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**World Climate  
Conference-3**

# Gender and Climate Forum



**World Climate Conference-3**

## Gender and Climate: Is Climate Change Gender-Neutral?

Women and men across the globe are distinct carriers, providers and users of information with regard to climate observation, risk assessment, adaptation and mitigation strategies. They are also affected differently by information on how to deal with climate challenges. However, these realities – and their gendered nature – are not always understood by climate scientists and decision-makers.

It is only recently that the strong gender specific dimensions of adapting to climate change started being taken into account in climate related research. Factors such as the gendered division of labour, access and control of natural resources, knowledge and skills and participation in decision and policy-making, expose women and men to different risks and opportunities. There are very few policy responses which take these distinct roles and responsibilities of women and men into account.

## Gender and Climate Forum

To address this issue, UNESCO's Division for Gender Equality in the Bureau of Strategic Planning, assisted by the Natural Sciences Sector, organized the "Gender and Climate Forum" as part of World Climate Conference-3 (WCC-3) on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2009. WCC-3 aimed to contribute to the establishment of a Global Framework for Climate Services. This Forum contributed to the work by exploring the linkages between gender and climate issues to inform the discussions of the Conference. In order to be effective and meaningful, a new framework for climate services needs to be closely linked to the needs and expectations of communities and societies at every level. In this context, this framework and the research agendas of the future have to take the gender dimensions of climate change into account.

## Co-sponsors

The Forum was organized in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).



## Welcome

**Ms S. Gülser Corat, Director, Division for Gender Equality,  
Bureau of Strategic Planning, UNESCO**

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It is in the spirit of “Delivering as One” that UNESCO decided to hold this Forum on Gender and Climate in order to raise awareness of the gender dimensions of climate among the scientific community. UNESCO was pleased to collaborate with UN and other agencies in this joint effort to raise awareness of the linkages between gender and climate issues and to promote the necessity of integrating a gender equality perspective in the outcomes of the World Climate Conference-3. Ms Corat concluded: “I truly hope that gender equality concerns will be an integral part of the discussions on climate and climate change which will take place in the months and years to come. ”

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## Opening Remarks

**H.E. Markku Niinioja, Ambassador for Climate Change,  
Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland**

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Finland has long underlined the need for a gendered approach in environment, and particularly in climate change – recognizing that climate change is not gender-neutral, and that women are not only victims, but are also active agents of change in the areas of climate change mitigation and adaptation. Ambassador Niinioja highlighted the active involvement of Finland in the International Colloquium on Women’s Empowerment, Leadership Development, International Peace and Security which took place in Monrovia, Liberia, in March 2009. This Colloquium demonstrated the clear gender dimensions of climate change, environment protection and sustainable development.

# Introduction to the Forum: the Scientific Basis linking Gender and Climate

**Dr Joni Seager, Hunter College, CUNY, New York, USA and Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University, Toronto, Canada**

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Why is it so important to link gender and climate change? Why does gender make a difference? Dr Seager highlighted the importance of linking the physical sciences and their work on climate change to a social and gendered analysis: "Climate change is a biophysical problem that derives from, is manifested in, and will need solutions from the social realm."

Gender analysis "reveals the ways in which these things are gendered. (It) maps the importance of understanding differential positions, roles and contributions of men and women, leveraging gender-specific knowledge into successful policies, programmes and mitigation/adaptation strategies."

She concluded that, "It is impossible to determine the full range of causes, effects and solutions to climate change without taking gender into account."

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## Challenges and Opportunities for Women's Empowerment in Climate Change

**Ms Thais Corral, M.A., Network for Human Development/Global Leadership Network, Brazil**

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Ms Corral highlighted the importance of integrating gender equality considerations into discussions of climate change and all internationally agreed development goals and to support efforts for women's economic empowerment and enhancing their equal rights, as well as their voice and participation.

In order to build on the capacities and skills of local women as distinct carriers, providers and users of information with regard to climate observation, risk assessment and adaptation strategies, it is essential to identify:

"Innovative economic approaches that could transform the impact of climatic changes into innovative economic empowerment initiatives on mitigation and adaptation to be implemented by women and communities."

One example of this is "Adapta Sertão", a collaborative project in Brazil, which combines NGOs, civil society organisations, private sector, the government and a university. This project is: "A breakthrough model to link climate, clean water and energy technologies to social entrepreneurship and rural economic development." It shows that the empowerment of women can go hand in hand with climate change adaptation.



## A Gendered Approach to the WCC-3's Global Framework for Climate Services

**Dr Emma Archer, Principal Researcher, Climate Change, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), South Africa**



Dr Archer responded to the question: "Aren't climate services gender-neutral?" with a resounding "no".

She noted that as climate information is not gender-neutral, women are differently exposed to climatic disasters and are closest to the resources impacted by these disasters. Traditional approaches to climate information provision fail as they include, "little understanding of what users need." As a result, "the notion of social and economic benefit (should be) derived from climate services and expanded towards 'marginalized users'" as access to information is crucial to their well-being and even survival.

She recalled working on a climate project in the Limpopo Province in South Africa, where she experienced, on the ground, how gender is an important factor in climate information provision and use; there were constraints on the project until gender and local institutional realities were taken into account.

## The State of Sex-Disaggregated Data for Assessing Impact of Climate Change

**Dr Ashbindu Singh, Regional Coordinator, UNEP Division of Early Warning & Assessment, North America**



"Climate change remains one of the most challenging issues currently facing humanity, and (sex) disaggregated data is necessary to take effective policy decisions."

This need for sex-disaggregated data is driven by the gendered nature of climate change; certain groups of women are "particularly vulnerable to environmental issues brought upon by climate change and need to be represented in statistical reports." He noted that, although, "there is a broad understanding and acceptance of the importance of collecting age-and sex-disaggregated data, this concern is true at the global level, but is less observed at the country and regional levels." Such data are "incomplete at this time, including in the developed world."

An analysis carried out by Dr Singh's team found that in Algiers "women are 5.4 times more exposed to changes in climatic conditions than men." Exacerbating factors, which make women more vulnerable than men, include: adult illiteracy, lack of involvement in decision-making, education, economic inactivity, income differences.

Dr Singh concluded that, "the first step towards ensuring that the specific basic needs of women are addressed over the short and long term is to collect data broken down by sex and age immediately after a disaster. Separate data on men and women is necessary to identify their separate vulnerabilities." As a result, he advocated for the creation of a composite Gender Vulnerability Index (GVI).

## Discussion/Q&A with the Audience

**Moderator: Dr Joni Seager, Hunter College, CUNY, New York, USA and Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University, Toronto, Canada**

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The discussion following the presentations highlighted two key points:

- There is a particular need for climate information to be contextualized and for it to be user-focused, so that it also benefits rural and indigenous communities.
- Women's representation and voice are lacking, not only in the WCC-3 panels, but in the meteorological sector and climate science in general.

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## Summary and Follow-up Plan from the Forum

**Ms Irene Dankelman, Radboud University, Nijmegen, The Netherlands**

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Ms Dankelman stressed the key lessons to be learned from the Forum:

- **Climate change is not gender-neutral and, therefore, climate information and services cannot be gender-neutral either.** Women and men drive and are impacted by climate change in distinct, gendered ways and differences also exist in their roles as carriers, providers and users of climate and weather knowledge and information.
- There is a **strong call for gender mainstreaming** in the Global Framework for Climate Services and for the full participation of women professionals and local women, in meteorological and climate entities and fora.
- **The need to make climate information user-friendly** is urgent.

Echoing Bella Abzug, former US Congresswoman and founder of the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), she concluded: **"If you wonder whether climate issues have changed the nature of women, or if women change the nature of the climate issues, there is only one answer: let's do it, let's try"**.



## Gender and Climate Forum Statement

**(included in the WCC-3 “Conference Statement – Summary of the Expert Segment”)**

The experts and participants of the Gender and Climate Forum of the WCC-3 having considered an extensive body of knowledge and expertise in the area of gender and climate variability and change, recognized that women and men around the globe are distinct carriers, providers and users of climate information, and that mounting evidence shows that drivers and consequences of climate change are not gender-neutral. The experts placed priority on:

- **Mainstreaming gender equality.** Gender equality must be mainstreamed into climate science, mechanisms and activities, and in climate institutions, particularly the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and National Meteorological and Hydrological Services (NMHS), and into the Global Framework for Climate Services.

The Forum experts and participants concluded that the proposed Global Framework for Climate Services should reflect a gender equality perspective in all its components, namely:

- **Observation and monitoring.** Involvement of local communities, particularly local women in environmental change and climate observations, and provision of adequate preparation and training of women and men is necessary for their full participation as providers and users of climate information;
- **Research and modelling:** Gender parity and equal participation of women researchers in climate research should be ensured at national, regional and international level. Enhance the role of social scientists and the human dimension in climate research;
- **Climate service information system.** Information on gender aspects of climate and health, energy, water and agriculture for mitigation and adaptation, particularly through the collection of sex-disaggregated data, at both the country and regional levels needs to be enhanced. National statistics divisions should be trained in sex-disaggregated data collection, in collaboration with UN agencies, and legal guarantees for the regular and continuous production of a minimum set of gender specific data in situations of climate change, should be promoted; and
- **Climate services application programme.** Recognizing the level of knowledge and taking into account the realities of access to information for women, it is necessary not only to ensure accessibility and benefits from climate information for scientists and decision makers in all regions, but particularly for local communities, especially local women.

The Gender and Climate Forum further recommended:

- **User-oriented information.** Climate information and practical prediction services, including those designed by users is important to assist in empowering local women; and
- **Outreach and capacity-building:** It is important to ensure and support outreach and capacity building for a broad user community, including local women and men of different age groups.

## **The Division for Gender Equality**

UNESCO's commitment to promote gender equality and women's empowerment is facilitated by the Division for Gender Equality in the Bureau of Strategic Planning.

As the UNESCO focal point for Gender Equality, the Division provides policy guidance, carries out capacity-building and coordinates cutting edge research in order to provide informed policy advice to Member States. The Division also monitors gender parity within the UNESCO Secretariat.

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**For more information on UNESCO's work promoting gender equality,  
please visit:**

<http://www.unesco.org/genderequality>

**For more information on the World Climate Conference-3,  
please visit:**

<http://www.wmo.int/wcc3/>

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