

Strengthening the evidence base and understanding of the differentiated impacts of climate change on men and women and the role of women as agents of change and on opportunities for women

Submission by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
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The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) is pleased to make this submission in response to the [open call for submissions](#) with regard to the UNFCCC's Gender Action Plan, Activity A.4 (and Decision 20/CP.26, para. 9) on *Strengthening the evidence base and understanding of the differentiated impacts of climate change on men and women and the role of women as agents of change and on opportunities for women*.

Drawing on decades of experience of building knowledge and tools, providing technical guidance to policy processes, and driving gender-responsive implementation across various levels and sectors, IUCN's submission is focused on latest learning from its recent programming and projects. These include an emphasis on: understanding gender-based violence (GBV) and climate linkages; new insight into women's various roles as change agents; and opportunities for climate resilience shaped and led by diverse women. These are each covered, in turn, below.

IUCN remains committed to continuing its collaboration with diverse members and partners, including, in particular, Parties and stakeholders to the UNFCCC, as well as the UNFCCC Secretariat, to drive enriched information for gender-responsive international, regional, national and subnational climate policies, plans, strategies and action.

1) *Strengthening the evidence base through enhanced knowledge and understanding of GBV-climate links*

Drawing together evidence from a two-year research project, supported by USAID through the AGENT¹ programme, IUCN published a detailed study² in 2020 that documented gender-based violence (GBV) and environment linkages, including the impacts of a changing climate ([Castañeda Camey et al., 2020](#)). The study found that climate change is a serious aggravator of GBV. Evidence across regions shows that in post-weather-related disaster contexts, the stress, tensions and livelihood insecurity triggered by conditions of scarcity have increased domestic and intimate partner violence. For example, after Hurricane Katrina in the U.S., GBV experienced by women more than tripled ([Henrici et al., 2010](#)). In post-weather-related disaster contexts, the conditions for sexual exploitation and trafficking can also increase. For example after Typhoon Haiyan in Thailand in 2013, trafficking was estimated to increase by 20-30 per cent ([Nellemann et al., 2011](#)).

¹ See more here: <https://genderandenvironment.org/agent/>

² See more and access the study in EN/FR/ES here: <https://genderandenvironment.org/agent-gbv-env/agent-gbv-env-tools/>

These dynamics extend beyond the immediacy of disaster contexts to the longer-term impacts of climate change. Rates of domestic and intimate partner violence have increased during prolonged droughts in the agriculture communities of Australia ([Whittenbury, 2013](#)), while child marriage is also increasingly seen as a survival strategy both in the aftermath of disasters, such as in disaster-prone areas of coastal Bangladesh ([HRW, 2015](#)) as in the extended-drought periods in Ethiopia ([OCHA, 2017](#)), rolling back decades of progress. And across regions, evidence also shows that women environmental human rights defenders fighting for their rights, territories and for climate justice are becoming targets of gender-based violence as a way to silence them ([Castañeda Camey et al., 2020](#)).

As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded, IUCN also conducted research on the overlapping effects of environmental degradation and climate change with COVID-19 on GBV ([IUCN, 2020](#)). An expert paper prepared and submitted to the expert group on the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) ([Owren, 2022](#)) and a new policy brief prepared in collaboration with UN Women ([UN Women and IUCN, 2022](#)) further spotlight key GBV-climate links, in particular geared to gender equality policymakers and practitioners.

2) *Elevating Parties' example of women as agents of change*

Having reviewed Parties' updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) submitted ahead of COP26 in 2021 ([IUCN, 2021](#)), and comparing findings with an IUCN NDCs baseline analysis submitted in 2015 ([USAID and IUCN, 2016](#)), IUCN welcomes Parties' strong overall progress in recognising and including gender considerations in these critical national submissions. In 2021, 78% of the 89³ NDCs analysed include at least one reference to gender issues – a notable jump up from 40% five years ago. The number of Parties identifying women as stakeholders and agents of change in climate action is also growing, with almost half (43%) of the NDCs assessed identifying them as key stakeholders in their national actions and 18% as agents of change – an increase from 14% and 2%, respectively, in 2015. For example, Nepal commits to implementing its NDCs in collaboration with all relevant stakeholders, ensuring equal access to women, children, youth, Indigenous Peoples and marginalised groups during participation, decision-making and benefit-sharing from NDC implementation. Similarly, Cabo Verde outlines women's empowerment actions led by national women's institutions to reduce vulnerabilities and to appoint a National Gender and Climate Change Focal Point, contributing to their implementation of the *Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender*. In the case of Honduras' NDC, in addition to identifying women as stakeholders, it recognises both women and men as agents of change across climate sectors and emphasizes that, "due to gender roles and inequalities, each group has contributions, needs and preferences differentiated in the various sectors that must be taken into account in strategic documents related to the subject, as well as in commitments acquired by the country" (Gobierno de Honduras, 2021, p.10, in [IUCN, 2021](#)).

³ The study was conducted in time to produce information relevant to ongoing national as well as international processes, chiefly the UNFCCC 26th Conference of Parties (COP), taking place from 31 October to 12 November 2021. Therefore, any NDCs submitted after 1 September 2021 were not included in this analysis.

The analysis also found that some Parties are starting to recognize women in all their diversity and are paying attention to intersectionalities. For example, Cambodia places a strong emphasis on upholding the rights of Indigenous Peoples in NDC implementation, while Argentina, Canada, Costa Rica and the Philippines make reference to LGBTQI+ groups as part of NDC planning. Additionally, through this research, IUCN also highlighted Parties' attention to GBV; Argentina, the Dominican Republic, Guinea, Seychelles, Sierra Leone and Somalia all mentioned GBV in relation to national policies and legislation, women's natural resource management roles or climate change impacts ([IUCN, 2021](#)).

IUCN notes that, to meet interlinked global goals, recognising and investing in diverse women's leadership and agency for positive transformation through Nature-based Solutions (NbS), which by definition tackle society's most persistent challenges – such as gender inequality, offers a powerful and inimitable opportunity. IUCN's [ADAPT](#) project in the Western Balkans, for example, is pursuing rights-based gender-responsive NbS strategies, which may contribute to filling important gender-NbS knowledge gaps in years ahead, including for better understanding and demonstrating promising practice on women's leadership for nature and for equitable climate resilience.

3) Promising practice from projects: opportunities for diverse women

Gender-responsive programming and projects across IUCN offer insights into the fundamental importance of elevating women's leadership for climate solutions and ensuring rights-based, socially inclusive approaches to identifying and creating enabling conditions for diverse opportunities for women. For example, in cooperation with and support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), IUCN's [Regional Coastal Biodiversity Project \(RCBP\)](#) aims to protect nature and livelihoods for future generations by reducing threats to biodiversity in coastal-marine ecosystems in Central America's Northern Triangle. Across the three sites of the project, the gender analyses found gaps in women's decision-making roles in natural resource governance. In Guatemala, for example, 190 women (including 53 Indigenous women) compared to 881 men were part of Community Development Councils (COCODES), and in some municipalities there were no women councilors. In Moskitia, Honduras, the participation of women in the Boards of Directors of the Territorial Councils shows that women mostly occupy positions of low responsibility. Of the five Territorial Councils around Karataska Lagoon, 23% of these positions were held by women while 77% of the positions were held by men. These gaps represent multiple missed opportunities, as women represent the majority of each population and hold important roles in fisheries, agriculture, and more.

The project has focused significant efforts on working with male community members, in a successful effort to shift perceptions regarding gender and decision-making, contributing to wider project goals of strengthening the enabling environment for women's leadership opportunities. This project conducted sessions with male community members which focused on women's inclusion in natural resource governance, exploring normative masculinity, and skills-building to become more communicative and supportive of women in natural resource governance. Evaluation of the sessions found that they were effective in significantly shifting attitudes that perpetuate gender-based discriminations and to valuing women's diverse roles and knowledge,



with participants making commitments to improve gendered power dynamics at home, as well as promote women in their respective organizations as peers.

The evidence IUCN contributes is made possible through strong partnerships with Parties and with local partners, especially with women's organizations and groups. These partnerships, particularly those with local women's organizations and groups, are vital for designing research methods and generating evidence on the links between gender and climate change. Though the evidence base is growing, significant gaps in data and evidence on the links between gender and climate change persist, impeding action. These gaps in information can hinder Parties and observers from implementing the *Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender*. IUCN welcomes this and future opportunities to contribute to strengthening the evidence base toward richer understanding of the differentiated impacts of climate change on men, women, and those of all gender identities and the vital ways in which all people can be empowered and valued as change agents and climate solution leaders.