



# WOMEN IN ALL THEIR DIVERSITY LEADING ON CLIMATE

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# The leadership dilemma

Stallard, B. E. (2022b, November 16). COP27: Lack of women at negotiations raises concern. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-63636435>



Women **make up** [1] more than half of the world's population. And women make up **80% of people** [2] displaced by climate disasters.

Yet, women, mainly from minority ethnic and indigenous backgrounds remain underrepresented in senior leadership roles across climate negotiations, politics and business.

**The decision-making processes and leadership teams are missing vital voices.**

Out of 110 leaders present at COP27 only **seven** were women [3] and they made up **less than 34%** [4] of the negotiating teams at this UN summit in Egypt. For the last 28 COPs, only 5 women have been president. This is not **progress** [6]

Continuing to ignore women's significance when addressing climate change will severely undermine the progress required to tackle the **crisis** [7]. One clear **consequence** [8] is adaptation projects that exclude the needs of local communities. Poorly designed programs can have unexpected consequences on women's lives. Decision-making needs to be inclusive in order to include a diversity of lived experiences.

We want to enable women, in all their diversity, to lead just climate action globally. To do this we must recognise how diversity and inclusion underpin successful climate and environmental action and leadership.

# Diverse, gender-based approaches in leadership

SHE Changes Climate firmly believes that inclusion and diversity are key to unlocking the systemic transformation of society. A **study** [9] from 2019 shows that increased participation of women in parliaments led to the adoption of more robust climate policies and reduced carbon emissions. Attitude towards climate change is gendered. Women are more likely to have a greater awareness of climate change and women are disproportionately bearing the cost of climate change [9].

**According** to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) sixth assessment report [10], in order to achieve climate justice, the intersections of gender, race and economic class have to also be studied to better inform mitigation and adaptation strategies.

The **World Economic Forum** agrees that when women are in the room they create solutions that are proven to be more sustainable [11].

28 COPs later there is still a lack of youth, indigenous people and women's voices as active participants in the **decision-making** [12]. More remains to be done at COP28, especially on finance for gender-centred action, a topic in which the Global North and leading countries, could work towards and help developing nations to achieve.

For systemic change to occur, a diversity of perspectives is critical. The time for a diversity of voices to be leading our climate decisions is now.

Source: Steward, B. E. (2022a, November 16). COP27: Lack of women at negotiations raises concern. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-63636435>



# What's in it for the governments?

Women, as equal decision-makers, at the governance level make a fundamental **difference** in economic growth, climate policy and the quality of institutions [9, 14]. The inclusion of women in parliament has also been proven to be highly beneficial. In **Rwanda** [15], 61% of the Members of Parliament are women and the country has been adopting progressive environmental legislation.

Moreover, countries which have at least 30% women in their parliaments **have** [16] lower levels of corruption, lower mortality rates and women's participation in national legislatures have been linked to higher GDP and better law enforcement. There are strong links between diverse teams and efficient decision-making processes, as well as better results.

## Remember 2020?

**Studies** [17] on another systemic event, the Covid-19 pandemic, have shown how countries with female leaders have tended to handle the lockdown better, saving lives as evidenced by the significantly lower number of deaths in countries with women leaders.

## What about the private sector?

It also makes a difference when women are on boards of companies. A **study** [18] shows the positive impact that gender diversity has on boards, such as increased legitimacy, effective monitoring, improved financial performance, better decision-making and easier access to limited external resources, which in turn can lead to improved financial performance.

When women are included, or are at the heart of, decision-making processes, we see better legislation and commitments to the environment, and superior financial results and decisions centred on a better future, for all.

# Decision-making at the UNFCCC

## What is the UNFCCC?

UNFCCC stands for the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**. This Convention has near universal membership (198 Parties) and is the parent treaty of the **2015 Paris Agreement** [19]. The **Conference of the Parties (COP)** is the decision-making body of the Convention [20]. The objective of these agreements under the UNFCCC is to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that will prevent dangerous human impacts on the climate system, in a time frame which allows ecosystems to recover naturally and enables sustainable development.

However, when a **diversity of perspectives** is missing are the decisions that come from these agreements truly inclusive? [21]

## Impact of the UNFCCC [20]

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**64%**

OF GLOBAL MARKET  
CAPITALISATION  
DISCLOSED THEIR  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
IMPACT

**6300**

FIRMS DECLARED TO  
HAVE REDUCED  
EMISSIONS OR  
IMPLEMENTED  
RENEWABLE ENERGY

**190%**

INCREASE IN  
PARTICIPANTS IN NYC  
CLIMATE CHANGE  
WEEK DESPITE  
COVID19 PANDEMIC

## Challenges

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**39%**

WOMEN MAKE UP  
THE UN  
CONSTITUENCY  
BODIES [23]

**29%**

OF SPEAKING TIME  
WAS COVERED BY  
WOMEN AT COP26  
[23]

**37%**

WOMEN REPRESENT  
COUNTRY  
DELEGATIONS AT  
COP27 [9]

**7/110**

WOMEN WERE IN THE  
WORLD LEADERS  
'FAMILY PHOTO' AT  
COP27 [24]

**1/10**

WOMEN MAKE UP  
THE SUPERVISORY  
BOARD OF UNFCCC  
IN 2022 [22]

# Women represented at COP

## The Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender

**The Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender** [25] was established at COP in 2014. This program aims to advance gender balance and integrate gender considerations into the work of COP to achieve a gender-inclusive climate policy and action. Growing from this the Gender Action Plan (GAP) was established at COP22.

## Gender Action Plan, 2022–2025

The enhanced gender action plan (GAP) aims to **promote gender equality** across the UNFCCC programs [26]. The GAP has five priority areas that aim to advance knowledge and understanding of gender-responsive climate action [26] and ensure that women are equal and meaningful participants in the UNFCCC process.



Source: Cycle power and gender rights: days eight and nine at Cop27 – in pictures (2022). The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/gallery/2022/nov/15/cycle-power-and-gender-rights-days-eight-and-nine-at-cop27-in-pictures>

# Women in the UNFCCC: Recommendations

**1** **Set up or recruit external bodies** to conduct regular checks on the execution of solutions set up at COP27 and other Climate Change conferences.

This may speed up the action course of the **Gender Action Plan** and the **Lima Work Programme**

By providing a platform at schools, universities and in corporations to lead Climate Change Action, more women can **build experience** to represent their nations at climate conferences

**Introduce climate change action bodies at local level** to upskill women to represent nations at UNFCCC.

**2**

**3** **Mandate female representation for national negotiating teams at conferences.** Even though there were close to 45% of women involved in COP26, most of them were in roles that did not have decision-making power such as event planning, associates or deputies rather than leadership.

Mandating the presence of women at every level will lead to **inclusive climate action** with policies that account for differences in social roles, experiences, and needs, relating to climate change



# Women in COP: Recommendations

Getting more women to lead the Conference of the Parties (COPs), or similar international meetings on climate change, is an important step towards **promoting** gender equality in decision-making and **ensuring** that the perspectives and experiences of women are included in discussions and actions on climate change. Here are a few ways to achieve this goal:

## **ENCOURAGING WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION**

in climate-related meetings and events, and provide them with the skills and resources they need to take on leadership roles. Proactively seek women's voices and ensure gender balanced panels.

## **ADDRESSING GENDER-BASED BARRIERS**

that may prevent women from participating and leading COPs, such as lack of access to resources and opportunities.

## **PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN DECISION-MAKING**

at all levels, including in international climate negotiations and in the implementation of climate policies and programs

## **ADVOCATING FOR WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP**

in international climate change negotiations and initiatives, and ensure that their perspectives and experiences are included in discussions and decision-making

## **BUILDING NETWORKS OF WOMEN WORKING ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

and provide them with opportunities to connect, share their experiences, and collaborate on initiatives

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