



**Submission by ICOMOS on behalf of the
Climate Heritage Network**

This Submission is made in response to the following Call for Submissions:

Issue: Gender and Climate Change

Deadline: 31 March 2022

Title: Share experiences on dimensions and examples of the gender differentiated impacts of climate change, the role of women as agents of change and opportunities for women

Session Name: SBI 54

Mandate: Table 1, A.4, Annex to 3/CP.25

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Introduction

The Climate Heritage Network (CHN) is pleased to submit the following information on the culture- and heritage-related dimensions of gender-differentiated impacts of climate change, the role of women as agents of change, and opportunities for women.

The CHN is a global network whose members are committed to mobilising arts, culture and heritage to address climate change and support communities in achieving the ambitions of the Paris Agreement. Its members are united in the belief that arts, culture and heritage constitute an invaluable resource to help communities reduce greenhouse gas emissions and strengthen adaptive capacity, even while the risks to those resources from climate impacts must also be addressed.

Launched in 2019, the CHN seeks to scale up culture-based climate action and to foreground the cultural dimensions of climate policy through coordination and cooperation among its members. CHN members work with all types of culture including arts and music; museums and libraries; landscapes, heritage sites and archaeology; and intangible heritage, traditional knowledge, and Indigenous ways of knowing. CHN members include public and governmental bodies from local, regional and national levels; universities; museums, heritage sites, libraries, and other cultural institutions; Indigenous People's organisations; civil society/NGOs; climate science; and artists and creative and design firms.

The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), which is an organisation with observer status before the UNFCCC, is making this submission on behalf of the CHN.

Background

The enhanced gender action plan sets out objectives and activities under five priority areas that aim to advance knowledge and understanding of gender-responsive climate action and its coherent mainstreaming in the implementation of the UNFCCC.

A. Capacity-building, knowledge management and communication

- B. Gender balance, participation, and women's leadership
- C. Coherence
- D. Gender-responsive implementation and means of implementation
- E. Monitoring and reporting

The Decision 3/CP.25 under the activities underlined in priority area A recognizes that there is a need to strengthen the evidence base and understanding of the differentiated impacts of climate change on men and women and the role of women as agents of change and on opportunities for women

Views of the CHN

Gender considerations are indispensable to addressing climate change and cultural considerations are indispensable to addressing gender. The quest for sustainable development provides a helpful entry point into understanding these intersections.

Climate Action, including adaptation and mitigation, is fundamentally connected with achieving sustainable development, poverty eradication and reducing inequalities. The climate impacts avoided at 1.5°C of warming compared to 2°C would make it easier to achieve many aspects of sustainable development that communities desire like health, livelihoods, food security, water supply and human security. At the same time, climate scientists have largely been unable to model pathways characterized by inequality and poverty that were still able to limit global warming to 1.5°C.

The 2030 agenda for sustainable development calls for the participation of all segments of society, irrespective of their race, gender, ethnicity, and identity to contribute to its implementation. This underscores the importance of gender and other intersecting groups. Culture being the 4th pillar of sustainable development,¹ it is hence an indispensable dimension to consider when thinking of gender responsive climate action. Arts, culture and heritage have immense potential to drive gender inclusive climate resilient pathways for adaptation and mitigation.

Culture or Heritage-based Examples of Gender-differentiated Impacts of Climate Change

The threat of climate change and its impacts are universal however the severity of how it is experienced falls disproportionately on vulnerable communities and populations especially women as men and women have different social responsibilities, vulnerabilities, capabilities, and opportunities. These differentials are often culturally determined or culturally influenced. They exist in historical contexts expressed through practices and knowledge that form a part of the cultural heritage of relevant communities.

One key gender-differentiated impact of climate change is the risk of loss and damage to the traditional knowledge and intangible heritage of communities, including traditional ecological knowledge. In many cultures, in diverse ways, women are the custodians of intangible cultural heritage which include the performing arts including music, culinary and medicinal knowledge and the know - how for the creation of material cultures such as handicrafts, weaving, textiles, habitat production and the making of tools for a wide range of activities in areas such as horticulture, agriculture and fishery.

Women often play a crucial role in rural and local communities in providing for the basic needs of their families by gathering and producing food, securing water, preserving traditional crops, and, in some communities, in the building and maintenance of their shelter.

¹ See, UCLG, Culture: Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development (Barcelona 2010) (https://agenda21culture.net/sites/default/files/files/documents/en/zz_culture4pillarsd_eng.pdf)

In most cultures, women maintain principal roles in the upbringing of children, through which the intergenerational transmission and renewal of many forms of intangible heritage occurs

Drought, deforestation, and erratic rainfall cause women to work harder to secure the resources for these needs. The gradual process of environmental deterioration is likely to increase both internal and cross-border human migration. In some cases, climate response measures can also differentially impact women, and all these factors work in combination with intersecting processes such as “development” and urbanization. These differential impacts on women can lead to accelerated loss to the intangible and tangible aspects of cultural heritage and threaten its integrity and survival. These losses can in turn diminish languages and whole knowledge systems, undermine social cohesion and identity, and more generally affect climate vulnerability and resilience of communities in iterative ways that need to be better understood.

Cultural dimensions of the role of women as agents of change and opportunities for women is critical for developing effective and equitable strategies for responding to climate change

Traditional knowledge and local knowledge systems help local communities to understand and adapt to changes in climate. Women’s active involvement in these systems for agriculture and other livelihoods and their dependence on biomass energy would mean effective environmental management. Hence women are not only vulnerable victims of climate change but have the potential to be key agents of adaptation and mitigation.

Culture can be a useful tool that can provide opportunities to women in climate resilience. This can be done by identifying women’s distinct skills, capacities and their wealth of traditional knowledge that can lend itself successfully to climate action. Sustainable development strategies that include cultural strategies, enable transformational adaptation in several ways.

For example, measures that reduce women’s vulnerabilities (SDG 5) also allow women to benefit from adaptation. In **Karachi’s City’s Historic Core**, low-income women were trained in ancient terracotta crafts, ultimately producing over 150,000 cobbles, which become a source of livelihoods while also reducing urban flooding through the expanded use of porous pavements.²

When sustainable development promotes livelihood security, it enhances the adaptive capacities of vulnerable communities and households. In **West Bengal**, Cultural Skills for Livelihood Resilience promotes the cultivation of Shola reeds and the fine craft tradition of making Sholapith products, a livelihood that supports village women (SDG 5) and is resistant to disruption by cyclone, and growing soil salinity.²

The promotion, dissemination and application of citizens science has been developed to advance climate ambition in the city of **Merida, Mexico**. It especially focuses on developing skills in youth and adults, empowering women through enabling technology, and taking action to combat climate change.²

Women are showing remarkable resilience around the world. They are leading climate action movements, championing clean sources of energy, and building alternative models of community that focus on sustainability and cooperation. Their participation and leadership can have transformative effects in their countries and communities.

Cultural/heritage dimensions in gender-responsive climate action

Gender responsive climate action is a long-term goal that requires medium- and short-term measures.

² For examples, please see: Potts, Andrew (2021) “The Role of Culture in Climate Resilient Development”, UCLG Committee on Culture Reports, n°10, and Climate Heritage Network (Working Group 5), Barcelona, 5 November 2021, 50-51,55; <https://climateheritage.org/the-role-of-culture-in-climate-resilient-development/>

One of the key challenges is that gender inequalities however universal vary tremendously from one place to another hence solutions need to be context and culture specific. Art, culture, and heritage can help build long-term, contextual, strategic, operational, multilevel, multi-stakeholder, intergenerational partnerships that bring together different expertise, resources and knowledge to accelerate this process.

International and national policies need to turn from a gender-blind approach (those that do not recognize gender vulnerabilities) to gender transformative (that which promotes the shared control of resources and decision-making with women's empowerment being a key aspect to the intervention).

Culture and heritage institutions like libraries and museums have traditionally been hubs of multicultural exchange and knowledge-sharing. They can play a huge role in bringing to light the contribution of women and a space for community interaction and learning around gender issues and women's lives and histories. They serve as platforms to inspire voluntary participation in advocacy and collective climate action. These processes support inclusive governance by serving the interests of diverse groups of people, enhancing empowerment, and providing opportunities to blend indigenous, local, and scientific knowledge.

There are many success stories of cities and territories that are succeeding in making egalitarian societies through collaborative policies between government agencies, universities, cultural institutions along with the public especially women and girls using culture as a transformative tool.

One such example is that of **Dublin, Ireland**. The city council of Dublin, Ireland created organisations that were dedicated to culture (Dublin's Culture Connects in 2016 and Dublin culture company in 2018) to take forward the agenda 21 for culture and the Sustainable Development Goals. Several successful initiatives were carried out with culture as a core objective fully financed by the council that included cultural projects with communities to connect artists, groups, and villages with libraries, museums and creative places across Dublin City.³

Festivals and events that promote local culture are innovative ways to promote social cohesion and create innovative opportunities for public to come together to understand, express and participate in open discussions with various stakeholders.

The WOW (Women of the World) Foundation, launched in 2010 by Jude Kelly, former Artistic Director of Southbank Centre, London, is a female-led civil society organization. The WOW festival is one such event created by and for the local community that showcases the power of arts and culture in creating dialogue on socially relevant issues to challenge and overturn attitudes towards gender inequality. These festivals are preceded by 'Think-ins' engaging local communities to develop meaningful and more representative programming around themes such as women's roles in cultural sustainability, environmental sustainability, heritage practices, and celebration of women's intersectionality.³

Conclusion:

Inclusion of women and girls and all people irrespective of gender is key to tackling climate change, including addressing human security and climate mobility. It involves closing knowledge gaps relating to gender aspects of climate change through research, collection of gender-disaggregated data and integrating gender-related knowledge into policy making, implementation, monitoring, and communication strategies. Inclusion of cultural experts and advocates, including women who serve as traditional knowledge bearers, artists, and others, as well as those working in culture and heritage, can aid immeasurably in these processes. The members of the Climate Heritage Network stand ready to be partners in this work.

³ For examples, please see: Shaheed, Farida (2021) "Cultural Actions Supporting Gender Equality in Cities and Territories", UCLG Committee on Culture Reports, n°9, Barcelona, 29 October 2021,44-46,86;
<https://climateheritage.org/the-role-of-culture-in-climate-resilient-development/>