action beyond individual projects, at the climate fund level.

This guide is designed for project teams preparing, designing, implementing and monitoring climate finance projects in developing countries under the four primary multilateral climate funds – the Adaptation Fund (AF), Climate Investment Funds (CIFs), Global Environment Facility (GEF) and Green Climate Fund (GCF) – as well as for those overseeing the approaches of project teams.

[Go to Top.](#) ++++++

### 4. What is bodily autonomy and why is it important?

[https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues\\_development-enjeux\\_developpement/priorities-priorites/commitment-health-rights-engagement-sante-droits.aspx](https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/priorities-priorites/commitment-health-rights-engagement-sante-droits.aspx)

Bodily autonomy is having the power to make decisions over your own body, including choices about your sexual and reproductive health. Yet many are denied this right due to societal, cultural and legal factors emerging from gender inequality.

A recent United Nations study found that nearly half of all women lack agency over their own bodies, denying millions the freedom to make choices about their sexual and reproductive health, including the use of birth control and ability to access safe abortions and post-abortion care, their preference of sexual partners, and being able to enjoy personal safety.

#LGBTQI+ people face similar challenges, with discrimination and laws in some countries limiting their human rights, including their right to bodily autonomy. This includes access to hormones, gender-affirming health care, and the freedom to love anyone regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Together, we can create a safe and inclusive world—for all.

As part of its 10-year commitment to global health and rights, Canada supports bodily autonomy through comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights and access to services and information.

Canada's 10-year commitment to global health and rights is a key vehicle for implementing the Feminist International Assistance Policy. Canada's international assistance to sexual and reproductive health reached over 8 million people with planning, sexual health (including HIV), and safe abortion services and care.

[Go to Top.](#) ++++++

### 5. “Journeys of Black Mathematicians”

<https://www.pbs.org/show/journeys-of-black-mathematicians/>

African Americans have played major roles as researchers and educators in mathematics. This documentary series conveys a rich history with compelling stories of contemporary Black mathematicians, portraying their struggles and accomplishments. The films also introduce innovative educational programs for African American students that will inspire future generations in the pursuit of mathematics.

*“Journeys of Black Mathematicians” is available to stream on pbs.org and the free PBS App, available on iPhone, Apple TV, Android TV, Android smartphones, Amazon Fire TV, Amazon Fire Tablet, Roku, Samsung Smart TV, and Vizio.*

[Go to Top.](#) ++++++

## 6. How to write winning funding proposals: a guide for non-profits and consultancies

<https://www.developmentaid.org/news-stream/post/198574/how-to-write-winning-funding-proposals>

While every donor has its own procedures, templates, and thematic preferences, there are nevertheless core elements that distinguish winning proposals across the board. This guide highlights six of these drawn from experience, evaluation reports, and real-world examples. We also show how to leverage DevelopmentAid's tools and databases to gather intelligence, plan budgets, and improve your competitive edge.

[Go to Top.](#) ++++++

## 7. International Institute for Sustainable Development Strategic Plan

<https://www.iisd.org/publications/iisd-strategic-plan-2025-2030>

IISD's Strategic Plan 2025–2030 is a roadmap that will guide our organization as we solve today's greatest sustainable development challenges in an increasingly complex and dynamic world. It focuses on five key areas of sustainable development: climate, nature, social equity, sustainable economies, and international governance. Within these, we outline top priorities in specific sectors where we see the greatest potential to make an impact, allowing us to harness the full extent of our expertise and address the root causes of problems rather than only providing end-of-the-line solutions. There is plenty of overlap, but that's intentional: complex challenges demand integrated, multidimensional solutions, and that's where IISD excels.

[Go to Top.](#) ++++++