

# Submission from the Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice

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Submission responding to the Gender Action Plan (GAP) adopted at COP23 (Decision 3/CP23)

**Responding to Decision 3/CP.23, activity E.1 of the Gender Action Plan.**

**Activity E.1 invites submissions on:**

- (a) Information on the differentiated impacts of climate change on women and men, with special attention paid to local communities and indigenous peoples;**
- (b) Integration of gender considerations into adaptation, mitigation, capacity-building, Action for Climate Empowerment, technology and finance policies, plans and actions;**
- (c) Policies and plans for and progress made in enhancing gender balance in national climate delegations.**

**Noting that these issues are also the focus of the workshop planned for SB48 in May 2018.**

The Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice welcomes this opportunity to provide inputs to inform the implementation of the Gender Action Plan.

The Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice ('The Foundation') is a centre for thought leadership, education and advocacy on the struggle to secure global justice for those people vulnerable to the impacts of climate change who are usually forgotten – the poor, the disempowered and the marginalised across the world.

The organisation is a platform for solidarity, partnership and shared engagement for all who care about global justice, whether as individuals and communities suffering injustice or as advocates for fairness in resource-rich societies. The Foundation provides a space for facilitating action on climate justice to empower the poorest people and countries in their efforts to achieve sustainable and people-centred development.

The work of the Foundation is guided by its principles of Climate Justice, which can be found on the Foundation's website [www.mrfcj.org/about](http://www.mrfcj.org/about). The principles 'Highlight Gender Equality and Equity' and 'Ensure that Decisions on Climate Change are Participatory, Transparent and Accountable' are particularly relevant to the subject of this submission.

In this submission the Foundation:

- a) Highlights information arising from the Foundation’s work related to the issues identified in activity E.1 of the Gender Action Plan.
- b) Proposes that the annual in-session workshop in 2018 which will address the issues identified in E.1, have an emphasis on local communities, grassroots and indigenous women’s participation in gender responsive climate policy.

### **1. Responding to Action E.1. of the Gender Action Plan**

The Foundation has carried out work on aspects a) and c) of the issues identified in Action E.1 of the GAP, in particular, noting that both of these contribute directly to b) the integration of gender into all aspects of climate action. The Foundation would like to share the findings of its work in the sections below.

#### **a) Information on the differentiated impacts of climate change on women and men, with special attention paid to local communities and indigenous peoples.**

The Foundation welcomes the focus given to women and men in local and indigenous peoples’ communities in the GAP. People living in vulnerable situations are most impacted by climate change and are often amongst the least responsible; this is the injustice of climate change.

The Fifth Assessment Report of the IPCC<sup>1</sup> notes that ‘differences in vulnerability and exposure arise from non-climatic factors and from multidimensional inequalities often produced by uneven development processes (*very high confidence*).’ This means that people are differentially at risk from climate change due to underlying socio-economic factors. The report adds that ‘People who are socially, economically, culturally, politically, institutionally, or otherwise marginalized are especially vulnerable to climate change and also to some adaptation and mitigation responses (*medium evidence, high agreement*).’ As a result, income, socio-economic status, gender, ethnicity, class and age are all factors that increase vulnerability to the impacts of climate change.

Given existing gender inequalities and development gaps, climate change ultimately places a greater burden on women. Men and women are affected by climate change in different ways, because of the societal and cultural roles and responsibilities made on them by families and communities. For example, in many communities’ women are the primary food producers and providers of water and cooking fuel for their families, therefore they have greater responsibility for family and community welfare. This also means that women are most affected by impacts of climate change on water availability, agricultural production and food supplies.

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<sup>1</sup> IPCC, 2014: Summary for policymakers. In: Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [Field, C.B., V.R. Barros, D.J. Dokken, K.J. Mach, M.D. Mastrandrea, T.E. Bilir, M. Chatterjee, K.L. Ebi, Y .O. Estrada, R.C. Genova, B. Girma, E.S. Kissel, A.N. Levy, S. MacCracken, P .R. Mastrandrea, and L.L. White (eds.)]. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY. [http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/wg2/ar5\\_wgII\\_spm\\_en.pdf](http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/wg2/ar5_wgII_spm_en.pdf) (Accessed 5 February 2018)

## Differentiated impacts of climate change on men and women – lessons from Uganda

Research conducted by the Foundation with local communities in Uganda in 2012 on the gender dimensions of food and nutrition security in the context of climate change<sup>2</sup>, found that men and women are experiencing the impacts of climate change differently. Some of these differences include:

- Tension between growing food crops and cash crops – women are traditionally charged with growing food crops to feed the family, while men focus on cash crops to earn money. However, as climate change reduces the length of the growing season and rainfall becomes scarce or unpredictable, there is a tension between men and women over which crops to grow and where priority should be placed.
- Increased labour demands on women – as climate change affects the growing season one coping strategy is to increase the amount of land under cultivation. But this increases the workload on women unless they are able to pool their labour or hire labour. However, hiring labour is difficult unless women can access loans which require collateral, and in many cases women don't own such assets
- Decision making and ownership – if women don't own land they work they have less say in how it is managed. In polygamous households', men decide which fields each wife can cultivate. Frequently this decision is taken late in the year which gives women less time to plan and buy seeds and other inputs, resulting in lower yields.
- Conflict – tensions in the household over land, decision making and ownership of crops can lead to domestic violence, especially when the rains are poor and yields are low.
- Reduced share of food for women – when food is in short supply due to a poor harvest, women prioritise feeding their children and men first, by reducing their own intake. This negatively affects their overall nutrition and health.

Discussion with the communities highlighted the importance of gender equality, women's empowerment and women's leadership in overcoming the differential impacts of climate change on men and women. The benefits of having women in more leadership positions, identified by the communities themselves, include:

- Giving voice to the whole community – women will identify women's needs and men will identify men's needs.
- Leadership helps women to gain confidence in speaking out and contributing to meetings in a constructive way. This counteracts perceptions of women as subordinate, less educated or shy.
- When women participate, information passes quickly to other women, who can discuss the issues among themselves and get involved.
- Having women in leadership positions is seen to reduce conflict and dishonesty.
- Women are seen by some men as adopting new ideas more quickly than men.
- Women in leadership positions tend to make men more accountable to women.

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<sup>2</sup> The gender dimensions of food and nutrition security in the context of climate change in Uganda (2013) Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice. Online Version. Available at: <https://www.mrfcj.org/media/pdf/2013-Uganda-Policy-Paper.pdf> (Accessed 5 February 2018)

These findings are supported by case studies<sup>3</sup> presented by local community representatives at the Hunger-Nutrition-Climate Justice Conference hosted by the Foundation and the Government of Ireland in 2013. The conference delegates (one third of whom were from local communities) emphasised that women are at the heart of effective solutions to climate change and that there can be no solutions without the involvement of women at all levels<sup>4</sup>. The Conference showed what can be achieved when women are given an opportunity to contribute in the fields of agriculture, urban development, fishing and pastoralism. A central message was that decision makers should not be afraid to empower local people or protect their rights. Rather sharing power can lead to positive change.

Finally, the Conference concluded that by placing people at the centre of decision making, the clearest picture of the challenges facing the most vulnerable people emerges. The Conference illustrated that empowering grassroots practitioners and giving them the right platform to discuss their realities informs more effective climate action.

#### Enabling participation in climate decision making by women from local communities and indigenous women

The perspectives from the local level, presented above, support the case for greater participation of women from local communities and indigenous women in climate decision making. This is a theme addressed in The Full View II, a publication co-authored by the Foundation and UN Women, which highlights the value of grassroots women's participation in decision making at all levels, including in the UNFCCC.

The report proposes ways and means of increasing the participation of women from civil society and particularly grassroots women in the UNFCCC and in national delegations<sup>5</sup>:

- Enabling regular consultations between women's organisations / grassroots women and Party delegations at national level and in the context of the UNFCCC to inform climate policy;
- Establishing an online platform under the UNFCCC to share views, knowledge and experiences related to local and traditional knowledge, needs and concerns;
- Requesting the secretariat to maintain a roster of representatives of local women's organisations, including grassroots and indigenous women, which is periodically updated and used to facilitate grassroots women's participation;
- Organising dedicated events to allow for the exchange of information, best practices and experiences in local and grassroots participation in and gender-responsive approaches (co-organised, for example, by the Women and Gender Constituency (WGC), the Global Gender Climate Change Alliance (GGCA) and the UNFCCC secretariat);

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<sup>3</sup> Hunger Nutrition-Climate Justice Conference Papers and Case Studies (2013) Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice. Online Version. Available at: <https://www.mrfcj.org/pdf/hncj/conference-papers.pdf> (Accessed 5 February 2018)

<sup>4</sup> Hunger- Nutrition – Climate Justice Conference (2013) Conference Report. Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice. Online Version. Available at: <https://www.mrfcj.org/media/pdf/HNCJ-Conference-Report.pdf> (Accessed 5 February 2018)

<sup>5</sup> The Full View: Second Edition: ensuring a comprehensive approach to achieve the goal of gender balance in the UNFCCC process (2016) UN Women and the Mary Robinson Foundation - Climate Justice. Online Version. Available at: <https://www.mrfcj.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/MRFCJ-Full-View-Second-Edition.pdf> (Accessed 5 February 2018)

- Establishing a voluntary fund to facilitate participation and capacity building for local and grassroots women to engage in the UNFCCC.

This last point is reflected in the GAP in priority area B, where activity B1 is to ‘promote travels funds to support the participation of women in national delegations, including those from grassroots, local and indigenous peoples’ communities in developing countries, the least developed countries and small island developing states.’ This emphasis on bringing local voices into the work is a welcome new initiative.

#### Gender differentiated climate responses

Gender differentiated climate responses grow from an understanding of the gender differentiated aspects of climate impacts. For example, research conducted by the Foundation in Malawi revealed gender differences in the sustainable energy solutions required by men and women in local communities<sup>6</sup>.

Table 1 below illustrates the different expectations of access to energy from a micro-hydro scheme in Bondo, Malawi.

**Table 1: Gender differentiated expectations of sustainable energy in Bondo, Malawi**

<b>Women’s expectations</b>	<b>Men’s expectations</b>
Safer deliveries of babies at the health clinic at night	Using electricity to weld broken bicycle frames
Retention of nurses and teachers in the area	Recharging batteries
The availability of equipment at health clinics and schools.	Refrigerators for groceries and bottle stalls
Install a maize milling machine in the village eliminating the current 7.4 km walk to the nearest mill	Opening shops in the village which would give easier access to supplies

Understanding these different expectations is critical to the successful design and implementation of effective energy access and climate solutions. To understand these different expectations men and women need to be empowered to participate equally in decision making, from the local level up.

#### Women and men in local and indigenous peoples’ communities as agents of change

In recent years the discourse has moved beyond looking at local communities and indigenous people as victims of climate change to look more at their role as agents of change, creators of solutions and leaders on climate action.

Research shows that when the rights of people living in local communities and indigenous people are respected and fulfilled they can be more effective participants in climate action. Take for example, the case studies presented in the Foundation’s publications [Rights for Action](#)<sup>7</sup> and in

<sup>6</sup> Access to Sustainable Energy – The Gender Dimensions (2012) Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice. Online Version. Available at: <https://www.mrfcj.org/pdf/Policy-Brief-Malawi-Access-to-Sustainable-Energy-the-Gender-Dimensions.pdf> (Accessed 5 February 2018)

<sup>7</sup> Rights for Action: Putting People at the Centre of Action on Climate Change (2015) Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice. Online Version. Available at <https://www.mrfcj.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/MRFCJ-Rights-for-Action-edition-2.pdf> (Accessed 12 February 2018)

[Women's Participation: An Enabler of Climate Justice](#)<sup>8</sup>. Events hosted by the Foundation with partners, such as the [Listening and Learning Climate Justice Dialogue](#)<sup>9</sup> in Bonn on the 9th May 2017, and the [Gender Talanoa](#)<sup>10</sup> held at COP24, brought together grassroots women and climate negotiators, revealing the very real contributions women at the local level are making to adaptation and mitigation.

Evidence is also emerging of the risk to women and their rights when they are not adequately involved in climate decision making. Rights to land and water, for example, can be undermined by climate projects if they do not adequately consult with and include women. In many countries women bear primary responsibility for water provision for the family, and failing to consult with them on adaptation or mitigation projects that affect the local water supply (e.g. irrigation) risks undermining their rights.

The findings of the Foundation's work reveal that a stronger focus is needed on facilitating and enabling the participation of indigenous women, and women from local communities, in climate decision making at local, national and international level. Greater recognition is also needed of the value of women's knowledge and experience and the leadership roles they play.

As a result, the Foundation recommends a strong emphasis on i) local communities as important actors in climate action and ii) the need to increase the participation of women from local communities and indigenous women in climate decision making – including under the UNFCCC. The Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples' Platform provides an important forum for participation and knowledge exchange, but local, grassroots and indigenous women also need to have a voice across all areas of the UNFCCC's work and in national planning and action.

**c) Policies and plans for and progress made in enhancing gender balance in national climate delegations.**

The Foundation has worked with UN Women to publish two resources on gender balance, with a particular emphasis on the UNFCCC: The Full View first and second editions<sup>11</sup>. Both reports contain recommendations to assist the UNFCCC to accelerate progress towards the goal of gender balance. Many of these recommendations are also reflected in the UNFCCC Technical Paper on Gender Balance (FCCC/TP/2017/8) published before COP23, which notes the uneven and inadequate progress towards the goal of gender balance in delegations and in bodies under the Convention.

Critical impediments to women's participation and representation, highlighted in the secretariat's technical paper and the Full View II, are capacity building and training and access to funding (Box 1).

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<sup>8</sup> Women's Participation: An Enabler of Climate Justice (2015) Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice. Online Version. Available at [https://www.mrfcj.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/MRFCJ-Womens-Participation-An-Enabler-of-Climate-Justice\\_2015.pdf](https://www.mrfcj.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/MRFCJ-Womens-Participation-An-Enabler-of-Climate-Justice_2015.pdf) (Accessed 12 February 2018)

<sup>9</sup> Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice (2017) Submission with views on matters to be addressed at the in-session workshop on a Gender Action Plan (Decision 21/CP.22) available at [http://unfccc.int/files/parties\\_observers/submissions\\_from\\_observers/application/pdf/893.pdf](http://unfccc.int/files/parties_observers/submissions_from_observers/application/pdf/893.pdf) (Accessed 12 February 2018)

<sup>10</sup> Valuing Local and Traditional Knowledge at COP23 Talanoa on Gender Day (2017) Mary Robinson Foundation – Climate Justice. Available at <https://www.mrfcj.org/resources/valuing-local-and-traditional-knowledge-at-cop23-talanoa-on-gender-day/> (Accessed 12 February 2018)

<sup>11</sup> The Full View: Second Edition: ensuring a comprehensive approach to achieve the goal of gender balance in the UNFCCC process (2016) UN Women and the Mary Robinson Foundation - Climate Justice. Online Version. Available at: <https://www.mrfcj.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/MRFCJ-Full-View-Second-Edition.pdf> (Accessed 5 February 2018)

Without training women delegates struggle to take up more senior negotiating roles in their delegation or to being nominated for chairing roles. Hence activity B.3 of the GAP, which calls on Parties the UN and other organisations to organise capacity building training on leadership, negotiations, facilitation and chairing in the context of the UNFCCC process is critical. The Foundation proposes that this training be open to both women government delegates and women delegates from civil society and local and indigenous peoples' communities.

**Box 1: Some of the measures identified by respondents to a survey to inform the Full View II on impediments to women's participation in the UNFCCC**

- Ensuring greater allocation of financial resources, particularly in the form of targeted funding, to support women delegates from developing and least developed countries
- Enhancing capacity-building for women, including training on leadership skills and on UNFCCC procedures
- As part of capacity-building and learning, creating space and opportunity for interested women to attend meetings of constituted bodies as observers

Access to funding to attend the negotiations is a constant challenge for women delegates, an issue the Women Delegate's Fund has helped to address and an area prioritised by the GAP in activity in B.1. Activity B.1 also highlights the need to provide funds for the inclusion of women from local communities and indigenous women to attend UNFCCC sessions – which picks up on recommendations made to increase grassroots women's participation in the Full View II. This is a positive and new departure and an issue that warrants further discussion in the workshop planned for SB48 to determine the practical next steps that can be taken by Parties, the UN and other relevant organisations.

Both the Full View II and the secretariat's technical report have specific recommendations to accelerate progress towards the goal of gender balance in national delegations. The relevant findings from the Full View II are presented in Box 2. These recommendations can inform further discussion on accelerating progress towards the goal of gender balance under the UNFCCC, including through the workshop planned for SB48, where measures to achieve the goal should be addressed.

**Box 2: Recommendations to accelerate progress towards the goal of gender balance in national delegations<sup>12</sup>**

- Set an initial quota of 30 per cent women in Party delegations to subsidiary body meetings and at COPs. The quota should be increased progressively to 40 per cent, with the aim of reaching 50 per cent at the end of a six-year period following the institution of the quota
- Allocate dedicated travel and capacity building funding for women delegates with the aim to ensure their full and equal participation in the UNFCCC process
- Include representatives of civil society and grassroots organisations on Party delegations and encourage the inclusion of grassroots women on the delegations of civil society organisations to the UNFCCC
- Mobilise resources and partnership opportunities for technical and skills training and capacity-building for women delegates, and ensure that women are guaranteed space in trainings offered for everyone

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid

- Promote regular awareness-raising trainings for all delegates on gender balance and its contribution to gender responsive climate action
- Put in place policies and mechanisms “including through a national gender responsive climate change action plan” to ensure effective implementation of gender-specific mandates from UNFCCC decisions and the Paris agreement
- Demonstrate leadership and accountability from the highest level of Government to the goal of gender balance
- Create and support opportunities for discussions, networking and collaboration among women delegates, as well as between women delegates and representatives from women’s organisations, including grassroots and indigenous organisations most affected by climate change impacts, with the aim of enhancing participation and gender responsive climate policy and action
- Identify and strengthen leadership of women’s organisations at the local level to encourage a participatory and consultative approach for informing climate-related policy-making
- Build capacity of grassroots women to participate in national, regional and international climate change-related processes
- Provide adequate resources and create formal platforms such as workshops, roundtables and dialogues for women’s organisations, including grassroots women, to build their capacity for their meaningful participation and engagements in regional or global processes, serving as crucial conduits of local knowledge and experience to inform global normative setting and decision-making processes and the design, planning and implementation of gender-responsive climate action

## 2. Annual in-session workshop 2018

The gender decision adopted at COP23 states that the May 2018 workshop will focus on the issues listed in activity E.1 (a, b & c). Given the limited time available for the workshop it will be necessary to prioritise and identify common themes across the three issue areas. As a result, the Foundation proposes that the workshop should emphasise ‘local communities, grassroots and indigenous women’s participation in gender responsive climate policy’ as this is a theme common to issues a), b) and c). Without the representation and active participation of indigenous women and women from local communities it will be challenging to achieve the goal of gender responsive climate action. Across all areas of climate action, the participation of grassroots women can help to inform policy, ensure local buy in and strengthen accountability.

In planning the workshop, it will be important to address not just the differentiated impacts of climate change on men and women, with special attention paid to local communities and indigenous peoples, but also to focus on the knowledge these communities hold, and the importance of ensuring the meaningful participation of grassroots men and women in gender responsive climate action. In planning the workshop links could be made with the Local Communities and Indigenous People’s Platform and other aspects of the Convention that capture learning from the local level (e.g. Nairobi Work Programme, REDD+, NAP expo). Parties can be invited to share good practice and the climate funds, such as the GEF Small Grants programme, can share their experience (from the perspective of the fund and the grantees). Learning from processes outside the Convention could be drawn upon for the workshop, for example, from the [Community Based Adaptation Conferences](#) and the annual [Development and Climate Days](#) held at COP.



Finally, it is important to ensure the active participation of women from local communities and indigenous women in the workshop planned for SB48 so that local knowledge and local perspectives inform the discussions. It is not possible to determine the actions needed to support men and women from local and indigenous communities without their active participation in the discussion. Parties, UN agencies and observers could be encouraged to include women from local and indigenous communities in their delegations to SB48 to enable their participation in the workshop.