



On March 25th the **66th meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)** drew to a close with the adoption by consensus of **Agreed Conclusions on gender equality** and the empowerment of all women and girls in the **context of climate change**, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes. There was broad based support from Member States of the need for gender-responsive action to address and tackle the climate crisis and the recognition that this requires immediate and urgent action. Over a two week period, and in parallel to the formal sessions, interactive panels and member state negotiations a marathon of some 800 virtual sessions formed the **NGO CSW Forum** on the same theme. The Forum was aimed at informing, engaging and inspiring the grassroots efforts and advocacy needed to empower women and girls in the face of climate change and environmental disaster. This issue of *News from the UN* shares some glimpses from these events.

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The climate crisis is not “gender neutral”!

Heat waves, droughts, rising sea levels, and extreme storms disproportionately affect women, deepening existing gender inequalities. Studies confirm that women are more likely to live in poverty than men and have less access to basic human rights enabling them to acquire land and move freely. They also face systematic violence that escalates during periods of instability and crisis. In a recent report, the UN Association highlighted five facts linking **gender inequality and climate change**.



1. Women face disproportionately high health risks from the effects of climate change.

Climate change threatens reproductive and maternal health. Women are more impacted by health issues related to vector borne diseases as well as being at higher risk of food insecurity than men and boys.

2. Women face barriers to leaving areas prone to climate change and natural disaster.

When they do manage to leave, girls and women face higher risks of unemployment, child marriage, human trafficking, and gender-based violence.



3. Gender-specific threats are used to silence female environmental leaders.

Forms of violence range from verbal abuse to sexual harassment and rape

4. Women are excluded from decision-making spaces and climate change negotiations.

women form less than 30% of national and global climate negotiating bodies

5. Female-led groups do not receive sufficient climate funding

Only 3% of philanthropic environmental funding supports girls’ and women’s environmental activism.

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Gender Equality – Disaster Risk Reduction.

How does **coastal erosion caused by climate change** affect **Indigenous women**? Testimony by an indigenous woman in an informative session during CSW 66 revealed the impact of coastal erosion on women and food security in indigenous communities along the **Louisiana coastline of the USA**. Two thirds of the 35,000 canals carved out by oil and gas companies over the last century are no longer used and remain unfilled. The result is a loss of vital marshland which makes the area more vulnerable to flooding and poses a threat to the life and livelihood of native American communities. With the loss of land and homes due to the incursion of salt water, vegetation dies, food sources are lessened, and livelihoods in the fishing industry are lost. What can be done? A campaign has been launched by the **Lowlander Center** to fill in the canals and restore the marshlands. ➔ [Read more....](#) ➔ [Watch the video](#)

Gender, Climate Change and Resilience

Throughout CSW, reports and personal testimonies highlighted that fact that **women are showing remarkable resilience** in the face of climate change. They are often the ones leading local climate action movements, championing clean sources of energy, and building alternatives that focus on cooperation and sustainability. From **Samoa to northern Canada**, from the **Philippines to Malawi**, women shared concrete initiatives of resilience in the face of crisis, promoting simple actions that often draw on indigenous wisdom. Recognising the important contributions of women as decision makers, educators, carers, and experts across sectors can lead to transformative impact on communities and successful, long-term solutions to climate change. ➔ Watch [a short video](#)



In the small island states of the Pacific, **women are active in mangrove reforestation.** Mangroves absorb **10 times more carbon dioxide** than trees on land and are vital to protecting the coastal eco-system. They help to revive, restore and even reverse negative impacts of climate change

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Women in countries as diverse as **Tanzania, Palestine, and Nigeria** have been active in the search for solutions to water shortage and other related environmental problems. Once they recognized that access to water is a right and not charity, they have been engaged as proactive participants in addressing water problems. The initiatives taken have empowered them and helped to change perspectives from domination and extractivism to being guided by a vision of care and responsibility in the use of land, water and forest. Several speakers highlighted the fact that African eco-feminism emphasises our dependence on and interdependence with all life forms. This recognition highlights the urgency of defending land, lives and ways of living.



As “**Equal Measures Partnership**” witnessed in their presentation of the **Gender Index**, data has power. It is an important tool for working towards gender equality. But data is not just numbers. It includes storytelling and film. If we marry the story and the numbers, together with music and drama, we can move the mind and the heart together. This is at the heart of the change in lifestyle that is required to address the climate crisis. Telling the story and recounting the narrative, women are engaging in climate action.

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Although women in **Mindanao (Philippines)** have been active in the fishing industry for decades, they have generally remained almost invisible. Now, women are taking on increasingly important roles in Eco-tourism as was demonstrated by the Bojo Aloguinsan Tourism Association which was recently awarded the **UN World Tourism Award**. Their expertise prepares them to serve as conservationists and eco-tourism guides. Women monitor the



condition of the **coral reefs**, and provide early warning alerts. They also serve as leaders in their in coastal communities in undertaking beach clean-up. They lead in helping others to adopt **sustainable fishing methods**.



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How do Girls use their voices as climate activists to call for changes that adults fail to achieve? Their voices were strong as they shared their initiatives. * From songs and music groups, to petitions, marches and resistance through “Fridays for Future”, articulate young women from India and Uganda, and Canada, shared practical initiatives they had taken to raise the awareness of their peers, address e-waste, promote regenerative agriculture and address period poverty. Organizing their peer group activists in “**Youth beats for climate**” and “**Cool climate club**” girls as young as 14

spoke of using their voices to secure a future that is threatened by adult inaction and inadequate short-range solutions to the climate crisis. Youth are changing their lifestyles and eating habits, calling political leaders to account for weak commitments made that are yet to be implemented.



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A recurring theme in many of the sessions related to **land access and ownership**. Where women lack control over the land, their initiatives are stunted. Not only do patriarchal cultural norms limit their agency, but the priority given to corporations over local populations has led to land grabbing, and large-scale exploitation of natural resources to the detriment of the local populations. **However, examples from Uganda and Ghana** showed how women working together in coalitions and cooperatives have been able to advocate for the introduction of new laws granting women the right to own land.

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RSHM Briefs.



As the invasion of **Ukraine** intensified during the month of March the **Religious at the UN (RUN)** held a time of prayer and solidarity in front of the UN. The initiative was supported by the **RSHM 93rd St.**

Community who helped to prepare the prayer sheets and scarves in the colors of the Ukrainian flag. A small gathering of Ukrainian citizens were demonstrating nearby and came to join us in the time of prayers.

Over a period of two days at the end of March, a **MODEL UN Conference – Sagrado MUN** - was held in the **Colegio SCM, Lisbon**.

The Assembly Hall was full of 350 teenage “United Nations delegates” who spent two days focusing on peace, justice, and security in the world through the lens of issues that included “*Ethical conflicts: Social Inequalities*” and “*Russia vs Ukraine*”. Participants learnt the skills of negotiating issues of vital importance in our world today, adopting the perspective of a given member state.



Distribution

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