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## Educate and Advocate

For decades, women have been effectively mobilizing around environmental, political, economic and social issues. In their communities, in their countries and at the global level, they have demonstrated tremendous motivation and have achieved great successes in securing spaces for gender equality in policies and programmes. With climate change becoming one of the most urgent issues of our time, women and gender advocates around the world are taking action.

**{ ad'-vo-ca-cy (n): The act of pleading or arguing in favour of something, such as a cause, idea or policy; active support.<sup>A</sup> }**

## Women's Advocacy and the Environment

### Setting the Stage

The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil—more commonly known as the “Earth Summit”—was momentous for women’s civil society environmental advocacy. While only 200 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had been accredited for the “official” portion of the 1985 Decade for Women Conference in Nairobi, an incredible 1,400 NGOs were officially welcomed to UNCED seven years later, represented by about 2,500 people.<sup>1</sup> Women’s organizations

made up only about 5 per cent of those granted access, but quantity had no impact on quality: an entire chapter on women and environmental issues (Chapter 24) was included in the outcome agreement, Agenda 21, with numerous cross-cutting gender issues woven throughout the whole agreement.

*“Countries should take urgent measures to avert the ongoing rapid environmental and economic degradation in developing countries that generally affects the lives of women and children in rural areas suffering drought,*

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 2)

<sup>A</sup> This is a compilation of definitions, but most closely based on that from the Oxford English Dictionary.

## Gender in the Rio Conventions

The UN Convention on Biological Diversity has strong language that can be used to make connections with climate change, such as:

*“Encourage, subject to national legislation and consistent with the Convention on Biological Diversity, the effective protection and use of the knowledge, innovations and practices of women of indigenous and local communities... and encourage fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of such knowledge, innovation and practices.”*

The same is true of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification:

*“Stressing the important role played by women in regions affected by desertification and/or drought, particularly in rural areas of developing countries... provide for effective participation at the local, national and regional levels of non-governmental organizations and local populations, both women and men, particularly resource users, including farmers and pastoralists and their representative organizations, in policy planning, decision-making, and implementation and review of national action programmes.”*

*desertification and deforestation, armed hostilities, natural disasters, toxic waste and the aftermath of the use of unsuitable agro-chemical products.... In order to reach these goals, women should be fully involved in decision-making and in the implementation of sustainable development activities.”*

—Excerpt from Agenda 21, Chapter 24, (a) 6 and 7

Moreover, of the three Conventions that were drafted in Rio, two include strong gender components: the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the UN Convention to Combat Diversification (CCD) (see box).

## Women Engaged in Climate Change

The third agreement from the 1992 Earth Summit—the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)—didn’t include any gender aspects. Parties to the UNFCCC are negotiating a new, “post-2012” global agreement that will go beyond the terms of the UNFCCC’s Kyoto Protocol, which required developed countries to reduce emissions. It will encompass the major components of climate change policy, programmes and funds: adaptation, mitigation, technology and finance mechanisms, as well as a shared vision for long-term cooperative action between Parties. Women and gender advocates around the world are mobilized to ensure that

- the next phase of climate change agreements and plans
- incorporate gender considerations.

### → **Bold action now**

- While the gender aspects of climate change are of
- major concern to women’s advocates and activists,
- one key message is universal: *new, bold actions must*
- *be undertaken immediately by every country to combat*
- *climate change and adapt to its effects.* Climate change
- is a threat to all of us, but to those populations and
- countries most at risk, it is a matter of survival—and not
- in the distant future, but today. The principle of “common
- but differentiated responsibility” means that developing
- countries must be able to engage in “green” development
- activities and have support in adaptation efforts, while
- industrialized countries must urgently reduce emissions
- and pay their corresponding historical carbon debt.
- Women advocates must unite to push all Parties into
- urgent action.

### → **Protect those most vulnerable**

- Prioritization of the most vulnerable groups must include
- not only countries and regions but also populations:
- women must be addressed in all response measures
- to climate change (adaptation, mitigation, technology,
- capacity building and financing).<sup>B</sup>

<sup>B</sup> Most of the recommendations in this factsheet are quoted from or based on: WEDO/GGCA (2009). “WEDO/GGCA Position Paper”. Bonn, Germany: GGCA Advocacy Team. March-April.

## Emphasizing Rights-Based Development

Another pivotal moment in women’s advocacy history came in Cairo in 1994 with the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), which asserted that individual and human rights and well-being are linked to development concerns. The 20-year Programme of Action (PoA) focused on people’s health needs—particularly women’s—rather than demographic targets.

The specific link made by the ICPD between sustainable development and every person’s rights has direct implications for climate change risks and responses. For example, the PoA encourages governments to address lack of access to land, education, health services and reproductive rights; enhance rural development; and increase the capacity of local governments to manage urban development. With the review of the ICPD coming up, advocates should continue urging their governments to make these critical connections and build on commitments already made, such as those at the Earth Summit. Doing so recognizes the vulnerabilities that hinder sustainable development and response to climate change and also paves the way for women’s full participation.

## The “International Bill of Rights for Women”—An Indispensable Building-Block

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is the Convention of 1979 under which Party governments are legally bound to protect and promote women’s rights and prevent gender-based discrimination. The ICPD, CBD and UNCCD all built on the foundation of CEDAW to strengthen progress toward gender equality.

## The Global Gender and Climate Alliance

Women advocates at the Earth Summit, who represented both NGOs and UN agencies, came together to make a tremendous impact on sustainable development policies and programmes. This alliance model of various actors was replicated in 2007 by the Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) with the launching of the GGCA—the Global Gender and Climate Alliance—which now brings together over 30 UN agencies and civil society organizations to ensure that climate change decision-making, policies and programmes at all levels are gender-responsive. The member organizations are engaged in advocacy, resource generation and sharing, training and capacity-building, and much more. Find out at [www.gender-climate.org](http://www.gender-climate.org).

- Advocates can use the legally binding provisions in
- CEDAW to push for gender-sensitive climate change policy
- at the national level. That’s where gender-disaggregated
- data should inform policy, women should be involved
- in making and implementing policy, economic benefits
- should be equally accessible, and health should be a
- paramount goal.

## Women and Gender, Equality and Equity<sup>c</sup>

The ideologies of women’s movements and gender advocacy have evolved over several decades. In the 1990s, the Gender and Development (GAD) approach took over from Women in Development (WID) programmes and projects because women were being pigeonholed in marginalized, often under-funded bureaus and projects, men’s roles were entirely absent, and gender disparities were not improving. GAD has tried to address gender differences and relationships more holistically, involving both women and men in development efforts.

But where are we now? The impacts of climate change demonstrate that women are still among the most vulnerable and must urgently be included as stakeholders, rights-holders and agents of change, alongside men. *Gender inequality* still exists—rights, responsibilities and opportunities vary based largely on sex and social constructs—and climate change exacerbates existing discrimination. *Gender equity*—that is, fairness of treatment between women and men—in representation, distribution of funds, prioritization of activities, etc., is needed to achieve gender equality and to effectively address climate change.

<sup>c</sup>Terms in this box are based on those provided in Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA). (2009). “Module 1”. In Training Manual on Gender and Climate Change. [http://www.generoyambiente.org/archivos-de-usuario/File/ecosistemas\\_especificos.pdf](http://www.generoyambiente.org/archivos-de-usuario/File/ecosistemas_especificos.pdf).

# Women Are Agents of Change

**W**hile women are disproportionately affected by climate change impacts, they are not just victims. They have been adapting to climate change long before scientists gave it a name or policy makers began to draft a response: women feed their families, raise and educate children and care for their communities against all odds, and their innovations often improve the wider population's well-being. Women and women's organizations and cooperatives have demonstrated time and again that great change is possible.

## → *Women and men have different experiences, expertise and knowledge*

- Balanced participation of all relevant stakeholders, including women and men, is needed for effective planning and activity implementation.
- Incorporating and investing in women's capacity as change agents, innovators, educators, leaders and caretakers strengthens programmes and projects.
- Taking advantage of existing information networks means considering local and indigenous knowledge alongside scientific data.

## Developing Effective Advocacy On Gender and Climate Change

What makes advocacy effective? Here are a few **key principles**:

**Message:** An advocacy message should be as precise and simple as possible and designed with a specific audience in mind. Different messages will resonate with different audiences. For example, some governments prioritize commitments to human and women's rights, while others may be more receptive to the argument that gender mainstreaming makes for more effective and efficient programming.

**Ramifications:** "if ... then." An effective strategy is to explain what the consequences will be if your issue is not taken into account. For example, if gender equality is not considered in climate change policy-making and programme implementation, then half the world's population may not be adequately equipped to cope. Moreover, if women's experiences, expertise and innovations are excluded, then policies may be only half as effective.

**Recommendations:** The point of advocacy is not only to reveal a problem but also to offer a solution. You want policymakers to listen because you have an answer. The solution must be simple but comprehensive.

**Delivery:** While it's important to be professional, well-prepared and direct, gender advocates also need to emphasize that climate change affects people. Reminding policymakers that climate change has a human face—a woman's face—may help make the issue more personal.

### **Key Principles in Action**

Apply the principles to an issue. For example:

**Issue:** How and where will climate change funds be allocated?

**Message:** Delivery of funds should prioritize women and vulnerable groups through appropriate guidelines and criteria.

**Ramifications:** If financing does not have a gender perspective, then women may miss out on invaluable life-saving resources.

### **Recommendations:**

- Establish **funding criteria** that ensure women can participate directly as stakeholders;
- Allocate **a portion of funds** exclusively to the most vulnerable groups (which often include women);
- Apply **gender-responsive budgeting and audits** to ensure funds reach all stakeholders and that delivery of resources is measurable, reportable and verifiable;
- Use **gender indicators** to demonstrate that benchmarks and targets for access, allocation and budgeting are being met; and
- Provide **capacity-building** that enhances the ability of vulnerable groups to access and manage these funds.

**Delivery:** Share a story of women from your own region.

## Engendering National Policy-making

Climate policies must be context specific and country-driven. Most climate change policies are written in national environmental ministries, but there is not really a common methodology—except for the national reporting due from Parties to the UNFCCC. While gender equality is widely considered a prerequisite for sustainable development, a UNEP survey of environmental ministries in 2006 found that only two countries were engaged in climate change activities from a gender perspective.<sup>2</sup>

Numerous other sectors apart from the environment—e.g., housing, tourism, agriculture, infrastructure, finance, commerce, health, water and labour—contribute to and are affected by climate change. This creates a lot of potential for gaps in policy-making and implementation, but also offers more opportunities for advocacy around gender issues.

→ **National policies, programmes and funds must consider gender and be in line with global commitments**

- Adaptation plans, including National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA), should be crafted and implemented to be responsive to both women and men to ensure optimum implementation.
- In areas and sectors where women often play an important or central role, such as agriculture, water, forestry and management of other natural resources, actions must explicitly address gender.
- Disaster risk management and reduction strategies, including early-warning systems, should consider differentiated impacts and prioritize the needs of the

most vulnerable populations, including women, in alignment with the Hyogo Framework for Action.

- Data should be gender-disaggregated for all actions and in all sectors related to climate change; they must be available to all stakeholders to make sure policies and programmes are effective and reaching targets.

## Local-level Mobilization

Every project can have a gender perspective. Projects on health, migration/immigration, water, energy, land use, land tenure, urban planning, sustainable development, good governance, economic justice and employment—just to name a few—all have gender and climate change as cross-cutting issues.

**Mobilization in Action:** In 2009, WEDO partnered with ENDA (Environmental Development Action in the Third World), based in Dakar, Senegal, to launch a Gender and Climate Change Caravan (GCCC) in two rural communities. The GCCC has three overall objectives: awareness-raising, capacity-building and local-level advocacy. ENDA is working with the local development bureau to strengthen policies on sustainable energy access and use and on climate change adaptation and mitigation, and to ensure gender is included. Lessons learned and best practices will be documented and will inform the next phase of the project.



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# Get Involved

## Interested in these issues?

- Visit WEDO's website, sign on to the mailing list and join the listservs: [WEDOsustdev@googlegroups.com](mailto:WEDOsustdev@googlegroups.com) and [WDACCUS@googlegroups.com](mailto:WDACCUS@googlegroups.com)
- Visit the GGCA website and find out how your organization can become a member: [www.gender-climate.org](http://www.gender-climate.org)
- Join us at global negotiations and advocate on behalf of your constituency
- Sign up for one of our Gender and Climate Change Training of Trainers
- Visit the UNFPA Gender and Climate Change pages: [www.unfpa.org/pds/climate/index.html](http://www.unfpa.org/pds/climate/index.html)

## At home, research your country's climate change policies and activities:

- National communications and plans are reported to the UNFCCC here: [unfccc.int/national\\_reports/items/1408.php](http://unfccc.int/national_reports/items/1408.php)
- National Adaptation Programmes of Action are here: [unfccc.int/cooperation\\_support/least\\_developed\\_countries\\_portal/submitted\\_napas/items/4585.php](http://unfccc.int/cooperation_support/least_developed_countries_portal/submitted_napas/items/4585.php)
- Visit your country's Ministry of Environment: [www.unep.org/resources/gov/MEnvironment.asp](http://www.unep.org/resources/gov/MEnvironment.asp)

## At your organization, take a look at your own projects:

- Ask a gender question (Who is involved? Who is the target audience? Who benefits from your work? Who holds the knowledge?)
- Apply gender criteria to your budgets (Who receives the funds and how much?)
- Write your papers or proposals with a gender perspective

## Learn more:

- [www.unfccc.int](http://www.unfccc.int)—United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
- [www.energia.org](http://www.energia.org)—ENERGIA, International Network for Gender and Sustainable Energy
- [www.gendercc.net](http://www.gendercc.net)—gendercc Network—Women for Climate Justice
- [www.gdnonline.org](http://www.gdnonline.org)—The Gender and Disaster Network
- [www.genderandwater.org](http://www.genderandwater.org)—The Gender and Water Alliance
- [www.unisdr.org/eng/risk-reduction/gender/rd-gender-eng.htm](http://www.unisdr.org/eng/risk-reduction/gender/rd-gender-eng.htm)—International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, gender pages

## References

<sup>1</sup> Haney, M. P. (2005). "Women's NGOs at UN Conferences: The 1992 Rio Conference on the Environment as a Watershed Event". *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, 27(1&2). October; and United Nations. (1997). *UN Briefing Papers/The World Conferences: Developing Priorities for the 21st Century*. UN Department of Public Information (DPI). <[www.un.org/geninfo/bp/enviro.html](http://www.un.org/geninfo/bp/enviro.html)>.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). (2006). "Gender Mainstreaming Among Environmental Ministries". *Government Survey*. December. <[www.unep.org/civil\\_society/PDF\\_docs/UNEP-survey-reportJan-07.pdf](http://www.unep.org/civil_society/PDF_docs/UNEP-survey-reportJan-07.pdf)>.

