



TAI POWER SEEFF

Policy that Supports Gender Equality

It's a fact: climate change affects women and men differently. This is important information for governments across the globe as they develop policies to reduce emissions (mitigate) and cope with (adapt to) the impacts of climate change. Policies that are gender-sensitive—in other words, that consider the particular needs and capacities of both women and men—are more likely to be effective.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in its 2007 Assessment Report confirmed that the impacts of climate change will vary depending on gender, age and class, with the poor most likely to suffer. Because of gender inequalities, women and girls are disproportionately vulnerable. Women are also the majority of the world's poor and are more often responsible for household food production, family health and nutrition, and management of natural

resources—sectors that are particularly sensitive to climate change.

But women are not simply victims. They are also agents of change and have unique knowledge and capabilities. Soliciting and encouraging their leadership to address climate change and inform policy is one way to ensure that a gender perspective is included; without this, climate policies could fail to be effective.

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Population Perspective: Supporting Human Rights

Advancing gender equality, eliminating violence against women and ensuring women's ability to control their fertility were acknowledged as cornerstones of population and development policies in the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action. As such, it remains an extremely relevant framework when considering climate change policies. Mitigation and adaptation measures should ensure that ICPD principles—including a human rights-based approach to reproductive health and rights rather than a focus on demographic targets—remain at the centre of climate change and population policies.

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Numerous international agreements and mechanisms address human rights, population issues, sustainable development, climate change and disaster planning. Together they offer a framework of rights and commitments that support the inclusion of gender concerns in national climate change policies and legislation. Designing and implementing policies in a complementary fashion increases their efficacy as well as their funding potential.

One key agreement, the Programme of Action from the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), highlights the potential connections among policy areas. Its explicit link between sustainable development and the rights of all people and communities has direct implications for climate change-related risks and paves the way for women's full participation in all aspects of action to tackle them.

National Policy Mechanisms

National governments use the international framework to craft their own climate change policy. Integration into existing development strategies, along with additional financial support, is the key to success. Adaptation, mitigation and disaster risk management with a gender perspective will combat poverty and injustice by addressing inequities, building resilience and lowering long-term development costs.¹ The following are four mechanisms for national action.

National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) are a vehicle for least developed countries (LDCs) to identify, prioritize and fund their most immediate climate change adaptation needs through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Guidelines state that NAPAs should be participatory and involve both women and men at the grassroots level, recognizing that some climate change impacts are gender-specific. In practice, the integration of gender and reproductive

Women, Migration and Climate Change

The scope of climate-related migration is not clear, but it's plain that women feel both positive and negative effects. Gender equality can increase, for example, and women who migrate often become more independent socially and financially. While women at home may need to rely on remittances from males, they may also experience increased autonomy in directing the household.

But equality does not always improve. Migrant women may have a higher risk of sexual exploitation and labour discrimination, or they may experience increased isolation due to cultural dependence on men. Women's burden at home may also increase.² For example, as a result of soil erosion in the Tambacounda region of Senegal, 90 per cent of men have migrated at least once, leaving many women and children to rehabilitate the land and produce food with fewer economic and human resources.³

To date, no policy adequately addresses the issue. If migration patterns on a local, regional and national level are examined, the growing numbers are likely to show a need for policy to do such things as promote rural economic development,⁴ facilitate movement,⁵ engage in proactive urban planning and address needs of both locals and migrants.⁶



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health issues into NAPAs has been weak (see *Climate Change Connections: Making NAPAs Work for Women*).

The Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) process, designed to be country-driven and participatory, makes countries

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International Government Commitments

Women's Rights, Human Rights

United Nations Charter (1945)

The United Nations Charter was the first global treaty that called for equality between women and men.⁷

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights strengthens the Charter's call for equality between women and men.

Articles applicable to women's ability to adapt to climate change include the right to own property, consensual marriage, freedom of movement and equal protection before the law.⁸

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (1966)

Article 7 calls for fair wages, equal compensation and good work conditions for all, especially women,⁹ principles that should underlie all climate change policies for technology transfer and capacity building.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (1966)

The ICCPR "ensures the equal right of women and men to the enjoyment of civil and political rights set forth by the covenant".¹⁰

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1979)

Signatory governments to CEDAW—also known as the first international bill of women's rights—agree to take action to promote and protect the rights of women and to include the principle of equality in legislation and ensure it is operationalized.¹¹

CEDAW has direct implications for climate change, obliging parties to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure that they participate in and benefit from rural development and are involved in all levels of development planning.¹² The text also links to population issues, affirming women's maternal and reproductive rights, which enhance women's decision-making power and affirm women's rights to equal health care and to participate fully in family, work and public life.¹³

World Conference On Human Rights, Vienna (1993)

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action reaffirm and strengthen human rights

around the globe, including the right to development.¹⁴

Governments and regional and international organizations are urged to facilitate women's access to decision-making processes; monitoring bodies are urged to use gender-specific data and include the status and the human rights of women in their deliberations and findings.¹⁴ Both are vital for responsive climate change policies that recognize women as agents of change.

International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), Cairo (1994)

The ICPD stands out as a pivotal moment in the history of rights-based development, asserting that individual and human rights are the centre of population and development concerns. It highlighted the linkages between the cornerstones of women's empowerment—reproductive health and rights—and other aspects of development. Conference participants agreed to a 20-year Programme of Action that focuses on people's reproductive needs, particularly women's, rather than demographic targets.¹⁵

The ICPD highlights that the health needs of women, men and children must be met and that women have the right to family planning and reproductive health services that can impact sustainable development and poverty (and thus potentially respond to climate change). The Programme of Action encourages governments to address women's lack of access to land, education, health services and reproductive rights; enhance rural development; increase the capacity of local governments to manage urban development; and "give migrants, especially females, greater access to work, credit, basic education, health services, child-care centres and vocational training".¹⁶

UN Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing (1995)

The conference resulted in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), in which governments and the UN agreed to promote mainstreaming a gender perspective in policies and programmes at all levels—local, national and international—and in all developments efforts.¹⁷

The Beijing Declaration¹⁸ addresses population issues and land and credit policies and makes an explicit link to sustainable development. In the BPfA, Strategic Objectives K and C respectively

address women and the environment and resources for and access to health care for women, including initiatives to address sexual and reproductive health.¹⁹

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000)

The Resolution and follow-up statements on women, peace and security call for equal and full participation of women in the promotion of sustainable peace and security and for the incorporation of a gender perspective in peacekeeping operations.²⁰

Climate change is likely to increase conflicts throughout the world.²¹ As women are major stakeholders in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, capacity-building and strategic inclusion of women in related activities is needed to incorporate a gender perspective.

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) (2005 and 2008)

The CSW meets annually to follow up on implementation of the BPfA, to ensure the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into UN work and to identify relevant emerging issues and trends.

Its 49th session in 2005 is known as *Beijing + 10*, and the resultant Declaration reaffirmed the BPfA, calling for all actors to intensify their efforts to implement the Millennium Declaration and fulfil obligations under CEDAW.²²

Resolution 49/8, Economic Advancement for Women, urges States to implement policies to recognize non-market labour, allow parents to choose family size and spacing, encourage men to share household duties and ensure women have a right to social security and other entitlements; recognize the contributions of migrant women and reduce the cost of remittances; and enhance the income-generating power of rural women and improve security of land tenure and property ownership for resource mobilization and environmental management.²³

The CSW's 52nd session in 2008 selected "Gender perspectives on climate change" as its key emerging issue.

The session's report, in the agreed conclusions on Financing Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (21(jj)), urges governments, agencies and financial institutions to: "Integrate a gender perspective in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and reporting of national environmental policies, strengthen

^A "The right to development should be fulfilled so as to meet equitably the developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations." Vienna Declaration, Section I, Paragraph 11.

mechanisms and provide **adequate resources** to ensure women's full and equal participation in **decision-making** at all levels on environmental issues, in particular on strategies related to **climate change** and the lives of women and girls."²⁴

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007)

This non-binding statement recognizes indigenous rights to self-determination, education, institutions and political and economic development as well as the right to participate in the life of the state.²⁵

By confirming the rights of indigenous peoples, the declaration strengthens a rights-based development agenda and encourages better understanding of traditional **land tenure** and the need to recognize its validity for **women** and other vulnerable groups in the face of climate change and shifting **population dynamics**. In the development of new **climate change** mitigation mechanisms such as REDD,^B reinforcement of indigenous rights is increasingly important.

UN Human Rights Council (2008/2009)

At its seventh session in March 2008 the UN Human Rights Council adopted by consensus Resolution 7/23 on Human Rights and Climate Change; as a result, the Office of the High Commissioner released a follow-up report in January 2009.

The report recognizes the need for more country-specific and **gender-disaggregated data** to effectively assess and address **gender-differentiated effects** of climate change. It states both that women have high exposure to climate-related risks exacerbated by unequal rights, and that women's empowerment and the reduction of discriminatory practices has been crucial to successful community **adaptation and coping capacity**.²⁶

Climate Change, Sustainable Development and Disaster Planning

Earth Summit, Rio (1992)

Officially known as the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), the Earth Summit led to several historic outcomes related to sustainable development.

Agenda 21, the outcome document of the Summit, is a blueprint for sustainable development and among the first UN conference documents to systematically refer to women's positions and roles.

Agenda 21 builds on and recognizes previous plans and conventions ^C that advocate for **gender equality** in areas such as **land ownership, resource stewardship, education and employment**.²⁷ It is to be achieved through actions that recognize **women's** critical economic, social and environmental contributions to environmental management and **sustainable development**.²⁸ It recognizes the synergy between **demographic dynamics** and sustainability,²⁹ the chapter on women calls on governments to eliminate all obstacles to women's full involvement in sustainable development and public life.³⁰

The *UN Convention on Biodiversity (CBD)* was adopted in 1992 for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

The CBD has clear **sustainable development and climate change** implications, but it mentions women only in the preamble. ^D Targeting women's biodiversity knowledge is crucial because of the link to household-level food security.³¹

The *UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)*, adopted in 1992, encourages governments to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to address climate change. Through the related *Kyoto Protocol of 1997*, Parties commit to reduce emissions through 2012.

As of 2009, **neither the agreements nor the associated mechanisms**, such as the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM), **address the gendered aspects of climate change** or incorporate gender equality.

The *UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)*, adopted in 1994, is implemented through participatory national action programmes to address ecosystem-specific needs.³²

The UNCCD recognizes the role of **women** in rural livelihoods and the importance of local **women's knowledge** in addressing issues such as **climate change**. The convention instructs national action programmes to "provide effective participation of **women and men**, particularly **resources users**, including farmers and pastoralists and their organizations."³³

Millennium Summit and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (2000)

The Summit resulted in the Millennium Declaration in which member States outlined a global partnership to address the world's most pressing development needs through the specific targets and timelines of the MDGs.

The Declaration aims "to promote **gender equality** and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly **sustainable**."³⁴ All eight MDGs are relevant to gender equality, **population dynamics and climate change** (see MDG box below).

Climate Change, the Millennium Development Goals and Women's Rights

Achievement of the eight MDGs by 2015 is in jeopardy. Climate change is reducing the likelihood of reaching a number of the Goals related to gender and sustainable development that are already at risk as a result of the deep and continued bias against women and girls.

Although the MDGs have been criticized by some women's rights advocates as "top-down", their concrete targets and timeline provide entry points to monitor the progress of both gender equality and women's empowerment. Also, with the Goals receiving international attention, active women's groups and civil society organizations have much better access to high-level officials and decision-making arenas than through previous agreements such as the BPFA.³⁵

The eight MDGs are: end poverty and hunger; universal education; gender equality; child health; maternal health; combat HIV/AIDS; environmental sustainability; and global partnership.

^B REDD= Reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation.

^C E.g., the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, CEDAW and conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

^D However, it recognizes women's knowledge, practices, and gender roles in food production in the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice. Source: WEDO. (2008). *Gender, Climate Change and Human Security: Lessons from Bangladesh, Ghana and Senegal*. New York: WEDO.

World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), Johannesburg (2002)

The WSSD reaffirmed and strengthened commitments to Agenda 21 and recognized the adverse effects of climate change.

Gendered analysis⁹ of climate change will be improved through the Summit's call for more effective and accountable institutions for women's equal access to and full participation in decision-making; for **mainstreaming** a gendered perspective by enacting resource management systems that support women and men; and for improving women's access to health care, education, **land and credit**.³⁶

Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) (2005)

Developed at the World Conference on Disaster Reduction, with a goal to substantially reduce disaster losses by 2015, this explicitly incorporates gendered aspects of disaster planning and response.

The HFA states that "a **gender perspective** should be integrated into all disaster risk **management** policies, plans and decision-making processes, including those related to risk assessment, early warning, information management, and education and training."³⁷ It also recognizes that **climate change**, climate variability and **demographic shifts** contribute to the vulnerability of both peoples and places.³⁸

United Nations: High Level Focus on Climate Change (2007)

High-level sessions increasingly recognize climate change as a global issue:

- The *UN General Assembly* held an informal thematic debate on Climate Change as a Global Challenge.
- In September, the Secretary-General convened a *High-Level Event on Climate Change*. On that occasion WEDO and the

Council of Women World Leaders organized a Roundtable on Gender and Climate Change with keynote speaker Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, UN Special Envoy on Climate Change.

- Consequently, the November *International Women Leaders Global Security Summit* "acknowledged that climate change poses significant security risks, particularly for women, and that women have to be included in decision-making at all levels."³⁹
- The Human Security Network, under the Hellenic Presidency for 2007–2008, concentrated on the impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations. See WEDO's *Gender, Climate Change and Human Security*⁴⁰ report.

The Need for Disaggregated Data

While a lack of data is sometimes used as an excuse not to implement gender-responsive climate policies, it is the gender-responsive policies that are likely to provide the necessary data.⁴¹ Gender differences are location- and culture-specific. Programmes and activities should include indicators and require data collection so that access to adaptation projects, funding and capacity building of women and men can be assessed.⁴² A broad range of relevant data, both quantitative (education, credit, income) and qualitative (women's household bargaining power, use of time)⁴³ is necessary to fully understand the need for and impact of policies and programmes.

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eligible for debt relief under the HIPC (Heavily Indebted Poor Countries) initiative and for lending from the World Bank and IMF.⁴⁴ But the PRS process has been criticized for lacking a clear institutional framework for civil society participation, which leads to the exclusion of women, indigenous groups and rural communities. Although it offers an opportunity to integrate climate change action

of "common but differentiated responsibilities" only communications from Annex I^e (developed) countries must indicate policies and measures in place;⁴⁸ this makes the communication a potential vehicle to showcase the integration of climate change with gender and population issues in these countries.

National **mitigation plans**^f to reduce emissions

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