




Gender equality in the climate agreement

 Paris must deliver an ambitious and equitable agreement that keeps warming below the 1.5°C threshold, supports just climate action, respects the human rights of all people, and ensures gender equality at its core, as a guiding mandate. However, it is also critically important to look ahead to implementation and continued efforts toward gender-responsive climate solutions.

Key messages

- Gender equality and respect for all human rights are central to an effective climate change agreement.
- Gender equality and women's human rights advocates have clear asks for the outcome of Paris, ensuring that gender equality is a guiding mandate for all aspects of the agreement.
- The agreement must be just, ambitious and inclusive in terms of mitigation, adaptation, finance, loss and damage; strong gender language in a weak agreement will not achieve what the world needs.
- Advocates at all levels must follow-up post-Paris to drive political will and implementation, and to hold governments accountable.
- Women are already working to solve climate change, contributing innovative, gender-just and climate-just solutions.

The problem

The impact of climate change is already causing widespread socioeconomic and environmental loss, and human suffering around the globe. Climate change erodes human freedoms and limits choice. However, the impacts of climate change are not felt equally, with women often bearing the brunt of climate impacts. Without measures to address the injustice of climate change, those with the fewest resources, countries and individuals alike, will be most susceptible to its negative effects; and those in positions of wealth and power will be the first to benefit from transitions in the economy towards a low carbon society.

To ensure survival, well-being, and livelihoods of women and men all over the world for the long term, *any international climate agreement must be gender-responsive*. It must also be ambitious and equitable, to keep warming below the 1.5° threshold, support climate action and respect the human rights of all people. The 2015 Paris climate negotiations will determine whether the critical gender-responsive decision making, programming and action on climate change will be framed and supported within a robust and fair overall agreement.

Context

From the original climate agreement in 1992 until now, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has advanced from a focus on mitigation to a more complex and holistic view that extends beyond technical measures and incorporates social, economic and environmental dimensions together.

Advocates across sectors and constituencies, together with decision makers, have propelled this progress. The women's rights and gender equality community, as well as women leaders within the UNFCCC, have initiated a strong shift in how gender issues are included.

The twenty-first Conference of the Parties in Paris in 2015 is expected to produce a legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the UNFCCC, which should address the grave challenge of climate change. It is being developed under the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP). It will be applicable to all Parties, and will enter into force in 2020.

Evidence and experience

Results and impact of advocacy on gender equality and women's rights

In 2010, Parties agreed to decisions that mainstreamed gender aspects across finance, adaptation and capacity building, which sent a signal that gender equality and women's participation are necessary for effective action on all aspects of climate change. Since 2010, gender equality issues have been included in adopted decisions on nearly every UNFCCC thematic area. Key outcomes include:

- 2012 Decision 23/CP.18 on gender balance and women's participation;
- 2014 launch of the Lima Work Programme on Gender¹, a 2-year work program aimed at achieving gender-responsive climate policy in all relevant activities under the Convention;
- The Green Climate Fund took a fund-wide gender-sensitive approach in 2011, enhancing this with a Gender Action Plan in 2014;
- Draft gender language going into COP21.

¹ Lima Work Programme on Gender, https://unfccc.int/files/meetings/lima_dec_2014/decisions/application/pdf/auv_cop20_gender.pdf

Where is gender going in the negotiations?

This year, 2015, has been highly anticipated as the final year of the ADP on all fronts, including gender equality. Since the very first ADP meeting, Parties and groups of Parties have expressed their strong views on the effective integration of gender equality into the new climate agreement – reiterating in submissions and interventions views that should be reflected to operationalize a gender-responsive approach to climate policy, namely as an overarching principle in the Objective section of the new agreement.

- **February Geneva text:** Parties called for gender language in the Preamble, the Objective/General section, adaptation, finance, technology and capacity building.
- **August session:** Parties reiterated support for gender language across all areas, calling for the language to be fully retained. Three groups of Parties (AILAC, the Environmental Integrity Group and the African Group), and 12² individual countries, stated that gender equality must be in the Objective/General section, and not just in the preamble or in a decision.
- **October session:** Some key gender language was maintained. However, support was less vocal than in previous sessions, highlighting an ever growing contentious agreement, watering down of language and text, where key issues such as gender equality could easily fall out without sustained political will.

The **10 November drafts**³ are the starting point for negotiations on 30 November. Gender language in the draft agreement and in the draft decision text ranges from “gender equality” to “gender-responsive” to “gender-disaggregated data.” Still missing is gender text related to mitigation and technology transfer and development. In some cases, a whole paragraph is bracketed (e.g. Purpose), which means it is at risk of being altered, weakened or deleted.

² Costa Rica, Philippines, Liberia, Malawi, Bangladesh, Dominican Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Vietnam, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, Bolivia

³ 10 November draft texts http://unfccc.int/documentation/documents/advanced_search/items/6911.php?preref=600008681#beg

Recommendations

It is not certain what will happen in Paris as COP21 and ADP 2.12 begin, but advocates on the ground will be tracking the negotiations carefully, to follow the changing landscape and ensure governments make commitments and achieve substantive agreement.

1. Overall, the COP21 agreement must:

- Be gender-responsive, ensuring participation and gender disaggregation;
- Be ambitious in terms of mitigation, finance, loss and damage, and environmentally and socially sound technology;
- Adhere to the principles of the Convention – equity and common, but differentiated, responsibilities;
- Support transformative change;
- Include gender equality text in the Purpose section – or the operative text – which would mandate that all climate actions under the new agreement should be gender-responsive.

2. The operational language, the Purpose section, of the agreement must ensure a truly transformative and effective approach. Countries should support the following proposed language:

“ensure that all climate change related actions, respect, protect, promote, and fulfill human rights for all, including the rights of indigenous peoples; ensuring gender equality and the full and equal participation of women; ensuring intergenerational equity; ensuring a just transition of the workforce that creates decent work and quality jobs; ensuring food security; and the integrity and resilience of natural ecosystems.”

3. In addition to ADP, it is critical to:

- move forward on the Lima Work Programme on Gender: ensure Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI) conclusions that review and take action on key lessons learned from the June 2015 SBI Workshop on gender, technology and mitigation.
- maintain effective mainstreaming efforts under the SBI/Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice programs: ensure gender-responsive implementation.

Strong gender language within a weak agreement is not enough; the planet needs commitments to halt climate change and support adaptation. True gender equality is not possible while homes are disappearing and disasters are increasing. Countries must commit!

4. Action beyond COP21 is imperative:

- First and foremost, do not stop the advocacy efforts after COP21!
 - Agreements on paper are worthless without sustained political will and advocates have a critical role to play;
 - 49 countries have made explicit reference to gender and the role of women in their intended nationally determined contributions (INDCs) but more needs to be done.
- National level gender and climate change strategies
 - Advocate for them where they do not yet exist;
 - Participate in their development, updating and operationalizing.
- Implementation
 - Reach out to the relevant ministries or get involved at local/municipal level;
 - Provide technical support to governments to ensure actions are participatory, inclusive and just;
 - Follow up with women’s groups and others working directly on climate change in your region;
 - Prepare and raise awareness of your own projects that demonstrate women’s innovative climate solutions.
- Hold governments to account for their commitments
 - Work with colleagues on accountability, follow-up and review.

Women and gender equality advocates are demanding a strong agreement in Paris from inside the negotiation halls. But we will not wait. Already, women are mobilizing and taking action in schools, neighborhoods and in the halls of parliament. Women are leading the way with innovative, socially and environmentally sound solutions to climate change.

For more information, and to stay updated, follow these groups – and any of their active members:

Women and Gender Constituency: womensgenderclimate.org

Global Gender and Climate Alliance: gender-climate.org

Women's Global Call for Climate Justice: womensclimatejustice.org

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This brief is number 9 in a set of Gender Climate Briefs.
See the full set here: CIFOR.org/gender-climate



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