

YOUTH EXPERT GROUP MEETING
23 AUGUST 2023

PROGRESS OF THE WORLD'S WOMEN

CONCEPTUALIZING FEMINIST CLIMATE JUSTICE

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1. Overview

Climate change is the most pressing issue of our times, one that is set to become the dominant global context and threat to continued progress on gender equality and human rights. Due to women's unequal access to and dependence on natural resources, public services and infrastructure, they are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation. In combination with other crises, this can lead to rapid reversals in progress made in areas such as the elimination of extreme poverty and gender-based violence. At the same time, it is equally pressing to advance social justice as we transition economies away from fossil fuels towards greater environmental sustainability. Against this context, women, including Indigenous women and youth, are mobilizing to demand climate justice and for their voices to be heard and heeded in decision-making on climate policy.

This is why the next edition of *Progress of the World's Women*, UN-Women's longest standing flagship report, will focus on 'gender equality in a changing climate'. To ensure the report is collaborative and accessible, UN-Women convened an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) with women youth activists leading on feminist climate justice. These activists were brought together to gather feedback on the proposed UN-Women framework for the report, to explore how the report could address climate issues that are relevant to youth leaders' respective groups or regions and to learn how the report can be made useful for youth leaders on the ground.

The workshop was opened by **Rosalind Helfand** (UN-Women) who began the EGM by welcoming the participants and informing them that their feedback was important for the UN-Women team to learn from their perspectives and inspire the climate work UN-Women does.

This introduction was followed by a presentation of *Progress of the World's Women* by **Laura Turquet** (UN-Women), remarks by youth activist **Joanita Babirye** (Girls for Climate Action) and plenary discussion among participants facilitated by **Loui Williams** (UN-Women). The workshop provided important substantive insights and facilitated a valuable exchange of perspectives and strategies for the UN-Women team to consider as they further develop the feminist climate justice framework and reflect on the best ways to support grassroots activists. A full list of participants can be found in Annex b.

2. Session summaries and key takeaways

2.1 Presentation and response

Laura Turquet (UN-Women) opened the session with the presentation on the history of *Progress of the World's Women* and a summary of the proposed framework for feminist climate justice developed by the UN-Women team. Key points of the presentation included:

- The vision for feminist climate justice is of a world in which everyone can enjoy the full range of human rights, free from discrimination, and flourish on a planet that is healthy and sustainable.
- To achieve this, economic and social policies must be transformed away from the pursuit of growth at any cost and profits for the few. In this transformation, care comes to the front and centre, raising the question of how societies can collectively organize care for people and the planet.
- A "Four R" framework was introduced as a way to ensure that climate action responds to women's rights in transformative ways. This includes: 1) recognition of women's rights, labour and knowledge; 2) redistribution away from extractive, environmentally damaging economic activities, towards those that prioritize care for people and the planet; 3) representation of the voices of women and other

marginalized groups in environmental decision-making at all levels; and 4) reparations that recognize that the Global North bears the largest share of responsibility for historical emissions.

This presentation was followed by a response from youth activist **Joanita Babirye** (Girls for Climate Action) who provided feedback on the framework and further insights based on her work. Her comments emphasized the importance of women leaders at the local level and outlining mechanisms that can increase their agency in climate action. Key points included:

- The framework should provide more detail on establishing a feedback loop connecting national climate action with grassroots organizations and local women climate leaders in relation to the four Rs. This requires creating a vision for civil society engagement, with careful consideration of the tools needed for policy localization and ensuring women's voices are heard.
- There could be more development of the bottom-up representation element of the framework, with more emphasis on the systems at the local level that are holding women back from taking leadership in climate action and policy implementation. The report should highlight tools to address these issues, including ones that will support access to climate finance for women in grassroots organizations.
- The report advocates for women in STEM and green technology solutions but needs to reflect more about how many young women and girls in local and rural communities are forced to discontinue their education or are unable to access relevant courses. These institutional educational barriers are important for the report to address.
- The report was missing discussion of humanitarian relief, particularly with regards to sexual and reproductive health and rights. Many countries are facing multiple crises with women experiencing several intersecting vulnerabilities in addition to climate threats.
- There should be additional discussion about carbon markets and credits in the report, because this is crucially important in local communities where women are not landowners. Men often claim women's land for income opportunities, taking women's already limited resources away from them. The report should question whether these credits benefit women and point to other mechanisms to improve women's agency and ownership over land.

2.2 Plenary discussion

The UN-Women presentation and Joanita's response were followed by a plenary discussion focused on a set of key guiding questions:

1. What are the pros and cons of the framing of 'feminist climate justice' that was presented, and do you have any suggestions on how to improve it?
2. What do you see to be the most important messages that this UN-Women report should convey, based on your experience?
3. What do you think are the most meaningful ways to incorporate intersectional approaches in written reports, and go beyond tokenistic reference to 'marginalised groups of women and girls'?
4. From your own experience, how do you think we can use this report to demand and ensure accountability for feminist climate justice? Can you share any practical examples from your communities/regions?
5. What activities would help increase our outreach in your communities/regions?

Several key themes emerged for the UN-Women team gathered from plenary discussion, focused on topics such as the importance of bold language, women's access to climate finance and capacity building for local activists. Key takeaways are listed below, grouped by topic:

On the Four R's framework:

- The discussion of redistribution from the Global North to the Global South could be more nuanced, considering that some governments in the Global South may limit access to climate finance to local communities, and that there are marginalized local and Indigenous communities within the Global North who experience significant loss and damage too.
- Enabling self-determination and independence for women in local communities is a vital aspect of resource redistribution, requiring grassroots capacity building. This involves generating mechanisms that can inform local and Indigenous women leaders about climate finance opportunities, providing support in developing funding applications to improve their chances of success and reforming overly bureaucratic application processes. Promoting women's financial autonomy at the household level is also crucial to prevent the appropriation of their money and assets by men. Access to savings accounts, education, and support groups can significantly promote women's personal financial autonomy.
- In the recognition pillar, the report needs to go beyond respecting forms of local and Indigenous climate knowledge and needs to commit to protecting and preserving Indigenous women's knowledge.
- The reparations pillar needs to have strong acknowledgement of the ways that many injustices are ongoing, not just in the past.

Specific language used in the report:

- The report uses bold feminist language which supports activist work on the ground and is strong compared to other UN documents. However, it relies too much on gender binaries, for example the use of "sex-disaggregated data," without sufficient recognition that biological sex does not define gender.
- The report could have greater emphasis on intersectional feminism, recognising that white western feminism has been more prevalent within international negotiations and development debates. The report should specify that a feminist approach must also be anti-racist and have class consciousness.
- Other recommendations were made related to the language of the report. They suggested to include the term "equity" (rather than "equality") and to incorporate the term "anti-patriarchal" to support activists in local contexts where "feminism" can be seen as too radical.

Missing topics to be integrated into the report:

- The activists made some suggestions to add additional areas of emphasis throughout the report, such as wildlife conservation, a peace-pillar for women facing climate change in conflict-affected areas, accountability and women-led adaptation solutions.
- Youth leaders also called for more examples and references from African countries in the report, pointing out that many of the current references are specific to South America.
- Harmful and discriminatory local practices should be recognized as a barrier preventing women from experiencing equality in their communities. Norms need to be transformed through consultations with local leaders to ensure gender equality solutions can have a meaningful local impact.

How the report can meaningfully engage with youth activism:

- Youth activism needs to be taken seriously and not over-simplified. Many youth activists are leading climate activism on the ground and contributing to data and research that does not get enough attention or respect.
- The report, its communications and outreach could support local activism by focusing on local solutions, led by local women, told in a narrative format. Narratives can show gaps, barriers and solutions in relatable ways that can seem less radical to the general public.
- The report could further explore what the concept “*buen vivir* [good living]” means within Indigenous worldviews and explore what this looks like in other contexts.

3. Concluding remarks and reflections

In closing the meeting, the UN-Women team thanked the participants for their contributions and laid out the next steps in the process, which included:

- A follow up survey with youth participants to gather additional feedback.
- The preparation of a meeting report to summarize the discussions at the EGM (this document).
- The incorporation of feedback and insights from the EGM into the *Progress of the World's Women* framework for feminist climate justice, which was then published and presented at COP 28, before being expanded in the full report.

Following the meeting, multiple participants shared positive feedback through the follow up survey, stating that they found the EGM useful for their activism and showed them the importance of collective work and different perspectives. They appreciated that the EGM sought out youth inputs and compensated them for their time and expertise, and they looked forward to future opportunities for collaboration.

Annex

a. Agenda

12:00–12:05	Welcome Opening remarks by Rosalind Helfand
12:05–12:20	Introducing <i>Progress of the World's Women</i> Presentation of draft concept note by Laura Turquet
12:20–12:30	Participant response Response by Joanita Babirye
12:30–1:45	Open discussion
1:45–2:00	Final comments and wrap up

b. List of participants

Brianna Howell, UN-Women

Camila de Moura, Fridays for Future MAPA / Engajamundo

Carla Kraft, UN-Women

Constanza Tabbush, UN-Women

Farzana Faruk Jhumu, Fridays for Future MAPA

Fazeela Mubarak, Wild Heart Kenya

Joanita Babirye, Girls for Climate Action

Kehkashan Basu, Green Hope Foundation

Laura Turquet, UN-Women

Loui Williams, UN-Women

Mana Omar, Spring of the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (SASAL)

Maria Reyes, Fridays for Future MAPA

Nohora Alejandra Quiguntar, Tejiendo Pensamiento

Rosalind Helfand, UN-Women

Venge Nyirongo, UN-Women