

Concept note

International Women's Day 2022

"Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow"

March 8th, 2022

14:00-15:30

Live on Zoom

Background

International Women's Day (IWD) is a global day to celebrate the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women, while making a worldwide call to action for strengthening gender equality and accelerating women's empowerment.

The United Nations theme for the observance of IWD 2022 is *"Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow"*. This theme recognizes the contribution around the world of women and girls who play a crucial role in climate change adaptation and mitigation. It is also aligned with the priority theme of the 66th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, *"Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes"*.

Every year the Rome-based agencies take turns to host the celebration of International Women's Day as a way of demonstrating their joint commitment to women's empowerment and the advancement of gender equality. We recognize that empowering women and achieving gender equality are crucial in order to achieve food security and good nutrition for all. This year we invite colleagues and member states to join us in celebrating the achievements of women, particularly those related to climate change adaptation and resilience building.

2022 Theme: Women and climate change

Since 2020 the world has witnessed an increase in GHG emissions above the average for the last decade, and 2021 has been one of the warmest years on record¹. In the last three years (2018-2020), approximately 319 million people were affected by extreme climatic conditions and the increasing recurrent natural disasters². Due to their disadvantaged status in many societies, women and girls are at a higher risk than men and boys of experiencing the devastating effects of climate change. Studies have consistently shown that women and girls, due to their increased risk of poverty and reduced access to assets and services, compared to men, are less capable of adapt to climate change and recover from shocks, making them overall more vulnerable to natural disasters and the impacts of climate change³. As a result, they face greater risks of becoming climate refugees - those having to abandon their homes, whether temporarily or permanently - in search for a more liveable environment that is less affected by increasing temperatures and extreme weather events⁴.

¹ https://library.wmo.int/doc_num.php?explnum_id=10859

² https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGI_SPM_final.pdf

³ <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/women-in-shadow-climate-change>

⁴ <https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/202003-twice-invisible-internally-displaced-women.pdf>

Globally women and girls represent more than half of the people displaced due to climate-related disasters.⁵ Women have less access than men to resources such as land, credit, training, agricultural inputs and extension services, as well as to decision-making processes within communities, enterprises and beyond, which undermines their ability to adapt to climate change. When homes are destroyed by climatic shocks, such as hurricanes, cyclones or droughts, women and girls are forced to flee to temporary displacement camps, where they are often exposed to gender-based violence. Further, for displaced women and girls in humanitarian settings, the lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services represents a major health risk⁶. Since 2011 across 26 climate-impacted countries, an estimated 11.5 million women and girls have had their access to contraception disrupted due to climate-related displacement.⁷

In addition to the lack of essential services for women and girls, such as sexual and reproductive health care, their access to education, social welfare and protection against GBV is also disrupted by acute climatic disasters. A recent report by the Malala Fund indicated that in 2021 alone, the impacts of climate change could affect the level of education of 4 million girls in low- and middle-income countries. This figure could increase to 12.5 million by 2025 if the underlying drivers are not urgently addressed.⁸ Among the most affected are rural communities where climatic hazards, such as droughts, floods and temperature changes reduce agricultural yields and subsequently incomes, and families are faced with hard choices about how to use their limited available resources. Often this results in girls being pulled out of school and an increase in the risk of child labour and child marriage as coping mechanisms. Climate change disasters can also increase the threats of gender-based violence, create greater economic difficulties for women and girls, erode progress in girls' education and reinforce gender inequalities.

Call to Action

Empowering women and youth to ensure their full participation in climate change adaptation decisions and frameworks is crucial for achieving a more sustainable world. Women have been severely underrepresented in important decision-making processes regarding climate change solutions. At the COP summit held in 2021, women occupied 33% of constituted bodies positions and men took the floor for 74% of the speaking time during the whole event.⁹ The lack of fair representation of women in climate change adaptation frameworks results in a creation of solutions that do not accurately respond to the different needs of the diverse groups of people affected by the threats of climate change, with the risk of leaving women and girls behind. Although some progress has been made in gender parity in climate leadership, it is estimated that at the current rate, gender parity in these frameworks will not be achieved until 2068.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has recognized gender equality as a key principle of the climate change agenda.¹⁰ The need for gender balance was first

⁵ <https://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/202003-twice-invisible-internally-displaced-women.pdf>

⁶ <http://wedo.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/GGCA-RP-FINAL.pdf>

⁷ [The five devastating reasons climate change affects women more than men | Euronews](#)

⁸ <https://assembly.malala.org/stories/climate-change-is-forcing-girls-out-of-school>

⁹ <https://unfccc.int/news/overrepresentation-of-men-in-un-climate-process-persists>

¹⁰ <https://unfccc.int/topics/gender/workstreams/the-gender-action-plan>

mentioned in the outcomes of Cop7 in 2001. In 2019, states agreed to strengthen their efforts in supporting gender-responsive climate change action.¹¹ However, a UNFCCC secretariat report for Cop26 found that women are not only underrepresented in climate change negotiations, but they are also given less speaking time and opportunities to actively participate and provide insights.¹² We know that women's active and meaningful participation is needed in the design of interventions that adequately address their needs.

International Women's Day 2021 discussed the need for more women in leadership positions. Globally, only 26 women serve as heads of government or state. However, it has been observed that there is a correlation between women's representation in national parliaments and stricter climate change policies as well as lower carbon emissions.¹³ Women's increased access to leadership positions is therefore an important avenue to sustainable climate change solutions. A sustainable future is more possible when women are given equitable access to meaningful participation in governments, parliaments and other important decision-making bodies.

International Women's Day 2022 provides an opportunity to demonstrate the potential and achievements of women in climate change action and resilience building, while at the same time making a call to action for the increased participation of women in leadership roles. We call on colleagues and member states in joining us in commemorating IWD 2022 by highlighting all the achievements of women while calling on actors to assure that their voices are included in climate change negotiations.

Objectives

By commemorating International Women's Day, the Rome- based agencies aim to:

- Give visibility to the achievements of women, in particular those related to climate change resilience and adaptation.
- Discuss how to advance women's empowerment and promote sustainable and inclusive social and economic development through gender transformative approaches.
- Highlight climate change issues and the importance of women's participation in decision-making processes related to climate resilience and adaptation.
- Call for the RBAs continued commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment, particularly in the context of women's participation and leadership in climate negotiations

Key messages

- Climate change has increased food insecurity and gender inequality
- Women and girls are disproportionately affected by climate change and natural disasters, making up the majority of climate refugees
- Women's participation and active engagement in decision-making and planning processes regarding climate change adaptation is crucial for sustainability

¹¹ https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cp2019_13a01E.pdf

¹² https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cp2021_04E.pdf

¹³ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0176268017304500>

- A sustainable future is only possible when women and girls are given meaningful and equitable access to opportunities and resources and the same voice in the negotiation tables

Draft Agenda

Time	Session	Speaker
14:00	Welcome remarks	Valerie Guarnieri, <i>Assistant Executive Director-WFP</i>
14:10	Keynote address	H.E. Elissa A. Golberg, <i>Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Canada to the Rome-based agencies</i>
14:20	Opening remarks	Jo Puri, <i>Associate Vice-President, IFAD</i>
14:30	Panel: Strengthening women's role in climate adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Elham Youssefian</u>: <i>Inclusive Humanitarian Action and Disaster Risk Reduction Adviser (International Disability Alliance)</i> • <u>Carla Madueño</u>: <i>Ecologist & Climate Youth Activist, (Youth in Landscape Initiative)</i> • <u>Andria Grosvernor</u>: <i>Deputy Executive Director, (Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency)</i>
15:00	Q&A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jemimah Njuki, <i>Director for Africa, IFPRI</i>
15:20	Closing remarks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maria Helena Semedo, <i>Deputy Director General, FAO</i>

Moderator: Jemimah Njuki, *Director for Africa, IFPRI*