



Human-induced climate change is having a profound impact on the natural ecosystems on which all life depends, increasing extreme weather events, natural disasters and ocean acidification, as well as reducing crop and forest yields. Globally, women are heavily engaged in agriculture, foraging and fetching water and play an important role in small-scale fisheries and seafood marketing—livelihoods that are facing disruption. Gender inequalities are also amplified in the aftermath of climate change induced natural disasters. Despite this, women’s participation and leadership across different areas of climate-related decision-making remains far from equitable.

### Facts and figures

- Globally, average concentrations of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere reached a new high of 405.5 parts per million (ppm) in 2017.<sup>1</sup>
- The accelerated pace of sea level rise<sup>2</sup> poses a threat to about 40 per cent of the world’s population that lives within 100 km (60 miles) of the coast.<sup>3</sup>
- Projections indicate that by 2050, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa will face significant reductions in crop production due to climate change, resulting in higher food prices and food insecurity.<sup>4</sup>
- Shrinking agricultural yields are likely to affect food distribution within households, with potentially gender-unequal nutritional outcomes<sup>5</sup> and increase the time needed to produce, process and prepare food, an activity to which women already contribute 60 to 70 per cent<sup>6</sup> of their total labour time.<sup>7</sup>
- To limit global warming to 2°C, countries need to triple the level of commitments made under the Paris Agreement. To limit temperature rise to 1.5°C, the level of ambition needs to increase fivefold.<sup>8</sup>
- Female representation in United Nations climate negotiations increased from 29 per cent in 2013 to 37 per cent in 2018.<sup>9</sup>
- Global climate finance flows have increased and in 2014, 31 per cent of the total bilateral ODA provided by OECD-DAC members to address climate change targeted gender equality.<sup>10</sup>

### Policy messages

#### **1. Existing inequalities between women and men are exacerbated by climate change impacts.**

Climate change disproportionately impacts women and girls, especially in developing and least developed countries, and small island developing countries. Throughout the developing world, women’s and girls’ livelihoods rely heavily on natural resources that are already being compromised by climate impacts, including a lack of clean and accessible water, shrinking crop and forest yields and increasing ocean acidification. Gender inequalities in terms of access to finance and other productive assets, technology, knowledge and mobility, among others, constrain women’s and girls’ ability to respond to climate change. Gender inequalities are also amplified in the aftermath of natural disasters and extreme weather events that are becoming more common worldwide as a result of climate change, placing women and girls at increased risk of negative health impacts and loss of livelihoods and property.

#### **2. Advancing gender equality is critical to address global warming and achieve the SDGs.**

The IPCC *Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C* reaffirms that social justice and equity must be core aspects of climate-resilient development pathways. Such pathways would be difficult to achieve without redistributive measures to overcome path dependencies, uneven power structures, and entrenched social inequalities. Gender power relations mediate women’s and girls’ access to and control over resources, including finance, technology and land, and constrain their decision-making power. Addressing these

inequalities is a prerequisite for ensuring that climate policies and programmes are gender-responsive, effective and sustainable. Given the cross-cutting nature of gender equality, gender-responsive climate approaches should be employed across all sectors that are vital for increasing climate adaptive capacity, including agriculture, water, energy, STEM education, sustainable consumption and production.

### **3. Women's participation and leadership in climate-related decision-making processes must be supported at all levels.**

Despite their limited access to resources, women and girls have proven to be particularly effective agents of change in spearheading sustainable development solutions at the household and community level. Yet, their full and equal participation and leadership is still missing from climate-related policy- and decision-making processes at all levels, from local resource management to intergovernmental climate negotiations. Women's presence in these diverse spaces is a critical first step for ensuring they are active and meaningful contributors and decision-makers in shaping climate approaches. It is also important that diverse groups of women are able to bring their perspectives and knowledge into decision-making processes, especially women from communities whose livelihoods are particularly at risk.

### **4. Gender-responsive climate approaches need timely and sex-disaggregated data.**

The ability to effectively address the differentiated impacts of climate change is undermined by a lack of timely and sex-disaggregated data. Currently, there are no established methodologies or standards for tracking progress on the only gender-specific indicator under SDG 13 (13.b). Existing data is patchy and ad-hoc, covering experiences of communities or groups at a given time or for a given project. Aggregated data is hardly available and data points often not comparable. Comprehensive information on the gender-specific ways in which climate change affects rural communities and indigenous peoples is even more difficult to come by. To establish baselines and monitor progress for women and girls, sex-disaggregated data and gender impact analyses need to be integrated into reporting requirements on the implementation of climate change and disaster risk reduction policies and used to inform, monitor and evaluate policies and programmes.

---

<sup>1</sup> World Meteorological Organization, 2018. Greenhouse Gas Bulletin, No. 14. 22 November 2018.

<sup>2</sup> NOAA, 2018. Climate Change: Global Sea Level.

<sup>3</sup> The Ocean Conference. 2017. Factsheet: People and Oceans.

<sup>4</sup> Nelson, G. C., M. W. Rosegrant, J. Koo, R. Robertson et al., 2009. *Climate Change: Impact on Agriculture and Costs of Production*. Washington, DC: IFPRI (International Food Policy Research Institute).

<sup>5</sup> UN Women, 2018. *Turning promises into action: Gender equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. New York.

<sup>6</sup> Doss, C. R., 2010. 'If Women Hold Up Half the Sky, How Much of the World's Food Do They Produce?' Background paper for *The State of Food and Agriculture 2010–11*. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Rome.

<sup>7</sup> UN Women, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> UN Environment, 2018. *Emissions Gap Report 2018*.

<sup>9</sup> UNFCCC, 2018. *Report by the Secretariat: Gender Composition*.

<sup>10</sup> OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality, 2016. *Making Climate Finance Work for Women*.