

Topic1: Measures to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change

What particularly is the issue?

Climate change is a pressing issue that affects every aspect of our lives, including women's rights. Climate change is caused by the release of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, which trap heat from the sun and cause the Earth's temperature to rise. This rise in temperature has a number of negative consequences, including increased frequency and severity of natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, and droughts. These disasters can have a disproportionate impact on women, as they often have fewer resources and less access to decision-making power to adapt and respond to these changes.

Women are often disproportionately affected by the loss of livelihoods and economic opportunities caused by climate change. For example, women are more likely to work in agriculture, which is highly vulnerable to climate change impacts such as droughts and floods. When crops fail, women are often the first to lose their income and livelihoods, which can have a devastating impact on their families and communities.

Climate change also has a disproportionate impact on women's time and energy, as they are often responsible for caring for children, the elderly, and the sick. When natural disasters occur, women are often left to pick up the pieces and care for their families, which can increase their workload and leave them with less time for other activities such as paid work, education, or political participation.

In addition, climate change can have negative impacts on women's health, as they are often more vulnerable to diseases and infections. For example, in areas where access to clean water is limited, women may have to travel further to collect water, which can put them at greater risk of violence and sexual assault. Climate change can also increase the spread of vector-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue fever, which can have a disproportionate impact on women and children.

Climate change is also driving displacement and migration, as people are forced to leave their homes due to natural disasters, sea-level rise, and other climate impacts.

Women and girls are often more vulnerable to violence, trafficking, and exploitation when they are displaced, as they may have fewer resources and less protection.

To address these impacts, it is important to take a gender-sensitive approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation. This means taking into account the different needs, priorities, and experiences of women and men when designing policies and programs to address climate change. Ensuring women's participation in decision-making is essential, as they bring unique perspectives and expertise to the table. In addition, policies and programs should be designed to reduce the burden of care work on women, increase their access to education and economic opportunities, and improve their access to healthcare and other services

Why is the issue becoming more pressing?

The impacts of climate change on women's rights are becoming increasingly severe, and this issue is only getting worse. The world is already experiencing more frequent and intense natural disasters, which disproportionately affect women due to their lower social and economic status. As climate change continues to worsen, these disasters are likely to become more frequent and more severe, leading to even greater impacts on women's rights.

In addition, the loss of livelihoods and economic opportunities caused by climate change is becoming more widespread, as extreme weather events and other climate impacts take a toll on agriculture and other sectors. Women who rely on these sectors for their livelihoods are particularly vulnerable to the loss of income and economic opportunities, which can have a devastating impact on their families and communities.

Climate change is also increasing the burden of care work on women, as they are often responsible for caring for children, the elderly, and the sick in times of crisis. This can leave women with less time and energy to pursue education and economic opportunities, further exacerbating gender inequalities.

The health impacts of climate change are also becoming more severe for women, as the spread of vector-borne diseases and other health risks continues to increase.

Women who live in areas with limited access to clean water and sanitation are particularly vulnerable to these health impacts, which can have a significant impact on their quality of life and well-being.

Finally, displacement and migration caused by climate change is becoming more common, as people are forced to leave their homes due to natural disasters, sea-level rise, and other climate impacts. Women who are displaced or forced to migrate are often at greater risk of violence, trafficking, and exploitation, which can have a profound impact on their human rights and dignity.

Which regions are affected?

In general, mostly all countries are affected by this issue but there are big differences when it comes to the region the country is in and the state of women's rights.

The regions that are mostly affected by this problem are the ones mostly affected of climate change. Countries that are very likely to witness natural disasters because of climate change have also higher risks for women due to the previously stated reasons. Mostly countries in the Sahel region will face huge impacts on temperature changes in the future and other catastrophes. However, other regions and countries are affected as well, like the parts of West Asia, South Europe and South America. Furthermore, insular states that have the risks of floods are facing troubles, too.

Another factor that has impact on the influence of the problem is the equality of women and men in the country. Women in states like Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan or Chad will face a way bigger and higher impact on the situation of women than regions with a high equality between women and men.

What has been done so far to make a difference?

Another cause of the bigger impact of the climate change on women is the often missing inclusion of women in the politics. This is especially important in countries with

a low number of political active women or that work in general which results in a high number of forgotten people. Like Matcha Phorn-In, a feminist human-rights defender, said: "If you are invisible in everyday life, your needs will not be thought of, let alone addressed, in a crisis situation!" Bhutan has set a very good example in empowering women in politics by implementing trained Gender Focus Points within ministries to implement gender equality in climate policies and initiatives.

To control and ensure the consideration of women when implementing new climate policies is very important. In order to guarantee this Uruguay has established a gender-responsive monitoring, reporting and verification system to ensure the equality of women when working on the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). A Nationally Determined Contribution is an action plan by each party that signed the Paris Agreement. Every party must update their NDC to the momentary situation to work the most effective against the climate change. Uruguay is also updating their system and improving it. The last relaunch of it was in 2021.

Further actions have been taking by both Lebanon and Uganda. These countries have examined their NDCs, to better understand how the climate change impacts women different to men and to close these gaps in key sectors. These examinations resulted in possible entry-points for the government to increase gender-inclusiveness and responsiveness of climate change policies. Main findings of these analysis have been for example that the gender inequality in Lebanon relies on legal frameworks and on cultural and social beliefs. Furthermore, gender is not systematically mainstreamed into politics and often misunderstood which hinders its effective consideration. This are a few of the lacks and problems in Lebanon which resulted in gender exclusiveness policies.

Another way to handle gender equality is by already adding strategies to a NDC from the beginning. Cambodia, for example, included gender as a key criterion for prioritizing mitigation and adaptation actions. Now most NDC priority actions have goals for the participation of women that range from 15 to 70 percent.

Georgia is another example for implementing equality. The government developed a guideline for all state officials that are concerned with climate change. The guideline explains the problem why the climate change is affecting the women harder than men further. It explains as well gender-responsive activities that can be employed in key

sectors affected by climate change such as agriculture, forestry, energy, transport, construction, and industry.

There also have been actions taken and implemented by the United Nations. The Human Rights Council requested the OHCHR (The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights) in the resolution 38/4 (A/HRC/RES/38/4) from the year 2018 “to conduct, from within existing resources, an 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...”. As a base for this study Member States, NGOs, UN agencies, IGOs, Academic Institutions and NHRIs were asked to hand in information concerning this topic.

What is the situation right now?

The topic of women being more effected of the climate change than men is still not commonly spread. Often the topic gets overlooked by a lot of people and governments. At the moment women are underrepresented in the politics in general but as well in the climate politics specifically. Even though studies show that female leader already tackle these problems from the grassroots and are better in performance of both environmental impact and social responsibility. This shows a need for more women in leadership positions who as well have shown to be more efficient leader in times of a crisis but as well during normal times. Since like stated women often are more efficient in fighting social or gender inequality, they often get signed up for jobs specifically addressing women which draws them away from participating in mainstream politics. This is another problem which needs to be tackled since this makes people believe women belong in these specific spaces and less valued jobs which hinders them again when trying to improve their influence in mainstream politics which is in fact the place to tackle such major problems of inequality.

Sometimes organisations are so focused on climate change and reducing emissions that they completely loose the understanding that something can help both the people that are affected by climate change and the environment. In one case organizers wanted to install “clean” cooking-stoves with low emission but then they realised the

impact is less than expected so they discontinued the project. The women and children and what impact it could have on their safety and health was completely disregarded and not forgotten.

Today only 27 percent of the whole workforce in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics field are women. This field is strongly linked to climate change and the reason the domination of women are several barriers. Often the job descriptions use words that have developed to stereotypical masculine words like “dominant” or “brilliant” which hinders women from applying for such crucial jobs when fighting the climate change. Furthermore, often when applying for jobs women won’t get them because of career breaks due to maternity leave which discriminates them further from applying for jobs and fighting climate change.

Another still existing and pressing major problem is the education of women. To this day, a lot of girls won’t receive the proper education needed due to cultural and institutionalised inequalities (see other committee guide for more information). This reduces the possibilities for women and girls to participate in their fight against the climate change they are more effected of than men who often are more likely to receive proper education. In addition, it hinders women to live sustainable and reduce their own emissions due to the lack of education. For example, if all women that work in the agriculture and have their own farm were educated properly 2.1 gigatons of emissions could be reduced by the year 2050.

In addition to the missing inclusion, women are 14 times more likely to die during a natural disaster than men. the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004 230.000 people died. 70 percent of them were women. This is linked to the women being incapable to swim or climb trees and to act the right way in general during this situation.

Who has to take action?

Concerning this issue, the most important party to act is the government of each state. The government must consider the equality at any time be it a debate or during the creation of a new climate policy. Furthermore, it is also incumbent on the society to change their behaviour concerning cultural discrimination of women which could result

in the exclusion from schools or education in general. This is crucial to prevent women from suffering more due to climate change.