



Thematic Fact Sheet

RESOURCE CONSERVATION INITIATIVE



WOMEN & GENDER FACT SHEET

On Smaller Plots, Harder Work

Gender inequality in land access, farming roles and environmental decision-making across Asutifi North and Atwima Mponua Districts — and what it means for climate resilience

RESCONI . AUGUST 2026.

ABOUT THIS FACT SHEET

Every figure in this fact sheet is drawn from the RESCONI final study report, Support to Promote Community Resilience and Rights in Competing Land Use for Mining, Agriculture and Forest Utilization in Ghana (November 2023), and is referenced to the section, table or figure from which it was derived. The survey reached 528 respondents — 41% female, 59% male — across 20 communities in the two districts at a 95% confidence level. That female share was not an accident of sampling: RESCONI deliberately raised women's participation to improve gender involvement in the research process, support more equitable cocoa farming communities, and drive transformative impacts through women's greater participation in community-level decision-making on natural resource management.

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1. On smaller plots, harder questions

Women make up 41% of respondents, but their farms are systematically smaller — a constraint that shapes how much food a household can grow and how much income it can earn.



KEY FACTS

- **41%** of respondents across both districts identify as female; **59%** male — an imbalance that reflects the domination of men in farming and mining in the two districts.
- The 41% female share was a **deliberate design choice** by RESCONI to improve gender involvement and participation in the research process.
- **Female farm sizes are systematically smaller** than male farm sizes in both districts. The median female farm is about 5 acres against about 9 for men.
- The disparity is **more pronounced in Asutifi North** than in Atwima Mponua.
- Women's farms are **generally under 10 acres**; male holdings extend well beyond that threshold.
- Women constitute **a significant portion of the agricultural workforce**, playing essential roles in farm activities, post-harvest processing and marketing.
- Women and migrants had **lower awareness** of land use and forest reserve regulations than better-resourced community members.

Smaller plots, unequal outcomes

DISTRIBUTION OF ACRES OF FARM AGAINST GENDER IN BOTH DISTRICTS

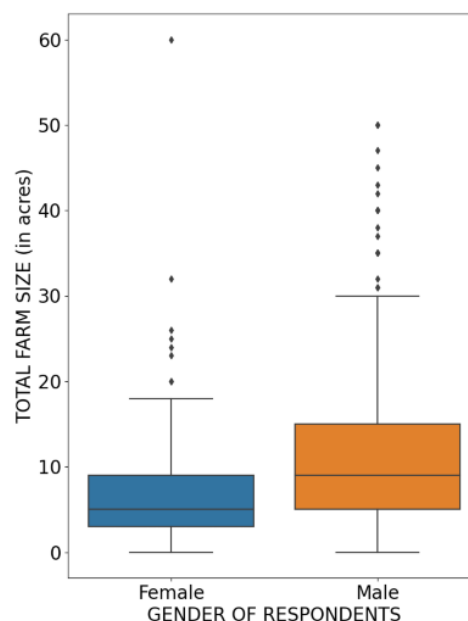
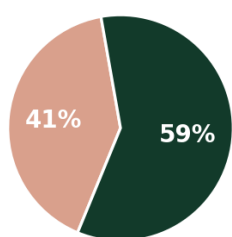


Figure 2. Distribution of farm sizes by gender across both districts, as published in the source report. The female median sits near 5 acres against roughly 9 acres for men, and the male range extends far higher. Source: RESCONI Final Study Report (2023), Section 2.2.5; Figure 2.9, p. 26.

The gender balance in this study



Female 41% · Male 59%

Figure 1. Gender composition of the 528 respondents surveyed across 20 communities in both districts. Source: RESCONI Final Study Report (2023), Section 2.1.1; Figure 2.1, p. 20.

Why the sample was designed this way

The report is explicit that the significant proportion of female respondents was a conscious effort to improve gender involvement and participation in the research process — consistent with RESCONI's purposeful intention to ensure gender diversity and social inclusion, to create more equitable cocoa farming communities, and to drive transformative impact through women's increased participation in decision-making on natural resource management at community level.

Why size matters

Farm size determines household food security and income. A woman with 3–6 acres can feed her household and produce cocoa for export earnings. A woman with less than 3 acres is constrained on both fronts. The report notes that the disparity is more pronounced in Asutifi North than in Atwima Mponua, suggesting local land-access patterns differ by district.

The gap constrains women's income potential and their bargaining position within the farming-livelihood nexus — even as they remain deeply engaged in agricultural work. It also compounds climate vulnerability: a smaller plot on degraded land leaves fewer resources to absorb a bad season.

A note on the 10-acre figure

Section 4.1 of the source report states that no female respondent in either district held a farm larger than 10 acres. The report's own Figure 2.9 shows a small number of female holdings above that threshold, and Section 2.2.5 states more cautiously that female farm sizes were *generally less than 10 acres*.

2. Women's Unrecognized Labor input and Voice.

Women work across the whole agricultural value chain — production, post-harvest processing and marketing — yet hold the smallest plots and the least say in how land is used.

Women across the agricultural value chain

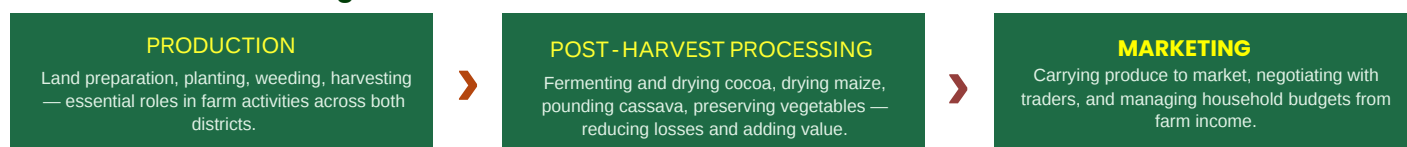


Figure 3. Women's contribution across the agricultural value chain, as described in the source report.

Source: RESCONI Final Study Report (2023), Section 2.3.2, Gender and Social Inclusion.



Labour participation

Women are the backbone of post-harvest agriculture. The report states plainly that women *constitute a significant portion of the agricultural workforce and play essential roles in farm activities, post-harvest processing, and marketing* — that is, at every stage from field to market, not merely at the point of production.

Framing it as a value chain matters for policy. It means an intervention aimed only at land or only at inputs reaches a fraction of what women actually do. Training, credit and market linkages have to follow the same chain if they are to reach the same women.

Decision-making exclusion

The study did not put a numeric question to respondents about women's formal participation in farm decision-making, and this sheet therefore reports no figure for it. What the report does document, across its sections on farming, gender and livelihood vulnerability, is that women constitute a significant portion of the workforce while receiving minimal mention in governance, land allocation or resource-use discussions.

That is a pattern well documented across sub-Saharan Africa, where women's labour and knowledge are drawn on while men retain control over land and capital.

Empowering women farmers through access to resources, training, and financial services can significantly enhance their livelihoods and contribute to gender equality and social development.

From RESCONI Final Study Report (2023), Section 2.3.2.

Climate and forest change hits women differently

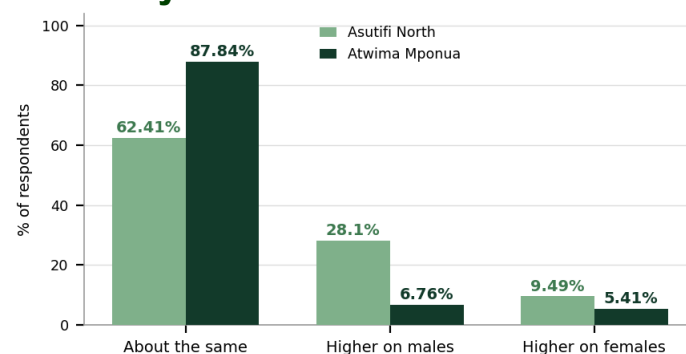


Figure 4. Perceived gender dimensions of the effects of deforestation and forest degradation. Most respondents in both districts see the effects as shared.

Source: RESCONI Final Study Report (2023), Figure 2.19, p. 37.

The research finds a paradox

Most respondents — 62.41% in Asutifi North and 87.84% in Atwima Mponua — say deforestation and forest degradation affect men and women about the same. A minority see men as more affected (28.10% and 6.76%), and a smaller group see women as more affected (9.49% and 5.41%).

Yet the report sets that local perception against wider research. Bessah et al. (2021) found male farmers report greater vulnerability to rising temperature and shifting rainfall, while female farmers are on average considered less resilient to floods and droughts. Glazebrook (2011) is quoted directly: climate change contributes to women's hardships because of the conjunction of the feminization of poverty and environmental degradation.

A woman on a 3-acre plot of degraded land faces climate variability with fewer resources to adapt than a man with 10 acres of fertile soil. Local awareness of that gap is low — which is precisely why it matters for who is asked, and who is heard, when decisions get made.



3. Centering women in forest and farming governance

Strengthening women's participation is not an add-on — it is essential to the food security and climate resilience the report recommends.

The knowledge gap

Citing Oduro Appiah et al. (2022), the report notes that higher-income community members were more aware of land use and forest reserve regulations, while women and migrants had lower awareness. This is not because women are less interested in sustainability; it reflects exclusion from information channels and decision forums traditionally dominated by men and traditional authorities.

What women bring to the table

Women manage food production for household nutrition and run post-harvest value chains. They understand soil and water quality firsthand through everyday farm work, and hold knowledge about which forest products support household resilience. Yet they are largely absent from formal discussions about mining policy, forest reserve management and climate adaptation.

The findings highlight the importance of re-evaluating awareness creation strategies to include marginalized groups, especially women and the youth, in information-sharing efforts for better sustainable practices.

From RESCONI Final Study Report (2023), Section 4.1.

These groups already exist — start with them

The report's own stakeholder mapping identifies women's organisations as established community-level actors in natural resource governance, not bodies that need to be created:

- **Women's Groups** — mapped among community-level stakeholders relevant to combating illegal mining and logging, alongside Traditional Authorities, CRMCs, youth groups and farmer-based organisations. Their identified roles include advocacy and sensitisation, afforestation and reforestation, and refusing the sale of land to illegal miners.
- **Women & Children Right Groups** — mapped as a stakeholder group for knowledge generation and capacity building on forest processes, forest laws and environmental sustainability, working alongside the Forestry Commission, local NGOs, academia and agricultural extension officers.

Source: RESCONI Final Study Report (2023), Section 2.8; stakeholder mapping tables, pp. 51–52.

RESCONI's recommendations

- Engage **Women's Groups and Women & Children Right Groups** directly in community sensitisation, afforestation and anti-illegal-mining initiatives, alongside Traditional Authorities — building on structures the study has already mapped.
- Include women in **all stakeholder forums** on forest management, mining regulation and land-use planning at district and community level.
- Develop **women-specific awareness campaigns** on forest laws, mining impacts and community rights before any mining permits are granted.
- Ensure women's representation in **land-access decisions** — require women to co-sign or jointly approve any assignment of household land to third parties, including miners.
- Support women farmers with **credit, inputs and training across the whole value chain** — production, processing and marketing — so they can raise yields on existing plots and build resilience to climate variability.
- Prioritise women in **alternative livelihood programmes** — beekeeping, snail rearing, mushroom farming — to reduce pressure on forest resources and the pull of mining.
- Establish **women's forest user groups** with formal recognition and benefit-sharing under community-based forest management.
- Measure and monitor **gender equity outcomes** in all forest, mining and agricultural projects in the districts.

Derived from RESCONI Final Study Report (2023), Sections 2.3.2, 2.8, 4.1 and 5.1–5.2.

Why it matters

Food security, climate adaptation and forest conservation all depend on smallholder farmers. A majority of these households in these districts (Asutifi North and Atwima Mponua) are smallholder farmers. Also, it is worthy to note that 41% of the total respondents were females. A food security strategy that excludes women's voices, land access and decision-making power will fail. A mining regulation that does not account for women's land loss cannot protect community livelihoods.



SOURCES

1. Resource Conservation Initiative (RESCONI). *Support to Promote Community Resilience and Rights in Competing Land Use for Mining, Agriculture and Forest Utilization in Ghana* — Final Study Report. Kumasi: RESCONI, November 2023. Sections 2.1.1, 2.2.5, 2.3.2, 2.8, 4.1, 5.1 and 5.2; Figures 2.1 (p. 20), 2.9 (p. 26) and 2.19 (p. 37); stakeholder mapping tables, pp. 51–52; Executive Summary, p. x.
2. Secondary sources cited within the source report: Kuusaana, Kidido & Halidu-Adam (2013) and Lambrecht & Karoff (2020) on gender and farm size; Bessah et al. (2021) on gender-based variation in climate change perception and vulnerability; Glazebrook (2011) on women and climate change; Oduro Appiah et al. (2022) on awareness of forest laws among forest-dependent communities.
3. Figure 4 values are read from the two district panels of Figure 2.19 in the source report (Asutifi North: 62.41 / 28.10 / 9.49; Atwima Mponua: 87.84 / 6.76 / 5.41). The study did not put a numeric question to respondents on women's participation in farm decision-making, and no figure is reported here for it.