

CSW66 Position Statement by African Feminists, Women's Rights, and Civil Society Organizations

Non-Governmental Organization
Commission on the Status of Women






Preamble

Acknowledging that Africa is the most vulnerable continent to climate change despite having contributed the least in creating this crisis and that African women in their different diversities have been and continue to be disproportionately affected. Climate change is a significant setback to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. During such disasters, women and girls are often left homeless and are condemned to destitution and extreme poverty. Moreover, the climate crisis compounds challenges women farmers face in gaining equal footing in the agricultural market where women and girls dominate labour contributions. Women do not have the same access to markets and credit.

Aware that women living in rural areas make up more than 70% of Africa's poor[1]. These women are the ones most connected to food and primary agricultural production and that they are also the most knowledgeable about land, water resource and biodiversity conservation. As a result, African women are the most vulnerable to climate change effects due to their dependence on land, forest, and water resource-based livelihood activities. In addition, women face the most health-induced risks such as sexual and reproductive health due to climate change.

Recognizing that the key vulnerable sectors identified by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) include agriculture, food and water. Sub-Saharan Africa is expected to suffer the most not only in terms of reduced agricultural productivity and increased water insecurity, but also in increased exposure to coastal flooding and extreme climatic events, and increased risks to human health.

[1] <https://www.un.org/africarenewal/magazine/july-2005/african-women-battle-equality>



Recognizing that the continent is faced with exponential collateral damage, causing systemic risks to the economies, water and food systems, infrastructure investments, public health, agriculture, and livelihoods which weighs heavily on women whose lives and well-being are tied to the land, and that these challenges are also rooted in systems of patriarchy and other systems of oppression including capitalism, neocolonialism, global imperialism.


Concerned that the climate crisis threatens to undo Africa's modest development gains and disintegrate the continent into higher levels of extreme poverty, and gender inequality amidst ongoing armed conflicts and wars. This is why addressing the climate crisis requires that Africa is considered a special needs and circumstances region.

Concerned that most governments, particularly of the Global North countries which are solely responsible for the crisis are delaying their actions to address the climate change emergency.

Aware that developed countries and multinational corporations are primarily responsible for the current climate crisis. However, the impacts of climate change devastate people who are least responsible for triggering the crisis: indigenous and local communities in the Global South, particularly women and girls, and low-income communities in developed countries. These are people who have the least access to resources and technology to adapt to the effects of climate change and to take action to mitigate it. For instance, African women have the least capacity to access green energy. Moreover, energy poverty disproportionately hurts women and girls, who have to spend up to 20 hours a week gathering biomass (wood, dung, crop waste)[1].

[1] End Energy Poverty and Empower Women - Forbes.
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/judeclemente/2015/01/22/alleviating-energy-poverty-and-empowering-females/>

[2] <https://www.e-ir.info/2021/09/30/climate-change-human-mobility-and-feminist-political-economy/>

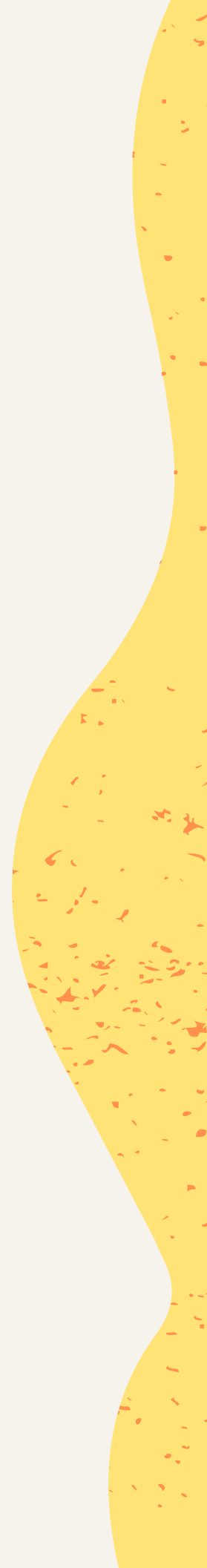



Acknowledging that the current climate crisis is characterized by both sudden and gradual onset environmental impacts such as cyclones, volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, droughts, wildfires, floods and hurricanes, has resulted in 30.7 million displacements in 2020[1]. The impacts and experiences of people affected by climate-induced disasters vary depending on one's realities as informed by their gender, age, ethnicity, geographical location, disability and social-economic status. Women and men have different patterns of mobility that are deeply embedded in the context of any society, making migration an option for some but not all. The climate crisis has for example pushed people to consider migration as a form of adaptation consequently posing several intersecting forms of oppression, particularly against women and girls. But merely counting or estimating the number of migrants does not address underlying conditions that result in migration patterns.

Aware that while everyone experiences the effects of climate change, the intensity varies disproportionately due to the various intersecting forms of oppression. The lived experiences and realities of African women and girls in their diversities have shown a direct relationship between these issues and how people live through various forms of oppression. Gender and other basis of oppression such as race, class, ability, age, sexes, shape and or reproduce vulnerabilities during climate disaster.

Concerned that women and girls are grossly underrepresented in climate decision-making positions at the United Nations global climate negotiations at all levels. At the COP summit held in 2019, approximately 80% or 155 of the 196 heads of delegation were men. Gender parity in climate leadership is estimated to be achieved only in 2068. Yet trends show that women's representation in these spaces leads countries to adopt more stringent climate change policies[1] and develop intergenerational approaches towards ensuring that the implementation of adaptation activities will not exacerbate inequalities and other vulnerabilities. Women and feminist political leadership is therefore key to the achievement of the global climate governance targets and meaningful climate action and justice in this generation.

[1] <https://www.e-ir.info/2021/09/30/climate-change-human-mobility-and-feminist-political-economy/>





Acknowledging that women's movements are putting their bodies on the frontline of resistance to resource extractivism which is linked to the broader struggles to fight capitalism and its entrenched classist, racist, sexist and patriarchal ideologies.

Concerned that extractivism, which is a process that has been described as an accumulation strategy which is based on intensive extraction of natural resources, primarily for export and is tied to the imperialist agenda whose uneven development and wealth distribution, perfected during the colonial era, pushes Africa's development agenda to the periphery. The plunder of Africa's resources which is sustained by women's unpaid care work and the household burden, has left ecosystems fragile making the continent unable to cope with the impacts of climate change.

Acknowledging that due to the exploitative and extractivist model of development, habitats and ecosystems in Africa are currently under threat from a variety of stresses such as deforestation and land degradation. In sub-Saharan Africa over 80 percent of the population depends on traditional biomass for cooking[1], and climate change is likely to be an additional stress factor. Extractivism is largely driven by fossil fuels driven production and has locked Africa and other resource-rich countries in the Global South into neo-colonial, extractivist development models which are associated with extreme poverty, conflict, violence against women and girls, and environmental harm. Camouflaged under the guise of resource-based development, extractivism is aided by international financial institutions and development agencies that promote weak environmental legislation, unjustly low taxes, low labour costs and other policy and legislative frameworks that favor the global neoliberal capitalist agenda.

Concerned that colonialism and the growth of capitalism, which can be traced back from the days of colonialism, is the main cause of global warming which has caused climate change. The harmful impacts of the socio-environmental impacts of extraction are experienced unevenly and intersect with, and reinforce the pre-existing forms of class, racial and gender injustice.

Acknowledging that gender mainstreaming in climate justice must focus on centering the most marginalized and re-imagining usual gender mainstreaming strategies in climate action while integrating a feminist analysis to recognize and address the root causes of the climate problems and advance just and inclusive solutions.

[1] <http://www.fao.org/3/i0670e03.htm>

Our Key Demands

Recognize and reward Unpaid Care Work and Resource Governance

African countries should intentionally make genuine commitments to investing in gender-responsive public services including the redistribution of gender roles during natural resource governance, including facilitating the provision of comprehensive and equitable universal social protection coverage for all. They should also ratify, implement and monitor the ILO190 convention on unpaid labour and localize climate laws, which will give access to and understanding of the contribution of grassroots communities, who can take up leading positions in amplifying grassroots voices regarding unlawful exploitation of resources that is harmful to the climate and modifies climatic conditions negatively.

Indigenous and local knowledge systems must inform climate policy and action

There is a need to focus on strengthening the role of women and girls, indigenous and local people in knowledge production and decision-making regarding climate change adaptation and finance. This should take place at various scales from international policy formation to national, local and regional management and decision-making. The climate crisis calls for more and deeper partnerships between women, girls and other local and indigenous knowledge holders to deal with the multifaceted impacts and implications of the climate crisis.



Adaptation policies based on gender inclusive, participatory processes

The knowledge, cultures and practices of women and girls, indigenous and local people whose livelihoods and lives are tied to the land have adapted to changing conditions and often carry the history of integrating approaches to adapt to climate change. The transition from indigenous and traditional practices to new land management regimes has the potential to cause environmental degradation. Therefore, it should be inclusive and informed by participatory, action-oriented processes. An approach that incorporates indigenous and local knowledge systems can provide mechanisms for conservation and ecosystem-based adaptation. Having a collective, participatory process that allows for an understanding that indigenous and local knowledge systems, cultures and practices can adapt to changing conditions can assist clarify the potential to address stewardship questions under biophysical and socio-economic transformation. In addition to adaptations to the local conditions, local and indigenous knowledge and practices can adapt to promote resilience under increased globalization. Effective climate change adaptation policies at all levels should appreciate that women, girls, men and boys experience impacts differently based on their lived realities, and contexts.



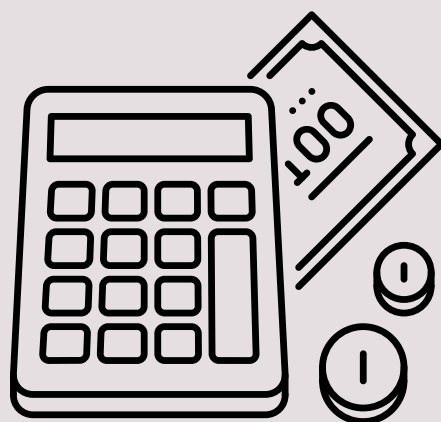
Improve adaptation finance

There is an urgent need to improve climate adaptation finance. The estimated adaptation costs in developing countries are five to ten times higher than the existing public adaptation finance flows, and the adaptation finance gap continues to widen. Most countries worldwide explicitly funded COVID-19 measures and pushed the climate change-induced risks to the periphery. While it is critical to address the COVID-19 pandemic urgently, Africa is devastated by climate change. The frequency and severity of climate-induced disasters have increased, creating a need to also treat the climate crisis as an emergency. The analysis of climate change, health pandemics, and conflict as separate problems poses a challenge in addressing all three which are inextricably linked. At least 57% of the countries experiencing the most significant burden of the combination of climate-induced and political fragility hazards are located in Africa. These risks transcend boundaries, and the responses from continental bodies such as the United Nations are critical so that the climate-related security risks are identified, analyzed, and responded to.



Debt Justice and Adaptation Finance


African countries that are facing social, political, economic, and environmental crises have been intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic. For low and middle-income countries these crises have been compounded by debt burdens, constraining governments' ability to respond to the climate crisis. This phenomenon has heightened gender inequality and imperiled women's human rights. Meanwhile, the increased cost of servicing debt and decreased government revenues are hindering future spending on adaptation. Implementation of adaptation actions continues to grow slowly, with the top ten donors funding more than 2,600 projects with a principal focus on adaptation between 2010 and 2019. Meaningful participation of women and girls is critical in all the decision-making and policy-making processes. The Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change established a global goal for adaptation to climate change. There is a recognition that the world is committed to climate actions and that investment in adaptation is both necessary and urgent. There is a need for investments in the adaptation which must be sensitive to the plight of women and girls in all their diversity.



Ensure climate justice

Ensure climate justice especially in the desert and marginalized regions by enabling them to benefit from water, electricity, and energy, including renewable energy; taking into account their economic and social conditions in an attempt to improve them; making better use of resources including agriculture, rural development, access to energy, water, and sanitation projects; including women in leadership for climate change awareness and publicity campaigns. Given that climate change is fundamentally a societal issue with human rights concerns, those who have contributed least to its causes suffer most from its effects, particularly women and girls in Africa and other parts of the Global South. The Paris Agreement already recognizes this injustice. The agreement, ratified by 185 countries, links climate change and human rights, poverty eradication, and sustainable development, acknowledging the importance of gender equality and the need for women's empowerment, and appeals for climate action to be gender-responsive. Countries and regions should operationalize the Paris Agreement.





Put in place mechanisms to ensure adaptation investments reach women and girls

With limited resources for adaptation in Africa, it is challenging to ensure that investments reach the most vulnerable women, girls, men, and boys. This calls for responses that seek to challenge and eliminate gender inequality rather than exacerbate the inequalities. Based on their identities and realities, people have different adaptation needs based on where they live, how they sustain their livelihoods and their roles in their families and communities. Women and men, girls and boys, have socially determined differences too, whether in opportunities, responsibilities, or decision-making power. All of these determine how vulnerable people are to climate change.

Without understanding the gender dynamics, there is a risk that the people with the greatest need for adaptation are excluded. Effective adaptation considers the differing needs of women and men and vulnerable groups to ensure that investments are targeted where they are needed most. Women remain under-represented in decision-making in areas pertinent to climate change adaptation. Effective climate change adaptation policy making, planning and implementation must bring women and girls to the table, recognizing the value of their knowledge and potential as agents of change. The adaptation planning process is designed to make it possible to invest in concrete actions that reduce vulnerability to climate change. However, there is a risk that adaptation investments reinforce existing wealth and power structures rather than benefiting the most vulnerable women and girls. Adaptation is effective when it is equitable, providing opportunities and benefits for all people. Through such global commitments as the Paris Agreement, there is an opportunity to scale up action.

Aligning global and regional climate policy instruments with national-level action plans

State-led responses, like Planned Relocation and Displacement guidelines and frameworks, require holistically accounting for the complex relationships between the land and people. Aligning global and regional climate policy instruments with national-level action plans that center human security and gender justice are crucial pathways forward. Africa needs financial, technical, and capacity support to address loss and damage, enhance implementation of adaptation plans, integrate focus areas of the Paris Agreement Gender Action Plan (GAP) and the Warsaw Mechanism. Across all cases of climate change-induced movements of people, whether forced or voluntary, there are several problems posed to people's security, self-determination, identity, culture, loss of home, and adaptation to the ways of host communities. There is an opportunity to holistically address current insecurities that protect homes, communities, and livelihoods while at the same time using it as a prospect to transform existing social and gender inequalities. At a global level, initial reference of climate change-induced human mobility was mentioned at the UNFCCC Conference of Parties in 2010 through the Cancun Adaptation Framework and has since been recognized in the Paris Agreement, Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage, and more broadly within the Women, Peace and Security agenda and Sustainable Development Goals. This implies that any action in response to climate change-induced human migration is already a part of pre-agreed outcomes that requires localization.



A women's Rights-based approach to Loss and Damage

Action to tackle loss and damage from climate change is an independent pillar of the Paris Agreement (Article 8). Still, it fails to provide any basis for liability and compensation, which challenges achieving climate justice. Approximately a quarter of NDCs include loss and damage, and 44% of small island developing states refer to loss and damage in their NDCs[1]. Loss and damage finance needs to be scaled up according to common but differentiated responsibilities, historical accountabilities, and respective capabilities and be channeled to the communities most affected, including women and girls in all their diversity.



[1] <https://www.preventionweb.net/news/loss-and-damage-gender-equality-perspective>

Include non-economic losses to Loss and Damage

Under the UNFCCC decision text, there has been a decision to review the five-year work plan that was agreed for Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM), and increase active knowledge-sharing and how it is reflected on gender and climate justice issues. Loss and damage cannot be entirely measured in physical assets or GDP only. Women and girls' work is mainly unpaid and undervalued. Loss and damage also include non-economic losses, including loss of life, cultural heritage, or ecosystem services. Gender differences play double roles in the non-economic losses of climate. First, women often contribute to their families and communities in non-monetary ways in terms of care work, the household burden, and reconstruction after disasters. Therefore, an assessment of loss and damage based only on monetary quantifications may not consider the value of women's contribution to society in terms of loss of life or relation, to nutrition and migration. There is a need for both quantitative and qualitative analysis of loss and damage to ensure that women and girls' contributions are considered.



Use an equity and empowerment approach to Loss and Damage

A critical analysis of women's capacities and leadership roles within the gender framework is crucial through using an equity and empowerment approach. The promises made under Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage to mobilize finance are yet to be fulfilled. Disaster risk insurance is only one of the solutions, but this is problematic as it places the burden of paying the premium on vulnerable countries. Most countries in Africa cannot pay insurance premiums. It takes away money from the national budget, which compromises women's access to social services such as health and education facilities. Through gender justice lenses, Parties must assess, identify, and agree on raising an innovative source of finance to address the broader impact of loss and damage that fall outside of historical parameters.

[1] <https://www.preventionweb.net/news/loss-and-damage-gender-equality-perspective>

Implement the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

There is a slow-onset disaster where the impacts from gender context need to be addressed. As loss and damage have differential impacts to both women and men, given the scenario, there is a need to have a linkage building with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, as the Sendai Framework particularly emphasizes that "women and their participation are critical to effectively managing disaster risk and designing, resourcing and implementing gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction policies, plans, and programs; and adequate capacity-building measures need to be taken to empower women for preparedness as well as build their capacity for alternate livelihood means in post-disaster situations." Several other factors explain men and women's differentiated vulnerability to climate change and disasters. Similarly, socio-cultural norms can limit women from acquiring the information and skills necessary to escape or avoid hazards, e.g. swimming or climbing trees to escape rising water levels, accessing technology, etc. Therefore, the loss and damage assessments should include existing vulnerabilities among children, elderly persons, persons with disability, gender non-conforming persons, minority groups etc. Women and girls' representatives from disaster-affected communities need to be consulted. Parties must consider broader concepts and objectives, as well as a full range of approaches and tools of Loss and Damage mechanism that enables the synergies between gender dimensions of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation within the loss and damage assessment, ensuring that there is adequate funding for loss and damage above and beyond adaptation.

Recognizing that women and girls bear the responsibility

Recognizing that women and girls bear the responsibility for household water collection and their resultant effects on the decrease in school enrollment and educational progress, we call on member states to ensure equal, fair, and equitable access to basic water services for all (UN World Water Development Report (2012), “Water and Gender” (Chapter 35). Women and girls experience unequal access to resources and decision-making processes, with limited mobility in rural areas.



Climate financial flows and climate actions must contribute to long-term gender transformative change and pro-poor co-benefits at the local level

Climate finance, gender, and poverty are inextricably linked as climate change impacts different groups of women differently. Climate finance can inform actions that can either reduce or promote gender equity and reduce poverty. Climate finance must be designed to enable, instead of hindering, women, girls, and other marginalized populations facing the brunt of climate change. Climate change-related adaptation and mitigation strategies must have gender-differentiated impacts. Implementation of pro-poor and gender-responsive climate finance should be accelerated. If the root causes of vulnerability are not considered, the potential solutions could worsen the existing inequities while failing to confront the problems associated with climate change. There is extensive evidence that points to equitable and gender-responsive climate finance as enhancing climate response efforts while at the same time fostering poverty reduction and gender equality.

Gender Just Transition

Women and girls centred and informed just transition should focus on creating regenerative economies which centre systemic and feminist alternatives. The just transition should not be limited to just creating low emissions society but should be informed by gender justice, environmental, and social justice in ways that challenge the existing gender inequalities to address discrimination, exploitation and harmful practices. It must be a transformative process that addresses women and girls' exclusion from social protection systems to challenge gender norms, unequal power relations and structural injustices. It should promote inclusiveness. The just transition should not be an energy transition that reproduces the same inequalities in society but should address the inequalities in power and wealth distribution as society moves to clean and affordable renewable energy solutions. A just transition should transform African women and girls' existing extractive, unjust status quo into new, socially just and environmentally sustainable economies. Therefore, it should be designed in ways that move away from the privatization and commodification of nature to sustainable, equitable production and resource use, which benefits women, girls, and other marginalized members of society. This involves understanding that the GDP is not adequate and is a detrimental economic indicator that does not include the unpaid care work that women and girls do. Therefore, alternative measures must be informed by alternatives that consider the quality of life and well-being as opposed to just production because women and girls are unpaid, undervalued, and invisible in economic and social policies. Yet, society is tailored upon and dependent on care work, which is valuable, low-carbon, community-based work that must be valued and centered in the new economy.

Recognize Africa as a special needs region

The Kyoto Protocol recognized Africa for its vulnerability to climate change and considered it a special needs region. However, under the Paris agreement, Africa lost that recognition. The African Group of Negotiators on Climate Change (AGN) says Africa's special needs and circumstances need reinstating. Africa is home to 17 percent of the global population; Africa contributes less than four percent of global emissions, and climate change is the most vulnerable continent. Already experiencing 1.8 degrees warming, according to the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the AGN reports show adapting to climate change is already costing the continent between three and nine percent of their annual GDP. Unfortunately, the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) - some of the most vulnerable to climate change, opposed the motion during the 25th UN Climate change meeting in Madrid, Spain. Interestingly, 33 African countries are recognized as LDC's. Africa needs its special needs and circumstances recognized under the Paris agreement.



FINANCE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENDER ACTION PLANS



This ensures that there are gender-responsive policies to counter the effects of climate change in Africa, and sets binding strategies and objectives by adopting participatory approaches through which all stakeholders, including women and girls, are involved. Financing of the Lima Work Programme on Gender will ensure capacity strengthening, and ensure women's civil society participation throughout all the stages of political decision making: the consultation, negotiation, and decision-making on climate change; including high-level international meetings that should include representatives of women's associations in African delegations in all their meetings and conferences on climate change; and ensuring women's participation in leadership positions that decide on climate change related decisions.

NGO CSW/Africa is one of the regional forums of Non-Governmental Organization Commission on the Status of Women established in 2013 as a substantive committee under the auspices Conference of NGOs (CoNGO). NGOCSW/Africa was created to increase the effectiveness of African Civil Society participation in the Commission on the Status of women. Since its establishment NGO CSW/Africa has provided leadership to African women in mobilizing women to participate in CSW and ensuring that women effectively engage and contribute to processes leading up to, during and after the Commission. Members of NGO CSW/Africa include Zamara Foundation, FEMNET (African Women's Development and Communication Network), Egyptian Feminist Union, Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS), Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA), Servitas Cameroon, Kadirat Tunisia, Women in Law Southern Cameroon (WLSA) Women in Law and Development in Africa (WiLDAF) and Women for Change Cameroon. <http://www.ngocswafrica.org>