

September 1, 2026	GEM Digest of the Month Published monthly since December 2009
 <i>Prunus virginiana</i> mature berries. Photo from 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 to compile and re-distribute once a month. Dinah Ceplis, P.Ag. (Ret.), FGHIH, FAIC, (Volunteer Editor)

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Opportunities and Coming Events

1. 2026 AWARD Leadership Program for Emerging African Women in Agricultural Sciences

<https://awardfellowships.org/news/the-call-for-the-2026-award-leadership-program-for-emerging-african-women-in-agricultural-sciences-open/>

The call for applications for the 2026 Leadership Program for Emerging African Women in Agricultural Sciences is now open. The program seeks to build a pool of capable, confident and influential young women scientists equipped to excel in agricultural sciences, thrive in leadership roles and champion gender integration in agriculture.

It is designed to equip participants to overcome barriers to women’s career progression and motivate them to remain in agricultural science careers. It will also increase their awareness of the importance of gender integration in agricultural sciences and the need to champion gender equality in agricultural professions.

The program is open to young women scientists under the age of 35 from Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania and Zambia.

Selected candidates will participate in a nine-month intensive, non-residential, career-transformative program and benefit from a range of opportunities to strengthen their leadership skills, enhance their ability to communicate their work effectively to diverse audiences, and increase their visibility and expand their networks. **Deadline September 20, 2026.**

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2. Course: Understanding Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility in Practice

<https://umanitoba.ca/extended-education/programs-and-courses/courses/understanding-equity-diversity-inclusion-and-accessibility-in-practice>

University of Manitoba’s Extended Education is offering this course. Tuition is \$467.25. Understanding Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility (EDIA 0108) is recognized as professional development (PD) for several organizations. Diving deeper than a workshop, this learning opportunity allows all participants to critically reflect on their strengths and areas for further growth and develop an action plan to contribute towards a more equitable, diverse, inclusive, and accessible workplace environment. Everyone can take it and grow.

Past participants consistently report an increase in their personal self-awareness and ability to act appropriately in matters related to equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility. Now it’s your turn.

The Understanding Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility (EDIA 0108) course starts **Oct. 5 and ends in December.**

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3. Atlas Online Launch Event

<https://cooperationca.glueup.com/event/atlas-online-launch-event-lancement-en-ligne-d-atlas-189504/>

This virtual event will introduce participants to Atlas and demonstrate how the platform can be used to explore data and insights about Canada's international cooperation sector. Attendees will receive a guided walkthrough of key features, learn how to navigate the platform, and discover how Atlas can support research, advocacy, collaboration, and sector learning. The session will also highlight new capabilities offering participants an opportunity to see how these features can enhance the way users interact with and explore sector data. **Wednesday, October 21, 2026.** Time: 12:00 - 1:30 PM (ET). Online.

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This Month's News

1. Why nature finance and gender data are central to achieving the world's biodiversity goals

<https://www.iied.org/why-nature-finance-gender-data-are-central-achieving-worlds-biodiversity-goals>

CBD COP17 will take place in October in Yerevan, Armenia and mark a crucial moment towards achieving the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) – the global plan to protect and restore biodiversity.

Key decisions are expected on how to finance this plan. Implementing the plan in a way that is gender responsive – the Gender Plan of Action (PDF) – is also high on the agenda.

Interim negotiations of the CBD's expert advisory body on implementing the GBF (SBI-06) took place earlier this year in Rome, with outcomes setting the stage for what we can expect on nature finance and gender at COP17.

In this insight we reflect on where the negotiations currently stand on these issues and why recognising the nexus of nature finance and gender data is crucial for effective and equitable conservation of biodiversity.

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2. World off-track on nearly every food system goal, latest assessment reveals

<https://www.fao.org/newsroom/detail/world-off-track-on-nearly-every-food-system-goal--latest-assessment-reveals/en>

The latest study from the Food Systems Countdown Initiative (FSCI) reveals the stark reality of where global food systems transformation stands: For most indicators on health, environment, livelihoods, governance and resilience, a vast majority of countries will not meet the internationally agreed 2030 goals. And for some indicators such as greenhouse gas emissions from food systems, no country in the world is projected to meet the target.

The study, published in Nature Food, represents the most comprehensive performance assessment of food systems to date, covering 197 countries and 44 indicators across five themes: diets, nutrition and health; environment, natural resources and production; livelihoods, poverty and equity; governance; and resilience. For the first time, the study goes beyond tracking trends to assess progress and measure how food systems are actually performing, and how much more needs to improve to meet globally set targets.

The study finds that, of 30 indicators, only one — mobile phone subscriptions, a proxy for connectedness and resilience — has been met by most countries. For 22 indicators, fewer than one third of countries will meet their global target or benchmark by 2030.

Despite the sobering picture for 2030, the study is not entirely bleak. For 7 of 33 indicators, at least a third of countries are already on track to meet the 2030 target. And half the indicators have been moving in a desirable direction at the global

level. The study also offers the pace at which changes are required to achieve the targets by 2050, making progress feel achievable rather than impossible.

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3. Population Age Structures of Countries

<https://www.ipsnews.net/2026/09/population-age-structures-of-countries/>

The world's current population of approximately 8.3 billion has a median age of about 31 years. This is substantially higher than during much of the 20th century, when the global median age was generally below 25 years. The median age of the world's population is projected to increase to approximately 36 years by 2050.

In 2026, approximately 50 countries and territories have populations with median ages of 21 years or younger, reflecting highly youthful age structures. At the other end of the age spectrum, a similar number of countries and territories have median ages of 42 years or older, indicating comparatively old populations.

Countries with young and rapidly growing populations may also face greater difficulties in reducing hunger and inequality, advancing women's rights, expanding access to healthcare, creating decent employment opportunities, preventing social unrest, and addressing internal conflicts.

The ongoing changes in countries' population age structures will have far-reaching implications, particularly for population growth, labor markets, employment, education, healthcare systems, retirement programs, and long-term care.

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4. How cooperatives are advancing decent work across South Asia

<https://www.developmentaid.org/news-stream/post/209304/how-cooperatives-are-advancing-decent-work-across-south-asia>

<https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/together-they-are-changing-their-communities-how-cooperatives-are-advancing>

Women workers across South Asia are forming cooperatives to transform unpaid and informal work into decent jobs, expanding access to affordable care services and strengthening economic empowerment, according to a press release by the International Labour Organization (ILO) issued on 31 July 2026. From cotton farmers in Madhya Pradesh and domestic workers in Bihar to care workers in Nepal and nursery teachers in Sri Lanka, women are coming together to build enterprises they own and govern collectively. The movement coincided with the International Day of Cooperatives on 4 July 2026, held under the theme "Cooperatives for a Peaceful World".

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5. Southeast Asian female street food vendors are struggling to cope

<https://www.fullerproject.org/editions/cost-of-living/bangkok-women-street-vendors-us-iran-war-economy/>

The fragile daily wage has been in jeopardy since the United States launched its offensive on Iran in February and triggered an intermittent closure of the Strait of Hormuz trade route that, several months on, continues to impact prices of basic commodities. Street vendors across Asia, the majority of whom are women, are struggling to make a living as the rising costs of ingredients, packaging, gas for their woks and fuel for their motorcycles eat into their earnings.

From stir-fried dishes and sweet treats to fresh fruit, vendors not only feed much of the Thai population but often act as a draw for tourists. Yet right now their livelihood, like others' across Asia, is at risk. Operating costs are higher while customers – both tourists and office workers encouraged to work from home – are fewer.

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6. World Bank approves \$100 million to expand rural services in Papua New Guinea

<https://www.developmentaid.org/news-stream/post/209549/world-bank-approves-100-million-to-expand-rural-services-in-papua-new-guinea>

The World Bank Group has approved a US\$100 million Rural Service Delivery Project Phase 2 (RSDP-2) to improve access to basic services and strengthen local planning across rural Papua New Guinea, according to a press release issued on August 10, 2026. Announced from Port Moresby, the initiative will scale a community-led development model to 12 provinces. The program is expected to benefit more than one million people. It places rural communities at the center of decision-making. The support aims to expand access to health, education, and essential services while creating job opportunities.

Under RSDP-2, communities will identify, plan, and implement projects most relevant to them. These include clean water, sanitation, health facilities, classrooms, rural roads, electricity, and livelihood activities. The design ensures that investments respond to local priorities and the needs of women, youth, and vulnerable groups.

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7. African Development Bank Group Presses Case for Investing in Women

<https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/african-development-bank-group-presses-case-investing-women-96348>

When world leaders gathered at the United Nations in New York in March for the 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the atmosphere was anything but routine. For the first time in 70 years, consensus broke down and member states had to vote on a declaration affirming women's access to justice. Thirty-seven countries said yes. One said no.

The Bank's collaboration with the African Women Leaders Network at the African Union's Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations was a key moment of the week. The conversation focused on the Bank's upcoming Gender Action Plan (2027–2031), which aims to shift its gender work from individual projects to broader, systemic approaches. Once operational, the plan will guide the Bank in tackling the barriers women face across labour markets, infrastructure and economic policy.

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8. Ghana: African Development Bank approves \$18.8 million grant to boost rice production

<https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/ghana-african-development-bank-approves-188-million-grant-boost-rice-production-96002>

The Board of Directors of the African Development Bank Group has approved a grant of \$18.8 million to the Government of Ghana for the implementation of the Regional West Africa Resilient Rice Value Chains (REWARD) Project.

The project aims to boost domestic rice production, strengthen food security, and create jobs across the agricultural value chain. It will support efforts to increase rice productivity, improve market systems, and reduce Ghana's dependence on rice imports, while enhancing the competitiveness of locally produced rice.

Implementation will focus on selected districts within Ghana's Northern Savannah Ecological Zone, an area with significant agricultural potential where productivity remains constrained by climate risks, inadequate infrastructure, and weak market integration.

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9. Empowering Women Farmers in Ghana to Reach 315,000 People

<https://opportunityinternational.ca/current-projects/ghana-2025-2029/>

By 2029, 14,500 smallholder farmers, most of whom are women, and 500 agri-businesses in Ghana will increase agricultural incomes, improve food security, and adopt climate-smart agricultural practices that strengthen environmental sustainability and resilience to climate change impacts. Success will be measured through project monitoring data, client interviews, and endline surveys, including the number of women smallholder farmers implementing climate-smart agricultural practices, accessing financial services, reporting increased annual farm yields, and demonstrating

In partnership with Global Affairs Canada and Sinapi Aba, this five-year initiative [2025 to 2029] will increase crop yields, incomes, and job creation while promoting gender equality and household decision making. Farmers gain access to microloans, savings, insurance, and tailored support that builds resilience against climate shocks and market fluctuations.

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10. Five Francophone African Countries Step Up Gender-Responsive National Adaptation Planning

<https://napglobalnetwork.org/2026/07/african-countries-step-up-gender-responsive-nap-process/>

On the sidelines of the 2026 UN Bonn Climate Change Conference in June, 10 government representatives from Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Rwanda gathered for a training-of-trainers session on integrating gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) in national adaptation plan (NAP) processes. This NAP Global Network-led session strengthened their expertise and equipped them with practical skills to train local colleagues.

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11. How geospatial AI is helping aid groups predict famine and deliver food

<https://www.devex.com/news/how-geospatial-ai-is-helping-aid-groups-predict-famine-and-deliver-food-112935>

A St. Louis nonprofit is investing in AI to help the World Food Programme, FEWS NET, and other groups build and improve open-source tools for humanitarian aid much more quickly and efficiently to people in need.

Geospatial AI uses artificial intelligence to analyze location-based data such as satellite imagery, drone imagery, maps, and other geospatial datasets — then combines machine learning and spatial analysis to help users identify patterns and understand change more efficiently. The WFP-REACH initiative project also uses climate, food security, nutrition, and market data from Afghanistan.

The second Taylor Geospatial awardee project, led by Arizona State University, or ASU, aims to predict and identify food insecurity in active conflict zones. It combines AI, satellite observations, and natural-language tools to provide humanitarian groups with quicker, more accessible early insights on how conflict is disrupting crop production and critical infrastructure. The University of Maryland and Washington University in St. Louis are partners, in addition to NASA and FEWS NET.

For all geoAI's promise to help humanitarian agencies be more efficient and prioritize limited resources, the researchers stress that it can't replace sustained investment in their operations. Luz added that a humanitarian response still requires, well, humanitarianism — and with funding shortfalls, that is not always the case.

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12. Family Planning and Population Dynamics Are Key to Water Security

<https://www.ipsnews.net/2026/08/family-planning-and-population-dynamics-are-key-to-water-security>

These days, water is increasingly a trigger for division, from the public outcry over data center water usage to anti-abortion activists introducing legislation to designate the abortion medication mifepristone as a water pollutant and get the US Environmental Protection Agency to regulate it, which is another way to restrict access to it. For the record, mifepristone is no threat to waterways.

While the mifepristone water scare is clearly disinformation, it's so pointedly backwards that it points up an important truth: it isn't abortion medication that threatens water security; on the contrary, it's attacks on it and on family planning in general that pose a real threat.

There are several reasons for this. If family planning access is curtailed or cut off and birthrates rise, so will water demand and water stress. It will be worse in places with faster population growth, and worse globally for women and girls, who are the ones who have to collect the water in 80% of households experiencing shortages. Over 2 billion people lack safely managed drinking water. Women and girls suffer disproportionately from water shortages, yet they are generally excluded from decision making bodies or leadership positions that would give them a say in managing water.

In general, research shows that where gender disparities are high, women have more babies, population grows faster, and water scarcity gets worse. But the reverse is also true: where there is investment in and access to comprehensive family planning, and where women and girls are more empowered and included in decision making about managing water resources, over time birth rates decline, water stress eases, and water resiliency grows.

But population trends and gender equity are still important variables in how we use water and other resources that planners should not ignore. As human numbers and consumption levels rise, our ecological footprint, including water consumption, has become overwhelming and unsustainable.

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13. This High Schooler Invented a Plant-Based Plastic That Removes Microplastics From the Environment as It Biodegrades

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/this-high-schooler-invented-a-plant-based-plastic-that-removes-microplastics-from-the-environment-as-it-biodegrades-180989254/>

Arya Satheesh, an 18-year-old student from Letterkenny in County Donegal, Ireland, has spent the past couple of years studying microplastics. The young scientist researched plastic pollution and the challenges of detecting microplastics in drinking water. She recalls finding a disturbing statistic: Only 9 percent of the 507 million tons of plastic produced every year gets recycled.

To address the problem, Satheesh invented Eco Purge, a plant-based, biodegradable plastic. Once disposed of, the plastic takes up to two weeks to degrade and release enzymes into the environment that break down existing microplastics in the surrounding soil and water.

Eco Purge won the European category of the 2026 Earth Prize, the largest environmental competition in the world for young students.

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14. Japan honours former Agriculture Deputy Minister of Manitoba

https://www.calgary.ca.emb-japan.go.jp/itpr_en/11_000001_01206.html

On July 31, Consul General Wajima held a ceremony in Winnipeg to confer the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays upon Ms. Dori Gingera-Beauchemin, who was named a recipient in the Spring 2026 Decorations for Foreign Nationals. Ms. Beauchemin who served Deputy Minister of the Manitoba Department of Agriculture for long years, received the decoration in recognition of her many years of dedicated service to the establishment, growth, and continued success of the Fukushima-Manitoba Youth Exchange Program, which connects Fukushima Prefecture and Manitoba. Her efforts have made a significant contribution to youth exchanges and mutual understanding between Japan and Canada.

Reports, Publications, Resources

1. Project Mesha: Transforming the Lives of Rural Women through Improved Livestock Management

<https://60decibels.com/insights/project-mesha/>

Since 2018, Project Mesha has partnered with 60 Decibels to track and measure its social impact as the program matured. To date, we have successfully listened to over 3,000 Pashu Sakhis and female goat rearers through annual phone-based surveys. These surveys track changes in knowledge, earnings, feelings of empowerment, and quality of life, offering valuable insights into the program's effectiveness and areas for improvement.

Project Mesha's collaboration with 60 Decibels has shed light on the significant strides made in empowering rural women through productivity improvements in their goat flocks, an asset perceived by women to be their own. The data underscores how gender-focused interventions can catalyze broader social and economic change. By prioritizing gender equity and responding proactively to the needs of rural women, Project Mesha is not only improving livelihoods but also advancing the larger goal of achieving social and economic equality for women in rural India. Yet, the journey towards gender equality is ongoing and the insights from this continuous assessment highlight the importance of consistent efforts for a lasting impact. Leveraging these insights, Project Mesha remains committed to refining its strategies and ensuring that its impact on the lives of rural women remains both profound and transformative.

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2. Nepal and WFP launch reports highlighting school meals as a driver of sustainable development | Report

<https://www.developmentaid.org/news-stream/post/209228/nepal-and-wfp-launch-reports-highlighting-school-meals-as-a-driver-of-sustainable-development-report>

<https://www.wfp.org/news/government-nepal-and-world-food-programme-showcase-school-meals-pathway-sustainable>

The Government of Nepal and the World Food Programme (WFP) launched two reports in Kathmandu on 28 July 2026 that outline progress in food security, nutrition, education, climate resilience, and social protection, according to a press release by WFP. The publications document Nepal's shift from partner-supported interventions to nationally owned systems benefiting millions of people. The reports launched are the Journey of the National Mid-Day Meals Programme and WFP's Annual Country Report 2025. Together, they show how sustained investments, partnerships, and government leadership have advanced Sustainable Development Goals. The launch underscored school meals as a cornerstone of Nepal's development strategy.

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3. IMF Maps How Emerging Economies Can Draw Private Capital into Climate Projects

<https://www.policyedge.in/p/imf-maps-how-emerging-economies-can-draw-private-capital-into-climate-projects>

The IMF Working Paper, Private Finance and Climate Investment Needs: An Analytical Framework, sets out how emerging and developing economies can choose among private, blended and public finance for climate projects. It presents a framework rather than country-specific estimates or operational guidance.

Emerging and developing economies require an estimated US\$1.4–5 trillion annually in climate investment over the coming decade. Yet these economies, excluding China, receive only 15% of global clean-energy investment.

The paper treats climate finance as a development and investment problem. Sovereign risk, macroeconomic instability, regulatory uncertainty, currency risk and shallow financial markets raise borrowing costs across the economy. Since renewable-energy and infrastructure projects require substantial upfront capital, they are particularly sensitive to high financing costs.

Improving macroeconomic stability, governance, policy predictability and financial-market depth can therefore expand the number of climate projects capable of attracting finance on ordinary commercial terms.

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4. A new how-to guide on carbon markets

<https://www.devex.com/news/a-new-how-to-guide-on-carbon-markets-110682>

The Voluntary Carbon Markets Integrity Initiative, or VCMI, an international nonprofit organization, launched a new tool kit aimed at helping countries navigate international carbon market rules and best practices amid major changes in regulations over the last year.

The tool kit arrives one month before the final deadline for nations to submit their nationally determined goals, or NDCs — their plans to curb greenhouse gas emissions — which so far, only 29 out of 197 countries have completed. Last year, officials at the 29th United Nations Climate Change Conference, or COP29, finalized the rules for Article 6 of the Paris Agreement, which governs international carbon trading between countries.

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5. Video: Mobilizing Knowledge for Stronger Rural Futures

<https://youtu.be/ogWzBQ43UUc>

As part of Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation (CRRF/FCRR) series of webinars aimed at new and emerging rural researchers (and open to everyone!), the first webinar "Mobilizing Knowledge for Stronger Rural Futures" is available to watch on our YouTube page. This workshop, led by Dr. Ryan Gibson (School of Environmental Design and Rural Development, University of Guelph) explores practical ways to share and use knowledge that supports rural peoples, rural economies, and rural environments. Together, we look at strategies that help move research, experience, and local insights into action. We focus on tailoring knowledge-sharing approaches to different rural audiences, including community leaders, policymakers, and businesses. The session features recent examples from rural research summaries, focusing on what worked well, what challenges were faced, and how lessons learned can support stronger decision-making.

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6. Video: A Tour of Rural Data in Statistics Canada

<https://youtu.be/RVv8eTuLN7Y>

Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation (CRRF/FCRR) hosted an online webinar in March 2026 led by friend and lifetime member Dr. Ray Bollman titled "A Tour of Rural Data in Statistics Canada". The workshop provides an overview of rural data and resources available for community leaders, students, and researchers. Ray Bollman is a retired researcher from Statistics Canada with a distinguished career focused on rural migration and demographic analysis. Although he is retired from active research and writing, Ray supports researchers by helping them navigate the data sources available within Statistics Canada.

A background paper is currently on our website under Rural Research Forums <https://crrf.ca/publications/>.

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7. New Standards Handbook: assess your organization's practices

<https://imaginecanada.ca/en/standards/handbook>

Imagine Canada's Standards Program offers a Canada-wide set of shared standards for charities and nonprofits designed to strengthen their capacity. The Standards Program is first and foremost a capacity-building initiative. Any organization may use these standards to improve and monitor its practices. Information about how to comply with the standards, as well as tools and resources to help organizations continue to strengthen their practices, are available free of charge. Organizations wishing to demonstrate publicly that they meet the standards can participate in a voluntary peer-review-based accreditation process."

Imagine Canada is excited to introduce a new resource — the Standards Handbook — to support your pursuit of governance excellence in addition to the Gap Analysis Tool and Standards Community. Whether you're starting your accreditation journey or simply looking to strengthen your organizational practices, these tools offer practical ways to see where your organization stands.

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