

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 call to action for strengthening gender equality and accelerating women's empowerment worldwide.

The United Nations theme for the observance of IWD 2022 is “*Gender equality today for a sustainable tomorrow*”. This theme recognizes the contribution of women and girls around the world who are leading the charge on climate change adaptation. 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 hosting International Women's Day as a way of demonstrating our commitments to women's empowerment and the advancement of gender equality. We know that women's empowerment and gender equality are crucial in order to achieve food security- particularly noting the important role women play in the food security and nutrition of families. 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.

2022 Theme: Women and climate change

In the past couple of years, the world has witnessed an increase in temperatures and natural disasters due to the ever-growing threat of climate change. Due to their often-disadvantaged status in many societies around the world, women and girls are at a higher risk of being exposed to the worst threats of climate change. It has been demonstrated that natural disasters and climate change are impacting women and girls harder, considering their disproportionate dependence on threatened natural resources and their higher representation in poverty.¹ Women and girls are also face greater risks of becoming climate refugees- those having to abandon their homes – whether temporarily or permanently - in search for a more fertile and liveable land that is less affected by increasing temperatures and droughts.

Globally 80 percent of the people displaced due to climate-related disasters are women. Women have less access than men to resources and decision-making bodies, such as land, credit, agricultural inputs, extension services and skills and capacities training which greatly affects their ability to adapt to climate change. When homes are destroyed by climatic shocks, such as hurricanes, cyclones and earthquakes, women and girls are forced to flee to temporary displacement camps, where they are often exposed to increased violence. Further, for displaced women and girls in humanitarian settings, the lack of access to sexual and reproductive health services is one of the leading causes of death. 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.²

In addition to essential services for women and girls, such as sexual and reproductive, health care, education, social protection and GBV response are also disrupted by acute climatic disasters. A recent

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/chronicle/article/womenin-shadow-climate-change>

² [The five devastating reasons climate change affects women more than men | Euronews](#)

report by the Malala Fund indicated that the impacts of climate change will affect the level of education of 4 million girls in low- and middle-income countries in 2021 alone. This figure will increase to 12.5 million by 2025 if not addressed.³ Particularly in rural communities where climatic hazards, such as droughts, floods and temperature changes affect agricultural yield and subsequently income, families may be faced with hard choices about how to use limited resources. Often this results in girls being pulled out of school and an increase in the risk of child marriage as a coping mechanism. Climate change disasters can 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

The increased participation of women 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 2019, approximately 80% of the heads of delegations were men.⁴ 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. Although some progress has been made in gender parity in climate leadership, it is estimated that at the current rate, full 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 core to the climate change agenda. The need for gender balance was first mentioned in the outcomes of Cop7 in 2001. In 2019, states agreed to strengthen efforts in supporting gender-responsive climate change action.⁵ 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 insight.⁶ We know that women's active and meaningful participation is needed in the design of any solution for their needs to be accurately considered.

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 female representation in national parliaments and stricter climate change policies as well as lower carbon emissions.⁷ Women's increased access to leadership positions is therefore an important contribution to the climate change solution. A sustainable future is more possible when women are given equitable access to meaningful participation in governments and other important decision-making bodies.

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

Objectives

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

³ <https://assembly.malala.org/stories/climate-change-is-forcing-girls-out-of-school>

⁴ <https://wedo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Factsheet-UNFCCC-Progress-Achieving-Gender-Balance-2019.pdf>

⁵ https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cp2019_13a01E.pdf

⁶ https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cp2021_04E.pdf

⁷ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0176268017304500>

- 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 transformation through gender transformative approaches.
- Highlight the climate change issue 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 most affected by climate change and natural disasters, making up the majority of climate refugees
- Women's participation in decision-making processes regarding climate change adaptation is crucial for sustainability
- A sustainable future is only possible when women and girls are given meaningful and equitable access to opportunities and resources

Draft Agenda

Time	Session	Speaker
14:00	Welcome remarks	WFP FAO
11:50	Keynote address	Permanent Representative of a Member State (TBD)
10:40	Panel: Women's role in climate change adaptation	Women activists in sustainability, climate change adaptation and resilience (TBD)
11:30	Q&A	Moderator
11:50	Closing remarks	IFAD

Moderator: TBD