



Subcommittee on Women & Climate Change

Women as equal partners in responding to the climate crisis

Climate change is now recognized as the crisis of the 21st century affecting not only the lives of the present generation but reaching into the future to dramatically change the environmental space of generations to come. A cross cutting reality, climate change obstructs the achievement of sustainable development, exacerbates poverty and forces affected populations to migrate in increasing numbers. Together with varied socio-economic factors, it triggers civil conflict and the violence against women that comes in its wake.

While everyone will suffer the consequences of climate change, regardless of race, caste, ethnicity, sex, and level of income, when climate change strikes, women are in the frontlines—women of all ages and girls, in rural and urban areas, in the global South and the global North, will be the first to suffer its consequences.¹

Indeed, climate change presents a severe and disproportionate threat to the dignity, livelihood, and, in some cases, even the very survival of women and girls, undermining their basic rights in direct violation of human rights law², for example, their:

- Right to Life—survival, security and health (UDHR Article 3)
- Right to Sources of Livelihood—food, water, energy, shelter, economic security (UDHR Article 25)
- Right to Participation— decision-making opportunities and information (UDHR Articles 21 and 27)
- Right to Capacity Building—education and income generation opportunities (UDHR Articles 23 and 26)³

However, in the face of these threats, women remain resilient. They are central to a community's response to the consequences posed by climate change—as practical problem solvers and nurturing caregivers, responsible leaders and effective policy advocates.⁴

Leaders in all sectors of society—government or NGO, business or non profit—should recognize the above facts. Women should be taken on as equal partners in a country's efforts to respond to the climate crisis.

Recommendations

Planning

- Women leaders should be equally represented in planning for the mitigation of the slow and rapid onset of climate change.
- They need to participate at all levels of decision making about plans for adapting to its consequences, including National Adaptation Plans for Action (NAPAs).

Finance

- In allocating funds for climate change projects, special consideration should be given to small scale programs managed by women that aim for social and ecological benefits over the long term.
- Capacity building needed to access available financial resources should be provided to women managing small businesses and agricultural enterprises.

Education

- Funding for the education of women and girls should ensure that they receive training in science, math and finance.
- Women should be given equal access to training for policy positions.

Information dissemination

- Planning should be undertaken and resources set aside to ensure that women are included in a community's climate change information network.
- Specifically, they should have access to information about planning and the financial and technological resources available for disaster prevention, mitigation and adaptation to the consequences of climate change.

All stakeholders should ensure that climate change and disaster risk reduction measures are gender responsive, sensitive to indigenous knowledge systems and respect human rights. Women's right to participate at all levels of decision-making must be guaranteed in climate change policies and programs. Statement of the CEDAW Committee on Gender & Climate Change CEDAW 44th Session, NY, 2009.

The NGOCSW/NY Subcommittee on Women and Climate Change represents NGOs in consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (NYC). For more information, visit our webpage at www.ngocsw.org

¹ Aguilar, L. 2009. Women and climate change; Vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities. In *State of the World: Into a warming world*. A Worldwatch Institute Report (pp. 59-62). New York: W.W. Norton & Company; Dunkelman, I. (2008, October 18-22). *Mainstreaming gender in climate change policies: Urgencies, challenges, and perspectives*. Available at <http://www.capwip.org/resources/resources.html>; UNDP (2007). *Fighting climate change: Human solidarity in a divided world*. Human Development Report 2007-2008. Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

² OXFAM, International. (2008). *Climate wrongs and human rights: Putting people at the heart of climate change policy*. OXFAM briefing paper, 117.

³ Women, Climate Change and the CEDAW, Information Sheet #4. Prepared by the NGOCSW/NY Subcommittee on Women and Climate Change. www.ngocsw.org

⁴ Aguilar, L. 2009; Escobar-Darvahal, Y., Quintero-Angel, M., Vargas-Garcia, M. (2008). Women's role in adapting to climate change and variability. *Advances in Geoscience* 14 277-280.
