

## Why women are key to climate action



Women and girls face disproportionate impacts from climate change. They are also driving climate solutions at all levels – as farmers, workers, consumers, household managers, activists, leaders, and entrepreneurs.

The climate crisis does not affect everyone equally. Women and girls face disproportionate impacts from climate change — largely because they make up the majority of the world’s poor, who are highly dependent on local natural resources for their livelihood.

Particularly in rural areas, women and girls are often responsible for securing food, water, and firewood for their families. During times of drought and erratic rainfall, rural women work harder, walk farther and spend more time securing income and resources for their families. This can also expose them to increased risks of gender-based violence, as climate change exacerbates existing conflicts, inequalities, and vulnerabilities.

When extreme weather disasters strike, women and children are 14 times more likely to die than men, mostly due to limited access to information, limited mobility, decision-making, and resources. An estimated 4 out of 5 people displaced by the impacts of climate change are women and girls. Acute disasters can also disrupt essential services, including sexual and reproductive health care, compounding the negative impacts for women and girls.

**Given their position on the frontlines of the climate crisis, women are uniquely situated to be agents of change** — to help find ways to mitigate the causes of global warming and adapt to its impacts on the ground.



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Everywhere, **women and girls** are taking action to confront the climate and environmental crises.”

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Here are three reasons why empowering women and girls is key to climate action:

### 1. Women are environmental stewards

Women are responsible for half of the world's food production. In developing countries, they produce even up to 80 per cent of food. As farmers, women have learned how to cope with and adapt to climate change, for example, by practicing sustainable agriculture in harmony with nature, switching to drought-resistant seeds, employing low-impact or organic soil management techniques, or leading community-based reforestation and restoration efforts.

Indigenous women have been at the forefront of environmental conservation. They bring invaluable ancestral knowledge and practices that build resilience in a changing climate, for example, by preserving crop biodiversity and seed varieties, protecting pollinators and local bee populations, using natural soil building and fertilization methods, or leaving forests intact.

But women have less access to a range of resources, from land rights and credit to education and technology. If women had the same access to productive resources as men, farm yields could increase by 20–30 per cent, feeding an additional 100 to 150 million people. This would reduce the pressure to cut down trees for more agricultural land – one of the biggest drivers of climate change. Worldwide, more than half of forest loss is due to conversion of forest into cropland.

### 2. Women are the backbone of resilience

Women carry out at least two and a half times more unpaid household and care work than men. When climate disasters hit – such as floods, wildfires, droughts and storms – women take on additional burdens.

As they usually have the primary responsibility for caring for a home and the people in it, women are often the first responders in disasters, rescuing children, elderly, persons with disabilities, and other community members, and informing local authorities and emergency teams.

After a disaster, women will likely be responsible for caring for the sick and injured, providing support for their families and helping communities recover and rebuild. And yet, even though women are disproportionately impacted by disasters and are leaders in post-disaster recovery, they are largely excluded from shaping policies, strategies, and programmes to address disaster risk and resilience.

Having women actively involved in decision-making is critical to recovery and reconstruction efforts. Fully utilizing women's capacities, knowledge, and skills when preparing for and recovering from disasters can help identify disaster risks and build security for families and communities.



### **3. Women are agents of change**

Women and girls – including students, moms, indigenous women, and celebrities – have been leading global and national climate movements that have put a spotlight on the urgency of the climate crisis and the need for action for the sake of this and future generations.

Women also play a key role in driving change as consumers, workers, political and business leaders.

In wealthier societies, women drive 70-80 per cent of all consumer purchasing decisions, leading the transition to more sustainable lifestyles. Women are more likely to recycle, minimize waste, buy organic food and eco-labeled products, and save water and energy in the household. By leading behavior change and consumer attitudes, women can drive change across sectors.

At the political level, research shows clear linkages between women's leadership and action to tackle climate change. For example, studies have found that countries with higher proportions of women in parliament are more likely to ratify international environmental treaties and have stricter climate policies.

In business, gender-diverse firms tend to have better environmental reporting and climate governance than their peers, and make more investments in renewable power generation and energy efficiency improvement.

Women are also increasingly contributing to the renewable energy sector, currently accounting for 40 per cent of employees in solar energy – a much higher share than in the oil and gas sector (22 per cent).

It is time to invest in women as a strong force for change, leading the way to a more sustainable future.