2.1 GLOBAL POLICY LANDSCAPE:
A supporting framework for gender-responsive action on climate change

By Eleanor Blomstrom and Bridget Burns (WEDO)
# CHAPTER CONTENT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key messages</strong></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.1.0 Introduction</strong></td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Engendering climate policy: An ongoing process</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.1.1 A framework for supporting gender equality and women's human rights and empowerment in climate change response</strong></td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Human rights</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sustainable development</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.1.2 Building political momentum in the new millennium: A growing web of gender and climate change linkages</strong></td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Development goals</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Disaster risk reduction</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Indigenous rights</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.1.3 Gender in the UNFCCC: From gender 'blind,' to gender balance—and beyond</strong></td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2.1.4 Moving forward</strong></td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>References</strong></td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACRONYMS</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADP</td>
<td>Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APWLD</td>
<td>Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development</td>
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<td>BAP</td>
<td>Bali Action Plan</td>
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<td>BPFA</td>
<td>Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBD</td>
<td>UN Convention on Biological Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COP</td>
<td>Conference of the Parties</td>
</tr>
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<td>CSW</td>
<td>Commission on the Status of Women</td>
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<td>Disaster Risk Reduction</td>
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<td>GCF</td>
<td>Green Climate Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>GGCA</td>
<td>Global Gender and Climate Alliance</td>
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<td>GHG</td>
<td>Greenhouse gas</td>
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<td>HFA</td>
<td>Hyogo Framework for Action</td>
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<td>ICCPR</td>
<td>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights</td>
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<td>ICESCR</td>
<td>International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights</td>
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<td>ICPD</td>
<td>International Conference on Population and Development</td>
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<td>INDC</td>
<td>Intended Nationally Determined Contributions</td>
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<td>International Union for Conservation of Nature</td>
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<td>KP</td>
<td>Kyoto Protocol</td>
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<td>LDCs</td>
<td>Least Developed Countries</td>
</tr>
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<td>LWPG</td>
<td>Lima Work Programme on Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAPs</td>
<td>National Adaptation Plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAPAs</td>
<td>National Adaptation Programmes of Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAMA</td>
<td>Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPEC</td>
<td>Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBI</td>
<td>Subsidiary Bodies on Implementation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBSTA</td>
<td>Scientific and Technological Advice</td>
</tr>
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<td>SDGs</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goals</td>
</tr>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNCCD</td>
<td>UN Convention to Combat Desertification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCED</td>
<td>United Nations Conference on Environment and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDRIP</td>
<td>United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNFCCC</td>
<td>United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDF</td>
<td>Women Delegates Fund</td>
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<td>WEDO</td>
<td>Women’s Environment and Development Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WGC</td>
<td>Women and Gender Constituency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Over the last few decades, a strong international policy framework spanning human rights, gender equality, environmental conservation and sustainable development has recognised the links between gender equality and climate change.

While the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) itself was unique in not integrating any social or gender concerns from the outset, great strides have been made by Parties recently to agree on decisions that include mandates on key gender issues. Such mandates include promoting women’s participation and leadership, gender mainstreaming of the Green Climate Fund (GCF), and formulating national adaptation plans with gender-sensitive approaches, among others.

Despite progress in achieving gender mandates in climate change decision-making at a global level, gaps remain both in advancing more substantive understanding of gender and climate dynamics in policymaking and in ensuring that decisions are acted on, such as through guidance under UNFCCC programmes.

Women’s participation in global decision-making on climate change has increased in recent years—due in large part to awareness raising and to subsequent mandates on this topic—but has stagnated overall, with women comprising just over a third of delegates.

The complexity of global challenges and global policy-making demands strategic and focused attention across sectors, financial mechanisms and at all levels of society. Advancing gender equality can leverage progress on multiple fronts, delivering co-benefits for climate change.
2.1.0 Introduction

*International norms and policies specifically related to gender and climate change have been slow to emerge. However they are increasingly surfacing, carving out space in the nexus between longstanding regimes — the environmental regime and the human rights regime. Principles expressed in the international agreements of these two arenas currently provide the foundation, and in some cases specific language, from which principles and policies have been drawn to address the gender dimensions of climate change.*

– Gender and Climate Change: An Introduction¹

Between 2009 and 2015, the UNFCCC—the major international treaty and governing sphere for climate change policy and programming—has witnessed a paradigm shift in recognising social and gender considerations in its policies and practices. The complex causes and impacts alike of climate change require multifaceted solutions that go beyond technical measurements of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions or concentrations, to incorporate and proactively address interlinked economic, environmental, and socio-cultural dimensions, including in particular gender equality issues. This chapter explores the international policy framework relevant to climate change and gender, key moments in its evolution, and next steps toward ensuring gender-responsive implementation.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

While a number of multilateral environmental agreements and other international policy frameworks are relevant to combatting and coping with climate change, the UNFCCC was developed to specifically address the urgent issue of climate change, with the ultimate objective to stabilise GHG concentrations “at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.”² While Parties ratify it, thereby entering it into force or validating it, the treaty provides only a legal framework for further action; thus, given the nature of the climate change challenge and need for decisive action, the international community established the complementary Kyoto Protocol (KP) that legally binds signatory developed countries, who are primarily responsible for GHG emissions, to reduce those emissions. The first commitment period of the KP was 2008-2012, and the second is 2013-2020. In addition to the KP, the UNFCCC has Subsidiary Bodies on Implementation (SBI) and on Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), as well as a Bureau, a Secretariat, and other related bodies, to support and guide comprehensive action on climate change.

At the time of this publication, the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP) established under the UNFCCC in 2012 is working to develop a protocol—another legal instrument or an agreed outcome with legal force under the Convention—applicable to all Parties, no later than 2015 at the Twenty-first Conference of the Parties (COP21) in Paris. If, and when, this new
agreement is reached, it is expected that it would begin implementation in 2020. With key agreements on gender-responsive action on climate change having recently come to fruition, the current and burgeoning period of decision-making, programming, and action on climate change is critical for the long-term wellbeing, lives, and livelihoods of women and men all over the world.

Engendering climate policy: An ongoing process

The global community has come a long way in identifying and making strides to address climate change since 1992, when the UNFCCC was formulated and agreed. The UNFCCC was originally a technocratic, top-down policy space focused solely on mitigation, but the Parties and stakeholders to the UNFCCC have advanced a much more comprehensive decision-making arena, one that is focused in all its complexity in addressing the dynamic and interlinked aspects of climate change, from adaptation to mitigation, from technology to education and capacity building, and to financing solutions. The agreements under the UNFCCC in recent years have also recognised and begun to substantively address gender equality concerns. Having been the only one of the three ‘sister’ Rio Conventions (the other two being the Conventions on Biological Diversity (CBD) and on Combatting Desertification (UNCCD)) without mandates on women’s rights and gender equality from the outset, these recent gender-sensitive decisions mark significant progress. As of mid-2015, the UNFCCC has over 50 mandates on gender across multiple decisions and programmes. These include three decisions specifically related to enhancing gender balance and gender equality under the Convention, most notably through the 2014 launch of the Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG).

In 2001, at COP7 in Marrakesh, Parties to the UNFCCC agreed upon the first text on gender equality and women’s participation concerns, adopting a decision on gender balance and women’s participation, alongside a guiding mandate that National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) be guided by gender equality. Implementation of these, however, was slow at best. It took another nine years of awareness raising, capacity building, and advocacy on gender and climate interlinkages before there was more progress: in 2010, the Parties stated that gender equality and women’s participation are necessary for effective action on all aspects of climate change. Since then, UNFCCC Parties, supported by civil society organisations and United Nations (UN) agencies, have included gender equality issues in adopted decisions on nearly every UNFCCC thematic area, including the 2012 Decision 23/CP.18 on gender balance and women’s participation, as well as the 2014 Decision 18/CP.20, launching the two-year LWPG.
In 2007, at the 13th COP to the UNFCCC in Bali, four organizations with a long track record of collaborating and driving action on gender and environment concerns came together to advance progress integrating gender equality issues comprehensively into the climate change debate. The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the United Nations Development Programme and Environment Programme (UNDP and UNEP, respectively), and the Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), a women’s global advocacy organization, officially launched the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA) to ensure that climate change decision making, policies and programmes, at all levels, became gender-responsive. Uniquely merging inter-governmental organisations, including more than a dozen UN organisations, with non-governmental organisation perspectives and capacities, GGCA now has nearly 100 members. GGCA represents all regions of the world, and has focused intensively since its start on international policymaking to build awareness and capacity for gender-responsive decisions and action. In collaboration with a wide range of governments and civil society organisations — especially those allied under the Women and Gender Constituency of the UNFCCC (see below) — GGCA founders and members have had a strong voice in UNFCCC spaces and have contributed technical support to the achievement of decisions related to gender. The GGCA has benefitted from the steadfast financial support and technical partnership of the Government of Finland since 2008, with other partners supporting specific projects over the years, as well.

The driving factors of this policy evolution from 1992 to 2015 are myriad and interlinked. Factors include the influence of the evolving human rights framework and sustainable development framework over this same period, and of the efforts of global, national, and regional advocates and other champions across civil society, governments, UN, and research institutions to ensure that climate policy is able to address human rights, and development challenges, along with its core mandate of mitigation. The evolution is also influenced by factors such as the increasingly obvious impacts of a changing climate on communities around the world; the interlinked political, environmental and economic global crises of recent years; the growing understanding that gender equality is integral to development and wellbeing of all people, of all ages, in all communities; and also the rising production of and attention to research that links issues of inequality, gender, rights, poverty, economy, and the environment.

Another critical aspect in evolving policy is the role of women’s direct participation and women’s leadership in international policy generally, but also specifically
within the UNFCCC where women, in 2014, accounted for around 35% of all national Party delegates and around 26% of the Heads of Delegations. The GGCA, through the Women Delegates Fund (WDF) has been a key actor in supporting both participation and leadership, as well as keeping a record of statistics (Box 2).

It is crucial to enshrine gender equality as a key principle for all climate policies and actions. Progress toward that end at the UNFCCC builds on the foundational international treaties, conventions, declarations, and decisions that pushed the world towards a more holistic understanding of the interlinked challenges of the 21st century, on the varied technical tools and capacity building to shape policies and programmes, as well as on mechanisms to hold governments and other key stakeholders accountable to their commitments. The following sections explore this dynamic further.

Box 2: Enhancing women’s participation and leadership at the UNFCCC: The Women Delegates Fund (WDF)

At the UNFCCC, where all key international decisions on climate change are made, women make up just over one-third of delegates. Research shows that gender imbalances differ across countries and regions. Women’s participation in Eastern and Western Europe, for example, is around 46%, while it is around 30% in Africa and the Asia-Pacific region. These differences can also be seen when looking at participation by UNFCCC negotiating blocks, with countries from the African Group, Least Developed Countries (LDCs), and Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) having less representation of women on national delegations.

Recognising a need to support the equitable participation and leadership of women in the UN climate negotiations, particularly from countries most affected by climate change, in 2009, the Government of Finland partnered with WEDO under the auspices of GGCA to launch the WDF. The WDF works to enhance women’s participation on national delegation to the climate negotiations in three key ways: first, by providing travel support; second, by offering opportunities for capacity building and networking; and third, via outreach and advocacy. Recently, the Governments of Iceland and the Netherlands have also contributed to the WDF.

First and foremost, the WDF works to address a gap in women’s participation, particularly focusing support toward LDCs that have already limited capacity and resources to attend and effectively participate in the climate negotiations. In tandem with travel resources, the WDF prioritises building leadership skills through knowledge and capacity building on
technical issues related to the negotiations, media, and communications. Since 2012, the WDF has worked to develop comprehensive and sustained negotiation skills modules, including the creation of a Night School during key preparatory and negotiating meetings. As of September 2015, in over six and a half years, the WDF has supported 191 trips for over 50 women across 40 countries to attend 22 sessions of the UNFCCC. During these sessions, eight Night Schools have been held and a further 250 women have been trained in technical language and negotiations skills.

A final and critical element of the WDF is advocacy, in particular assisting organisations and delegates to highlight the importance of innovative strategies to enhance women’s leadership, and to provide a platform for wider discussion on women’s leadership in decision-making, as well as to promote policy change at international and national levels.

There is progress to note: in the last 7 years, there has been a steady increase in women’s participation in the process, both in overall participation and at the highest levels of decision-making. The numbers of total women delegates has increased from 31% to 35% in this time frame, and there are more women as Heads of Delegation, a rise of 16% to 26%. This progress can be attributed to various factors: the adoption of decisions promoting women’s participation in climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts at the UNFCCC, the implementation of gender quotas and the introduction of climate change and gender plans at the national level, as well as the introduction of initiatives by civil society to enhance women’s leadership in climate change negotiations and in broader awareness raising efforts.
2.1.1 A framework for supporting gender equality and women’s human rights and empowerment in climate change response

As indicated above, over the last decades, a policy framework has evolved that intricately links commitments to realising human rights, advancing gender equality, evolving sustainable development, and effectively mitigating and adapting to climate change.

**Human rights**

The International Bill of Rights, the cornerstone of which are the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the 1966 Covenants on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). It provides the foundation for promoting and protecting human rights for all people. These covenants are considered binding (Box 3), and are broadly supported by UN Member States with 167 parties and 74 signatories to ICCPR and 160 parties and 70 signatories to ICESCR. Each element of these covenants reiterates that “recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world” and declares that people are entitled to human rights without distinction of any kind, including being based on “race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.” As a whole, this entails both a moral and a legal obligation to ensure equality and non-discrimination.

These agreements also have components applicable to gender and climate change:

- *United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)* - Articles applicable to women’s ability

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II. Preambles of all and UDHR Article 2, ICCPR Article 26, ICESCR Part II Article 2
to adapt to climate change include the right to own property, consensual marriage, freedom of movement, and equal protection before the law,

- *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (1966)* - Article 7 calls to ensure fair wages, equal compensation and good work conditions for all, especially women, which are principles that should underlie all climate change policies for technology transfer and capacity building, and

- *The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) (1966)* “ensures the equal right of women and men to the enjoyment of civil and political rights set forth by the covenant.”

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**Box 3: Binding vs non-binding agreements and signatories vs parties**

A range of commitments are made at international level to indicate global priorities. Some are ‘harder’ laws than others:

‘**Hard law’ or binding agreements** (legally binding agreements made by/between countries) include:

- Treaties (also known as conventions, covenants or international agreements),
- United Nations Security Council Resolutions, and
- Customary International Law.

‘**Soft law’ or non-binding agreements** (non-legally binding agreements on principles and codes of conduct, which are key to defining global priorities and standards for action) include:

- Most Resolutions and Declarations of the UN General Assembly,
- Elements such as statements, principles, codes of conduct, codes of practice etc. often found as part of framework treaties,
- Action plans (for example, Agenda 21, Beijing Platform for Action),
- Other non-treaty obligations.

**Signatory vs party**

A Signatory to a treaty is a State that is politically in support of the treaty, and its signature implies that support. A signature does not imply that the treaty has entered into force for that country. For example, the President of the United States of America (USA) can sign a global treaty, but then the USA Congress must ratify it to enter it into force.

A Party to a treaty has given its explicit consent to be bound by the agreements of that treaty.
In addition to these agreements, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is fundamental to advancing gender equality and regarded as the first international bill of women’s rights. Signatory governments are bound to take action to promote and protect the rights of women. Parties also agree to include the principle of equality in legislation and ensure it is operationalised.iii

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, on a basis of equality of men and women, that they participate in and benefit from rural development” and participate in all levels of development planning. It further addresses issues of resources, credit, family planning, education, and the right to work, to participate in forming and implementing government policies and to represent the country at international level—all of which impact on a woman’s capacity to adapt to impacts of climate change and to participate in planning and implementation to address climate change.

Box 4: CEDAW—the international bill of women’s rights

- **Article 1** Defines the term “discrimination against women” for the purposes of the Convention
- **Article 2** Governments shall take concrete steps to eliminate discrimination against women
- **Article 3** Governments shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that women can enjoy basic human rights and fundamental freedoms
- **Article 4** Governments can adopt temporary special measures to accelerate equality for women, i.e. affirmative action
- **Article 5** Governments shall take appropriate measures to eliminate sexist stereotyping
- **Article 6** Governments shall take all measures to stop trafficking and exploitation of women for prostitution
- **Article 7** The right of women to vote, to participate in forming and implementing government policies and to join public and political organisations
- **Article 8** Right of women to represent the country at international level
- **Article 9** Equal rights with men to keep and change their nationality and to grant their nationality to their children
- **Article 10** Women and girls should receive career and vocational guidance and have

Box 4: CEDAW—the international bill of women’s rights (Cont.)

- access to education opportunities on par with men or boys
- **Article 11** Women have an equal right to work with men, which includes pay, promotions, training, health and safety
- **Article 12** Women have the right to family planning services
- **Article 13** Woman have a right to family benefits, bank loans, mortgages, and other forms of financial credit
- **Article 14** Governments should undertake to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas so that they may participate in and benefit from rural development
- **Article 15** Women are to be equal before the law
- **Article 16** Women have the same rights as their husbands in marriage, childcare and family life

**Sustainable development**

In the 1990s, Member States to and stakeholders of the UN system embarked on a series of world conferences that ushered in a new era of global partnership, defining over two decades of development. These included major conferences on women as well as conferences that addressed the environment, human rights, population, and social development.\(^\text{IV}\)

Their outcomes furthered the international mandates and frameworks defining global cooperation. They reinforced the foundational covenants through subsequent binding international conventions, optional protocols and ‘soft’ declarations and plans of action, addressing equal human rights with regard to women, race, children, migrant workers, and people with disabilities. The foundations are also translated into practice through human rights mainstreaming mechanisms aimed at strengthening interagency collaboration, technical support, and national capacity building for human rights.\(^\text{V}\)


Also known as the Earth Summit, the UNCED led to several historic outcomes related to sustainable development. Agenda 21, the outcome document of the Summit, is a blueprint for sustainable


\(^\text{V}\) These include the 1997 launching of the UN Programme for Reform, the 2003 Interagency Workshop on a Human Rights-based Approach, and the 2009 UN Development Group’s Human Rights Mainstreaming mechanism (UNDG-HRM).
development (Box 5) and among the first UN conference documents to systematically refer to women’s positions and roles, including a stand-alone chapter on women. Follow-up conferences on sustainable development took place in 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, and in 2012 at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD, or “Rio+20”) in Rio de Janeiro.

**World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna (1993)**

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action reaffirms and strengthens human rights around the globe, including the right to development. Governments and regional and international organisations are urged to facilitate women’s access to decision-making processes. Also, monitoring bodies are urged to use gender-specific data and include the status and the human rights of women in their deliberations and findings. Both are vital for responsive climate change policies that recognise 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 links 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. The rights-based consensus of the ICPD highlights that the health needs of women, men and children must be met. It squarely considers population from the perspective of women, through the lens that women have the right to family planning and reproductive health services, which can impact sustainable development and poverty, and thus potentially their resilience to climate change.

**Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing (1995)**

The conference resulted in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPfA), a commitment to ensure that a gender perspective is included in policies and programmes at all levels—local, national and international—with the UN and governments agreeing to promote mainstreaming a gender perspective in all developments efforts. The Beijing Declaration addresses population issues, 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 preventive programmes, initiatives to address sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS, information dissemination, and follow-up health care.

**World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen (1995)**

At the end of their deliberations, the delegates at the Summit agreed on the adoption of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development, and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development. This declaration included the recognition that women carry a disproportionate share of the burden of coping with poverty, social disintegration, unemployment, environmental degradation and the effects of war.
The 1990s was a critical time for development, including setting out the framework for action on environmental protection and climate change through the outcomes of the Earth Summit—most notably by the establishment of the UNFCCC.

**The Earth Summit**

A key aspect of that framework is Agenda 21, which builds upon and recognises previous plans and conventions\(^6\) that advocate for gender equality in areas such as land ownership, resource stewardship, education and employment.\(^8\) The Agenda is to be achieved through actions that recognise women’s critical economic, social and environmental contributions to environmental management and sustainable development.\(^9\) It recognises the synergies between sustainability and issues such as demographic dynamics, health, human settlements, waste, water, chemicals, work, and technology, and the chapter on women calls upon governments to eliminate all obstacles to women’s full involvement in sustainable development and public life.

In addition to this, the Earth Summit saw the launch of the three Rio Conventions: the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC):

**UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**

The 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. It also recognises women’s knowledge, practices, and gender roles in food production in the Subsidiary Body on Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice. In 2014, the CBD adopted a Gender Plan of Action for 2015-2020 to promote gender equality and mainstream gender into activities, building on the first Gender Plan of Action that was developed in 2008, facilitated by IUCN. Parties have, over the years, agreed a number of decisions that well integrate gender concerns cohesively; gender mandates over the last decades were compiled in a 2012 publication, aiming to consolidate information on gender and biodiversity and propel more gender-responsive decision-making.\(^10\)
### Box 5: A framework for sustainable development and addressing climate change

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<th><strong>UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)</strong></th>
<th><strong>UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)</strong></th>
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<td>The UNCCD, adopted in 1994, is implemented through participatory National Action Programmes (NAPs) to address ecosystem-specific needs.(^{11}) The UNCCD recognises 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 the NAP to “provide effective participation of women and men, particularly resource users, including farmers and pastoralists and their organisations.”(^{12}) Several COP decisions have addressed the importance of gender in relation to multiple aspects of the UNCCD, and in Decision 9/COP.10, Parties approved the Advocacy Policy Framework (APF)(^{13}) on gender with a focus on promoting the integration of gender within the implementation of the UNCCD.</td>
<td>The UNFCCC was presented for signatures at the Earth Summit, and unlike the ‘sister’ Conventions, it did not include references to issues related to women or gender. Even years later, many of the texts were limited to gender balance concerns in UNFCCC processes and encouraging but not requiring women’s participation. However, in more recent years, with technical decisions integrating recognition of gender considerations, significant progress is noted and establishes a framework by which adaptation, mitigation, and climate finance can, and should be pursued with gender responsiveness.</td>
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2.1.2 Building political momentum in the new millennium: A growing web of gender and climate change linkages

With a foundation of international conventions and norms that furthered the recognition of the social and gender dimensions of environment and development, the first decade of the new millennium witnessed further milestones. Many of these are already being updated and enhanced in 2015 to shape the next 15 or more years of sustainable development. These include exercises in goal setting to address the major challenges of poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation towards a global partnership in development; a Declaration recognizing the rights of indigenous peoples; and policymakers drafting various resolutions with explicit references to the deep connections between gender and environment.

Development goals

The Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) resulted from the 2000 Millennium Summit. Member nations outlined a global partnership to address the world’s most pressing development needs through specific targets and timelines (2000–2015) of the eight MDGs. Of particular significance, 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.” As part of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) arising from the Rio+20 Conference, Member States finalised in August 2015 a new set of goals that are much more comprehensive as well as universal and applicable to all states. These SDGs include a specific goal on climate change and one on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The other goals reflect an effort to integrate and mainstream gender and other issues throughout, creating the opportunity for further advancement in gender and climate change over the coming decades. For many actors in the process, the Post-2015 agenda has been critical and momentous, contributing towards advancing ambition and progress in combating climate change, especially as the new climate agreement will not officially begin until 2020, and the SDGs have a lifespan from 2016 to 2030.
Box 6: Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): The universal priority blueprint through 2030

Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere.

Goal 2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.

Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages.

Goal 4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

Goal 6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

Goal 7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.

Goal 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Goal 9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation.

Goal 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries.

Goal 11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

Goal 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Goal 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts*.

Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.

Goal 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

Goal 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the global partnership for sustainable development.

*Acknowledging that the UNFCCC is the primary international, inter-governmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.
Disaster risk reduction

The 2005 Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) was developed at the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) and was updated in Sendai, Japan, at the Third World Conference on DRR at the first major conference of 2015. With a goal to substantially reduce disaster losses by 2015, 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.” 15,16 The Sendai Framework for DRR 17 recognises climate change as exacerbating disasters and also as a driver of disaster risk and it calls for the coherence of DRR, sustainable development, climate change and other policies for improving efficacy and efficiency. The Sendai Framework expands somewhat in terms of gender: it includes guiding principles of a gender, age, disability and cultural perspective in all policies and practices and the promotion of women and youth leadership. It refers to women’s role in gender sensitive policies and highlights empowerment of women and persons with disabilities to publicly lead and promote gender equitable and universally accessible response, recovery rehabilitation and reconstruction approaches.

Indigenous rights

In 2007, after 20 years of negotiations, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was adopted as a non-binding statement that recognises indigenous rights to self-determination, education, institutions, political and economic development, as well as the right to participate in the life of the state. 18 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 recognise its validity for women and other vulnerable or marginalised groups in the face of climate change and shifting population dynamics. In the development of new climate change mitigation mechanisms, such as REDD+, (which stands for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation in developing countries, including the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks), reinforcement and safeguarding of indigenous rights is increasingly important.
At its seventh session in March 2008, the UN Human Rights Council adopted by consensus Resolution 7/23 on Human Rights and Climate Change, and as a result, the Office of the High Commissioner released a follow-up report in January 2009. The report recognises the need for more country-specific and gender disaggregated data to effectively assess and address gender-differentiated effects of climate change. It simultaneously reports 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.19

In 2011, at the 55th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) which meets annually to follow-up on implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action to ensure the mainstreaming of a gender perspective into UN work and to identify emerging issues and trends important to gender equality, Parties adopted a resolution to mainstream gender equality and to promote the empowerment of women in climate change policies and strategies. The resolution (E/CN.6/2011/L.1) is the first resolution by the CSW to address the link between gender equality and climate change. In 2014, the 58th session of the CSW passed a resolution entitled “Gender equality and the empowerment of women in natural disasters,” which outlined the link between women, gender equality and disasters, and referred to the climate resolution from CSW55.

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2.1.3 Gender in the UNFCCC: From gender ‘blind,’ to gender balance–and beyond

As the links between gender equality, human rights, sustainable development and climate change response and resilience have become increasingly understood and recognised—not least because the gender-differentiated impacts of climate change are increasingly being felt—decisions under the UNFCCC have, more and more, reflected this reality and have included specific mandates to ensure gender considerations are integrated into policy-making, programming and finance. The figure below presents a timeline of key milestones in the UNFCCC process, demonstrating how decisions have progressed to substantively reflect gender concerns.

Figure 1  Timeline of gender mainstreaming in the UNFCCC

UNFCCC  Year  Gender Equality and Women’s Rights

1st major women’s conference organised at the UNFCCC.

1995, Berlin

1st “Women’s Caucus” organised.

1997, Kyoto

COP3 adopts historic KP: world’s first greenhouse gas emissions reduction treaty.

2001, Marrakesh

COP7 results in the Marrakesh Accords, setting the stage for ratification of the KP.

1st decisions and references on gender agreed: Decision 36/CP.7 on Improving the participation of women in the representation of Parties in bodies established under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change or the KP; and Decision 28/CR.7 on Guidelines for preparation of the NAPAs—stating preparation of NAPAs must be guided by gender equality.
KP enters into force.

Daily women’s caucus re-launched, hosted by GenderCC, open to anyone interested in women, gender, and climate change inter-linkages.

COP13 adopts Bali Road Map, including Bali Action Plan (BAP)—the framework toward a new global agreement expected for COP15.

COP14 takes steps towards assisting developing countries, e.g. Adaptation Fund under the KP and the Poznan Strategic Programme on Technology Transfer.

IUCN as part of the GGCA launched a Gender and Climate Change Training Manual and hosted the first orientation session on gender dimensions of climate change for Party delegations, supporting awareness raising and increased understanding among a wide range of Parties.

Gender advocates from the GGCA and other groups provided technical support directly to delegates, built strong relationships with Parties, and advocated suggestions for gender text.

BAP marked a turning point in the UNFCCC negotiations.

GGCA launched in 2007 by 4 founding members, IUCN, UNDP, UNEP and WEDO, joining forces to propel gender into the climate agenda.

Women’s groups began discussions to establish a Women and Gender Constituency, to facilitate a formal relationship between women’s civil society and the UNFCCC.
COP15 fails to produce an ambitious outcome in line with the Bali Action Plan, instead agreeing on a short Copenhagen Accord.

GGCA continued to host orientations for Party delegates on the links between gender and climate change.

In the lead up to Copenhagen, gender advocates successfully lobbied for inclusion of gender language across all areas of the negotiations; Parties include dozens of texts on gender in negotiating documents.

Women and Gender Constituency (WGC) (Box 7) given provisional status.

WGC released a joint statement on COP15 outcomes: “While gender-sensitive text remained in the negotiating documents until the end, these texts mean nothing without an overall outcome which will protect the lives and livelihoods of everyone on Earth.”

COP16 results in Cancún Agreements, a comprehensive package by governments to assist developing nations in dealing with climate change. The Green Climate Fund, the Technology Mechanism and the Cancun Adaptation Framework are established.

GGCA and other gender advocates actively lobby governments and media; IUCN, UNDP-Mexico and other GGCA partners organise capacity building session for Mexican delegation.

Cancun Agreements included 8 references to women and gender across seven sections of the decision texts: foundational language under the ‘Shared Vision’ for long-term cooperative action which recognises that “gender equality and the effective participation of women are important for effective climate action on all aspects of climate change”, and references under Adaptation, REDD+, Technology Transfer, and Capacity Building sectors/themes.
At COP17, Parties commit to finalizing a new universal climate change agreement by 2015 for the period beyond 2020.

At COP18, Parties agree to work toward a universal climate change agreement by 2015 and find ways to scale up efforts before 2020 beyond existing pledges to curb emissions.

Doha Amendment launches a 2nd commitment period of KP. UNFCCC Secretariat launches Momentum for Change—including the Women for Results pillar.

Mandates on women and gender advance, including: guidelines for National Adaptation Plans (NAPs); Nairobi Work Programme; information systems on REDD+; and operationalisation of the Cancun Agreements, including the GCF, the Adaptation Committee, the Standing Committee on Finance, and the Technology Mechanism.

References to gender in GCF and Climate Technology Centre and Network show evolving understanding of gender and social considerations.

WGC given formal status as a Constituency of the UNFCCC.

The “Gender COP” COP18 saw an upsurge in attention to issues of gender and climate change: 1st official Gender Day organised by UNFCCC Secretariat, GGCA and WGC raises awareness and outreach, with key decisions made.

Gender mandated for implementation of activities: NAPs, Loss and Damage, host of the Climate Technology Center, criteria for the advisory board of the technology mechanism, and new work programme on Article 6 on education and information.

Decision 23/CP.18 aimed at promoting gender balance and improving the participation of women in UNFCCC negotiations, reaffirming and strengthening previous commitments, establishing an in-session workshop on gender, and making ‘gender’ a Standing Agenda item for the COP, moving it from ‘Other Business’.
COP19 produces the Warsaw Outcomes, including a rulebook for REDD+ and a Loss and Damage mechanism.

At COP20, Parties produce a decision on the submission of countries’ Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) and submit the foundational text for the new climate agreement in 2015.

COP19 decisions included language on gender equality and social considerations across fourteen programme areas, including: on technology transfer, finance, and adaptation, and important language on gender-disaggregated data in the newly established loss and damage mechanism.

COP19 hosted the first ever in-session workshop on gender and climate change.

Annexed text of the new climate agreement included references to gender in the preamble, in sections on adaptation, finance and capacity building, and also across seven decisions under the Subsidiary Bodies.

Most notably, Parties adopted Decision 18/CP.20, LWPG.

Final year of negotiations toward new 2015 climate agreement launches in Geneva in February; negotiations conclude with adoption of a ‘Geneva Text’ to serve as foundation for ongoing discussions.

Mexico — then supported by Uganda and Chile, kicks off Geneva negotiating session with progressive statement on gender: “Parties to respect human rights and gender equality in implementation of all climate policies and actions.”

European Union, LDCs, and African Group all put forward proposals on gender equality.

By mid-year, language on gender equality, women’s rights, public participation and indigenous peoples mainstreamed across all areas of the negotiating text.

In GCF Board Meeting, Gender Policy and Action Plan adopted—making it the first financial mechanism with gender mainstreamed before fund dispersal/operationalised.
Marking a key point in this process, in 2007 the BAP established a new comprehensive framework to advance negotiations around five critical pillars—mitigation, adaptation, finance, technology development and transfer, and capacity building—guided by a shared vision of all Parties to take into account "social and economic conditions and other relevant factors". The BAP opened a window for recognising more comprehensive roles, responsibilities, and differentiated risks and impacts of climate change. With regard to women's and gender concerns, a significant opportunity arose to build awareness on gender and climate inter-linkages and introduce negotiating text to reflect gender differentiated impact and women's right to participate in climate change planning, among other things. Another critical moment evolved in 2010 and 2011, when an enhanced understanding of gender considerations was reflected in the gender mandates relevant to the Green Climate Fund and the Technology Mechanism.

Box 8: Women and Gender Constituency (WGC): ‘Formalising’ women’s engagement in the UNFCCC process

While women’s organisations, including leading networks like LIFE e.V. and GenderCC, were active in the UNFCCC since its start, women and gender-focused civil society participation was informal during the first 15 years of the Convention and its processes. In 2008, active women's civil society organisations applied for provisional constituency status to gain official recognition and be afforded formal channels through which to provide input into negotiating processes. Provisional status was granted in 2009, when the WGC included active organisations such as GenderCC, LIFE e.V. Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF), WEDO, the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD), ETC Foundation, ENERGIA, The Huairou Commission, and International Council for Adult Education (ICAE). The WGC became fully operational in 2015 and is able to make submissions and interventions on the floor, as well as participate in a range of in-session workshops and other events. The WGC also collaborates closely with other major constituencies, including youth, indigenous peoples, trade unions, and environmental non-government organisations (NGOs).
In 2012, the UNFCCC Secretariat itself, with support from Rockefeller Foundation, launched an initiative to spotlight particularly innovative—but also scalable and replicable—projects that help to create a highly resilient, low-carbon future. Momentum for Change recognises innovative and transformative solutions that address both climate change and wider economic, social and environmental challenges.”

Called Lighthouse Activities, the projects that are chosen as winners of this prestigious competition fall into specific categories—including one called Women for Results. Among the winners are extraordinary examples of projects that “demonstrate the critical leadership and participation of women in addressing climate change,” and that are having real impact at local, national and international level. The leadership of the UNFCCC Secretariat in soliciting and promoting these innovative examples is to be acknowledged, especially in light of relatively slow political negotiations overall (see some of the Momentum for Change projects in the case study chapter, Chapter 7, of this publication).

Sometimes referred to as the ‘Gender COP’ because gender issues garnered so much attention, COP18 in 2012 produced a Decision promoting gender balance, women’s participation and, among other things, called for an in-session technical workshop on gender issues for the next year. That workshop, held during COP19 in 2013 in Warsaw, produced draft conclusions and an annex with Party proposals on actions for governments, the UNFCCC Secretariat, and civil society, including: the establishment of a two-year work programme on gender balance under the Convention; workshops to further substantiate a gender lens across mitigation, adaptation, technology and finance; capacity building for female delegates organised by the UNFCCC secretariat; and monitoring of gender balance, gender budgeting and gender sensitive climate policies and actions by Parties. At COP20 in Lima in 2014, Parties adopted Decision 18/CP.20, the LWPG, building on much of the above and establishing a two-year work programme that includes:

- A review of implementation of all gender-related mandates by the UNFCCC Secretariat,
- Training and awareness raising for delegates on gender-responsive climate policy,
- Training and capacity building for women delegates,
- Two in-session workshops on gender, in relation to mitigation, technology, adaptation and capacity building at SBI 42 in 2015 and SBI 44 in 2016,
- Submissions by Parties and accredited organisations on these workshops,
- A technical paper by the Secretariat on guidelines for implementing gender considerations in climate change activities, and
- Appointing a senior focal point on gender at the UNFCCC Secretariat.
In early 2015, Parties and Observer organisations had the opportunity to make submissions on gender and mitigation and technology, with a particular eye toward shaping the first LWPG-mandated workshop. While the workshop—which was implemented in Bonn in June 2015, at the mid-year inter-sessional—was an important step, more substantive examples of practical and effective ways in which governments and other stakeholders have indeed mainstreamed gender through relevant mitigation and technology sectors are needed. The workshop was noteworthy in convening national delegates from over 40 countries in a two-session workshop and sharing the need for, and progress on, gender equality in climate change in the Convention and national and local level policy, programs and measures.

The timeline demonstrates how far decisions under the UNFCCC have progressed in the last several years in terms of recognising the gender dimensions of climate change. However, counting the gender references is not enough; understanding and propelling progress requires capacity building for gender-responsive implementation at all levels and accountability for the operationalisation of mandates.

Box 10: The power of words: Text that demands action

Across the gender text itself—that is, the references to gender and gender equality considerations agreed in UNFCCC decisions, gaps do remain. A number of mandates refer only to gender balance and enhancing women’s participation on boards and bodies. For instance, Decision 23/CP. 18, which specifically sought to, “Promot[e] gender balance and improve[e] the participation of women in UNFCCC negotiations and in the representation of Parties in bodies established pursuant to the Convention or the Kyoto Protocol” while others recognise both the need for gender balance and a gender-sensitive approach. But operationalising gender mainstreaming—and pursuing gender equality in a transformative fashion, as delivering co-benefits to the fight against climate change—will require much more than simply getting women to the decision-making tables, despite of course the importance of this step as a means toward an end, and a critical recognition of women’s right to participate in political and practical decision-making processes.

To date, decisions on adaptation have the most robust gender-sensitive language integrated, for example, a number of decisions that specify Parties to pursue adaptation with a “gender-sensitive, participatory, and fully transparent approach”. This could be due, in part, to the following:

- The first decision to integrate a gender-sensitive approach mandated that national adaptation programmes of action be guided by gender equality (COP7 in 2001),
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- From the outset of the current UNFCCC adaptation framework, a gender-sensitive approach was mandated, and
- Early research and awareness raising on the linkages between gender and climate change predominantly framed women in terms of their vulnerability to climate impacts; this made the link to adaptation more relevant to policy-makers than the link to areas such as mitigation and technology.

Mitigation issues have the lowest number of decisions that reference gender, with no guiding mandate for gender-sensitive mitigation actions. Gender considerations are limited to REDD+ and response measures, with the latter only referring to women as a ‘vulnerable group’.

Progress is clear with respect to decisions on climate finance and more recent decisions of the finance mechanisms themselves (as discussed in the finance chapter). The GCF addresses gender in a more holistic manner, across several aspects of the GCFs governing rules and procedures from the outset, and mandating a gender-sensitive approach to the GCF’s actions, promoting gender-balance in the Board/Secretariat composition, and promoting the input of stakeholders, particularly women (although not specifically framed as vulnerable in this instance). These specific mandates imply a stronger push toward action and toward the distribution and governance of gender-responsive resources.

While mandates ‘on paper’ are crucial, mitigating and adapting to climate change in a gender-transformative manner requires that the full and appropriate implementation of these policies is realised and that Parties are accountable to their commitments. Implementation lags behind, even in meeting gender balance goals, which jeopardises potential impact of the mandates. The current composition of UNFCCC boards and bodies, for example, which are explicitly mandated to target gender balance, especially mandated to target gender balance, especially via decision 23/CP.18, remains notably inequitable and inadequate.
There can be no doubt that significant progress has been made over the last twenty years on the ways in which international policy is addressing the complexity and intersectionality of global environment and development challenges. It is visible in the shift from the MDGs to the SDGs, both in terms of their scope and in the ways in which they were developed. It is equally visible in the UNFCCC, which is currently undertaking a two-year work programme on gender-responsive policies, and where people and countries are beginning to tackle climate change impacts as an issue of human rights.

However, while global policy may better reflect our complex world, the effectiveness of multi-lateral processes leading to implementation of actions calls for clear strategies and further steps to create real change for gender equality and a sustainable future.

Although there are many legal norms and mandates, the current trend is to move away from legally binding international agreements and towards voluntary commitments, often without clear pathways for financing, capacity building, or technology transfer. This trend is visible in the SDGs and in climate change. There is momentum toward bilateral and regional partnerships for solving development challenges, whether it be among governments or between the State and the private sector. With climate change as an example, recent rounds of negotiations and high-level calls for action are largely defined by voluntary commitments and a showcase of ‘solutions’, partnerships, and actions that fall outside of the frame of international policymaking.

This makes the challenges for effective gender-responsive climate policy clear. Firstly, turning words in the global policy realm into action at regional, national, and local levels and, secondly, identifying alternative spheres of influence to build awareness and capacity on the linkages between gender and climate change.

There are some key next steps to address the first main challenge of ‘turning words into action’:

- For the UNFCCC, the LWPG provides a first step towards a more institutionalised approach to gender mainstreaming across all climate policies. However, to be truly effective, the next step involves the development of monitoring, evaluation, and reporting guidelines and systems to hold governments accountable to mandates on gender equality,
- For governments, effectiveness in understanding and implementing gender-responsive actions must be enhanced via a clear set of tools which:
  - Define methodologies for gender-mainstreaming under the UNFCCC,
  - Create specific action guidelines for all mandates across UNFCCC decisions (for example, if a decision calls for undertaking gender analysis, a clear methodology and set of questions to conduct gender analysis should be developed and easily accessible to all Parties and practitioners of the UNFCCC), and
  - Provide templates and examples for what a ‘gender-responsive’ NAP or Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action (NAMA) looks like.
Those focused on implementation must be vigilant in monitoring and analysing climate finance flows, as well as ensuring that the multiple ‘gender action plans’ and mandates are being articulated in project implementation, design, and monitoring.

The participation of civil society is key to success, and thus relevant actors must also emphasise capacity building for women’s organisations and their allies at the local level to understand national mandates on gender and climate, along with legal tools and practices they can use to hold their governments to account.

Addressing the second challenge of alternative spheres of influence is also crucial. One sphere is the SDGs, which, although voluntary, will have a strong influence on development financing over the next 15 years. With individual goals on gender equality and climate change, and mentions of both in relation to education, there is a strong opportunity for awareness raising of the inter-linkages of these issues in all countries and for demanding more inclusive approaches from governments and large donor networks.

Similarly, tracking the implementation of INDCs in each country and encouraging the development of national gender and climate change action plans could substantially influence gender-responsive policies.

Thirdly, investing time into awareness raising and movement building, beyond just interaction with governments and practitioners, towards capacity building of women’s groups, feminist organisations, gender expert groups, and foundations to understand climate change as a critical women’s human rights issue and to make it integral to their programming will support their ability to advocate and act on the inter-linked issues.

New challenges for effective gender-responsive climate policy will likely continue to surface, but having tools to identify and tackle them head on from multiple fronts will support progress in implementation—and soon, transformation.
REFERENCES


