

Thematic Session

Climate, Feminism in the context of the environmental crisis and the climate emergency
29 March 2021, Generation Equality Forum

There is a direct relationship between gender equality, women's empowerment and climate change. Women are disproportionately vulnerable to the effects of climate change which could exacerbate existing gender disparities. In addition, women have unique knowledge and skills that can help make the response to climate change more effective and sustainable. At the local level, women's inclusion at the leadership level has led to improved outcomes of climate related projects and policies.

Climate change has a greater impact on those who are most reliant on resources for their livelihoods and those who have less capacity to respond to disasters and hazards, such as droughts, floods and hurricanes. Women commonly face higher risks and greater burdens from the impacts of climate change in situation of poverty. Furthermore, women's unequal participation in the labor market and in decision-making processes exacerbate inequalities and often prevent women from fully contributing to climate-related planning, policymaking, and implementation.

Women and marginalized people find it difficult to fight for survival, as the impacts of climate change add to structural inequalities such as gender-based violence and discrimination. This is even more accentuated for those living in small island states and territories, in less developed countries, in the Global South and for indigenous peoples, impoverished people in urban areas, rural and remote communities.

The current climate crisis has led to an increase in disasters, forced migration, loss of livelihood; rising food prices; and regional conflicts over scarce resources such as water or fertile land. Adding to this crisis is the accelerated loss of biodiversity, the contamination of soils, food and water, and conflicts driven by the extractive industry. These intersecting crises are deeply gendered crises, with often devastating effects for women and girls around the world, already facing inequalities in decision-making, access to education, health and financial services and lacking bodily autonomy.

The feminist and environmental movements have emphasized time and again that true solutions to multiple environmental problems must address the root causes of these problems and not be limited to occasional and politically expedient fixes. Women's access to green jobs and climate-resilient livelihoods will be a key steppingstone to help us bounce back. We need to make sure that economic recovery packages account for climate change and leave no one behind.

Martine Gayon

UN Representative, New York