



# CLOSING THE GAP ON GENDER AND CLIMATE POLICY

First-ever Gender Action Plan (GAP) adopted under UNFCCC



PHOTOS: RITZAU / SCANPIX

## WHY GENDER AND CLIMATE CHANGE?

**Climate Change Actions  
through a Gender Lens**

**GAP mainstreaming  
gender into UNFCCC  
negotiations**

**Nordic-backed gender-  
just projects putting  
GAP into action**

Climate change, caused by human activity, brings greater risk to all life on earth. Every year, rising average temperatures increase the probability of storms, floods and droughts becoming more severe, destroying homes, livelihoods and local economies, as well as displacing people. Women and children in rural areas bear much of the burden of these changes due to the impacts on their routine actions such as fetching water and wood or growing crops.

A study referred to by UN Women in 2018<sup>1</sup> shows climate change having a disproportionate impact on the safety of women and children, who are 14 times as likely as men to die during a climate related disaster. Since women are most affected, it is natural that women be able to participate in climate actions and have access to the right resources and technologies to facilitate adaptation and mitigation strategies. However, women in all countries are also actively creating solutions to tackle climate change and solving everyday issues that can have a big impact.

It is important that the unique experience and knowledge of women are taken into account at climate negotiations, thereby enhancing the probability of reaching viable solutions. The most effective global response to climate change policy must therefore be gender inclusive and gender sensitive.

<sup>1</sup> UNDP 2013. *Gender and Disaster Risk Reduction*. New York. (Referred to in: UN Women 2018: Turning promises into action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. p. 119)

## UNFCCC GENDER AGENDA

The adoption and entry into force of the Paris Agreement in November 2016 marked a significant step towards achieving this gender inclusiveness. Significantly, the Paris Agreement placed combating climate change into the context of achieving sustainable development while respecting and protecting human rights.

At the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in-session meetings in Bonn, in May 2017, recommendations for negotiations of the Paris Rule Book were made based on the need for governments to combine climate action with efforts to address other imbalances, and gender equality and the empowerment of women were high among these.<sup>2</sup>

Later in November 2017 at COP23, a Gender Action Plan (GAP) was adopted. This was hailed

as a welcome step to support the formal and holistic implementation of gender-related decisions and mandates from the UNFCCC process since its inception, including mainstreaming gender across the Paris Agreement.

## WOMEN AS AGENTS OF CHANGE

Clearly a lot of progress is being made in mainstreaming gender in climate negotiations, but more needs to be done. Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and founder of Climate Justice, suggests the gender aspects of climate change are still underestimated. Speaking in April 2017 at the European Parliament hearing on Women, Gender Equality and Climate Justice, Robinson said: *"Women are more affected by climate change because of their traditional roles in the community, but they are not victims, they are increasingly agents of change."*

<sup>2</sup> Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) 2017: Delivering on the Paris Promise: Combating Climate Change While Protecting Human Rights. - CIEL, IWGIA, RNF, CARE, WEDO, AIPP, ITUC.

## WHY WOMEN AT THE TABLE?

Issues related to climate change in women's lives



Choices made by women traditionally relate to feeding their families, running their homes and tending to agriculture, all of which can have considerable impact on green house emissions. This means women can play a vital role in mitigating and adapting to climate change and should therefore be afforded full and equal participation at the table in climate policy negotiations.

## SPOTLIGHT ON GENDER ACTION PLAN (GAP)

At COP 23 in November 2017, a first ever Gender Action Plan (GAP) was adopted, putting gender firmly on the agenda in the global climate negotiations.

The GAP aims to advance the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all UNFCCC negotiations; promote gender responsive climate policy; and to mainstream a gender perspective in all work of the Convention and under the Paris Agreement.

There are several priority areas within the plan covering the most important aspects of promoting gender equality, including for instance capacity-building, knowledge sharing, communication, gender balance, participation and women's leadership as well as monitoring and reporting. Each area has embedded activities, to drive the achievement of its objective, as well as implementation timelines for 2018 to 2019.

Over the last 20 years since COP negotiations began, a lot of gender decisions have been made and actions put forth. This plan now aims to take them forward and give them a coherent framework. For those involved in the negotiations this is seen as a strong positive.

Anna Axelsson of Diakonia Sweden, who was engaged in the negotiations leading up to GAP, sees this one inherent weakness in the plan, that the GAP is not binding.: *"In respecting each party's respective capabilities to implement the GAP, the COP is leaving the door open for countries to continue to side-line gender perspectives, based on lack of capacity, which ironically, is what the activities themselves aim to build."*

GAP is nevertheless being well-received, particularly for its underlying objective that gender be mainstreamed into all COP negotiations instead of staying an issue only dealt with in relation to adaptation and capacity building. In this way, GAP is well-positioned to influence how the Paris Rule Book is developed.

*"GAP is an incredibly important tool for furthering the work on gender under the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement," Axelsson asserts, "and I hope that all countries take this opportunity to look at their climate policies and intervention with a gender lens."*

**"The GAP aims to advance the full, equal and meaningful participation of women in all UNFCCC negotiations."**





## MIND THE GAP – EXAMPLES OF PRIORITIES IN ACTION

As set forth by the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan (GAP), the following two Nordic funded initiatives show GAP priorities in action as local governments work to accelerate gender responsive climate action. Both projects pay particular attention to elements of GAP priority area A Capacity building, knowledge sharing and communication; and B Gender balance, participation and women's leadership.

### PROJECT Rural Village Water Resources Management in Nepal

Water shortages in Nepal are worsening. Rainfall has become unpredictable in timing, distribution and intensity and can ruin crops already planted, or deplete or damage domestic and agricultural water sources. This has a particular impact on women, who are principally responsible for water collection.

Pamela White, Senior Manager, International Development Consulting at FCG International says: *"Some women spend virtually the whole day carrying water for the household or for livestock, one container at a time, up steep hillsides, from water sources perhaps one and a half hours away. This is exhausting and limits their time for productive or social activities."*

This project, jointly funded by the governments of Nepal and Finland, with additional funding from the EU, and implemented by FCG International, aims to provide some 600,000 people in the poorest areas of Nepal with clean drinking water and basic sanitation, while working to provide opportunities to advance their livelihoods, including renewable energy access.

Women and men are being taught technical and social fixes to adapt to climate change, including water technologies like solar or hydraulic ram pumps; improved water recharge of spring areas, for example through tree planting or digging water recharge pits; and using less water-demanding technologies and crops, such as drip irrigation technologies with water smart crops. It is mainly women who work in the construction of these schemes and they are reportedly satisfied with the results, giving them maximum use from their water.

[www.rvwrmp.org.np](http://www.rvwrmp.org.np)

→ *Men in Nepal are often away earning cash in India, so women are taught to do the work of installing water schemes – here shown carrying water pipes.* Source: FCG International Ltd.

### PROJECT Integrating Gender 'Upside' into Climate Change Adaptation

The Nordic Development Fund, financed by the Nordic Countries, is working with the Asian Development Bank to support this climate project in Cambodia, integrating gender considerations into climate change adaptation. The project has been designed specifically to empower women to take a lead in combating climate change by more actively participating in decision-making processes.

The women of Cambodia are severely affected by extreme weather events driven by climate change, but up until now, gender issues have not been adequately included in climate change adaptation planning and this project intends to address this imbalance.

The programme sets out, amongst others, to develop guidelines and knowledge to help integrate gender considerations into local climate change adaptation investments and pilot initiatives. One of the ways has been to strengthen coordination at the government level among Cambodia's Ministry of Women's Affairs and other line ministries focused on gender and climate change.

*"Gender is always taken into account in every one of our projects,"* affirms NDF's Deputy Managing Director Leena Klossner. *"And it's very much a positive, because by asking the right questions about gender, projects very often yield additional co-benefits, or what we call gender upside, which would otherwise have gone unrealised."*

[www.ndf.fi](http://www.ndf.fi)

