

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
Submission to the UNFCCC on Gender and Climate Change

OHCHR welcomes the opportunity to respond to the open call for submissions related to the UNFCCC's Gender Action Plan (GAP), its implementation, areas of progress, improvement and further work to be undertaken in subsequent action plans. OHCHR would like to emphasize the importance of promoting, respecting, protecting and fulfilling women's human rights in all climate action. The Gender Action Plan is an important tool for achieving this objective. With this in mind, OHCHR would like to submit the following inputs and recommendations relevant to ongoing work with respect to the Gender Action Plan.

Resources

OHCHR's analytical study on the integration of a gender-responsive approach into climate action at the local, national, regional and international levels for the full and effective enjoyment of the rights of women was submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution [38/4](#). In the study, OHCHR examines the impacts of climate change on women, identifies human rights obligations and responsibilities of States and other actors to implement gender-responsive approaches, shares illustrative practices, and issues conclusions and recommendations (see [A/HRC/41/26](#)).

OHCHR's summary of the panel discussion on women's rights and climate change: climate action, good practices and lessons learned was submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 38/4, in which the Human Rights Council decided to hold a panel discussion on this theme at its forty-first session. The report summarizes the mandated panel discussion which was held on 28 June 2019 and concludes with recommendations derived from the discussion (see [A/HRC/42/26](#)).

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) General Recommendation 37 on gender dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change is an authoritative interpretation of the norms contained in the Convention of the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW Convention) as these apply to disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change. The Recommendation underscores the urgency of mitigating climate change and highlights steps needed to achieve gender equality as a factor that will reinforce the resilience of individuals and communities globally in the context of climate change and disasters. It also seeks to contribute to coherence, accountability and the mutual reinforcement of different international agendas on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation by focusing on the impact of climate change and disasters on women's human rights (see [CEDAW/C/GC/37](#)).

Background

Climate change affects women, men, boys and girls in different ways. Entrenched and systemic discrimination can lead to gender-differentiated impacts of climate change with respect to health, food security, livelihoods and human mobility, among other things. Intersectional forms of discrimination can further increase the vulnerability of some women and girls to climate change, while the exclusion of women from climate action inhibits its effectiveness and further exacerbates climate harms. The adverse effects of climate change on the effective enjoyment of the rights of women require urgent, rights-based, gender-responsive

climate action that will respect, protect and fulfil the rights of women and ensure their empowerment as agents of change.

Key elements of a gender-responsive, rights-based approaches to climate action

Sustainable climate action that benefits all people within a society requires knowledge and consideration of the different roles, responsibilities, priorities, capabilities and needs of all of its members. This must involve a rights-based, gender-responsive approach at the local, national and international levels that ensures that all people, including and especially women, are included, consulted, and empowered to participate in decision-making, planning, implementation and assessment, as regards climate action. Taking this approach means fully integrating human rights and gender in climate action, through:

(a) The integration of principles and standards derived from international human rights law, especially the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other core human rights treaties, in all policies and programming;

(b) Improved understanding of the gendered impacts of climate change and climate action (e.g. mitigation, adaptation, technology transfer, finance and capacity-building) informed by the lived experiences of women;

(c) Women's meaningful, informed and effective participation in climate change-related decision-making, and climate change mitigation and adaptation, at all levels;

(d) Gender mainstreaming as well as targeted gender strategies in legislation, policymaking, programming and other activities related to climate action;

(e) Clarification and implementation of the obligations and responsibilities of duty bearers such as States and private actors.

The meaningful, informed and effective participation of women with diverse backgrounds in relevant decision-making processes lies at the heart of a rights-based, gender-responsive approach to climate action. This inclusive approach is not only a legal, ethical and moral obligation; it will also make climate action more effective and should be reflected in any extension or renewal of the Gender Action Plan.

Recommendations

OHCHR recommends that such a plan should, *inter alia*:

1. Be guided by the multi-dimensional and intersectional experience of women to incorporate a broad range of human rights and gender considerations in mitigating climate change and building climate resilience, such as:
 - a. Women's rights to land, natural and financial resources, services, and income;
 - b. Climate-induced displacement and migration;
 - c. Sexual and gender-based violence;
 - d. A gendered focus on health and well-being, including sexual and reproductive health and rights; and
 - e. Social protection systems.

2. Ensure the full, equal and meaningful participation of women with diverse backgrounds in climate change mitigation and adaptation at all levels;
3. Promote the integration of human rights and gender equality into nationally determined contributions and other national climate commitments and policies;
4. Ensure gender balance in the composition of bodies under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and its constituent agreements;
5. Promote gender balance and diversity in the composition of national delegations to processes under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;
6. Support capacity-building for women from diverse backgrounds to maximize their voice, confidence and negotiation skills;
7. Promote measures to ensure that climate funds and new technologies benefit countries and people most affected by climate change and systematically integrate women's human rights and gender equality into governance structures, project approval, implementation processes, and public participation mechanisms;
8. Increase the effectiveness of climate action by supporting an improved understanding of the differentiated human rights impacts of climate change on women and girls, including through:
 - a. Disaggregated data collection that pays particular attention to gender and its intersections with characteristics such as age, disability and ethnicity;
 - b. Development of gender-specific indicators;
 - c. Mapping the effects of climate change upon the poor, women, and girls; and
 - d. Identifying priority areas of action to support women, and enhance access to benefits.