



Time to Listen, Time to Act – Centering Women, Children, and Girls in Policymaking at COP28

UNANIMA International Policy Statement

At last year’s COP27 held in Sharm El-Sheik, Egypt, UNANIMA International sought to amplify the messages and lived experiences shared with us from the grassroots level, emphasizing the intersection between gender justice and climate justice. Yet many reports from NGOs and climate change leaders have highlighted the continued exclusion of groups most experiencing the ramifications of climate change from entering COP spaces and participating in the Blue Zone, effectively excluding them from a seat at the table where global policy decisions are made. Research conducted by the BBC found that women made up only 34% of the committee members in negotiation rooms at COP27, and many country teams were made up of more than 90% men.¹ This is despite Parties’ collective pledge to increase women’s representation at COP negotiations back in 2011.² Moreover, while COP27 was meant to be the “Implementation COP” and important strides were certainly made, the Global Stocktake conducted over the last year and which is set to conclude at COP28 indicates that we are not doing enough to implement the Paris Agreement agenda. The world has fallen short of its climate goals, and developed countries have failed to deliver on many of their commitments from past COPs and agreements.

To our members and the countless women, girls, children, and families suffering intersecting vulnerabilities only worsened by the climate crisis: we see you. we hear you. And we too are tired of broken promises and failed commitments. *We stand in solidarity with the climate activists, youth, women, Indigenous leaders, and civil society organizations paving the way for systemic change towards a more sustainable relationship with our planet and environment.*

At COP28, UNANIMA International will again advocate for gender equality as a cornerstone of environmental justice, ensuring that the on-the-ground realities of women and girls are not cast aside or simply limited to one thematic “Gender Day” throughout the Conference. We need a whole-of-society approach and the political will to make good on the Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the 2022 UN General Assembly Resolution which officially recognized the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.⁷ We need to learn from both the gaps in progress and the best practices detailed by the Global Stocktake, and apply those lessons learned as we come together to decide on a course of action. At UNANIMA International we are guided by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its pledge “to leave no one behind, especially those furthest left behind.” As important as concrete climate actions are to a program of sustainable development, it is equally important not to lose sight of the particular contexts in which those actions are actualized. COP28 provides an opportunity to correct course and accelerate action to tackle the climate crisis, and the inclusion and empowerment of vulnerable communities is necessary to arrive at

¹ <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/the-gender-imbalance-at-cop27>

² <https://www.cfr.org/blog/women-underrepresented-cop27-summit>

an outcome that brings us together for the preservation of future generations on Earth. The urgency of this moment cannot be understated.

UNANIMA International’s advocacy work and research on Family Homelessness has taken us to places like Kenya, the Philippines, Madagascar, India, Brazil, Mexico, and Australia where the climate crisis isn’t just another item on an agenda – whole livelihoods, lands, and species face extreme and existential environmental threats. This is especially true for women and girls, who are even more profoundly impacted by climate change as entrenched gender inequalities decrease their access to resources and increase their additional risk for poor health, gender violence, and trafficking. The UN Environment estimated in 2022 that 80% of people displaced by climate change are women,³ and testimonies shared with us from the grassroots illustrate the ways in which climate change has exacerbated the displacement and homelessness of women all over the world. One woman from Kenya detailed her experience with climate-induced displacement and starvation due to drought, which compounded by the unequal access of women to land and assets in her community led to her living on the street and later surrendering some of her children to a local orphanage. Her story exemplifies the gendered impacts of climate change and the risk multiplication that happens to vulnerable people already living on the margins of society, in turn pointing to the *need for gender-responsive policymaking and the empowerment of women with lived experience to be agents of change*.

Ensuring that the needs, concerns, and unique realities of women and girls are adequately addressed is crucial for improved climate governance outcomes at every level, as the goals of sustainable development and gender equality are intrinsically linked. As the UN Development Programme asserts, “transformative changes require that legal frameworks empower women, enable their engagement, and protect their environmental rights.”⁴ Climate change mitigation, disaster reduction, and adaptation policies cannot be holistically developed without the inclusion of women, who make up half of the world’s population and play a critical role in influencing and accelerating sustainable climate action and environmental justice.

Policy Recommendations

In our Publications, UNANIMA International has offered sets of policy and advocacy recommendations based on the findings from our research and the testimonies shared with us from vulnerable communities. Many of the recommendations related to environmental protections and climate change are especially relevant in the lead up to and the months after COP28. As such, we ask all COP Parties and stakeholders to:

- Acknowledge the strong connections between the political, economic, social, and environmental problems the world is currently facing, for example the link between the increasing number of climate disasters and the increasing rate of Family Homelessness.
- Mitigate migration toward urban areas located on vulnerable coasts by increasing allocation of funds to support the livelihoods of rural communities. This will support poverty eradication and increase employment opportunities throughout Member States’ territories.
- Agree to a rapid, monitored, and equitable global phase-out of fossil fuels in all sectors by 2050, and take actions to transition towards green economies.
- Incorporate a gender perspective across all climate action efforts, recognizing the ways in which the climate crisis disproportionately affects women and girls and exacerbates gender inequalities. Tailor policies to the unique vulnerabilities women and girls experience during a climate-related crisis and identify gaps in gender mainstreaming in climate policies.

³ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2022/07/climate-change-exacerbates-violence-against-women-and-girls>

⁴ <https://www.undp.org/blog/gender-equality-cornerstone-environmental-and-climate-justice>

- Prioritize the engagement of women in the design, delivery, and assessment of inclusive climate interventions and sustainable energy transitions. Empower women in decision-making spaces at COP and center gender equality beyond vulnerability, for example by promoting (indigenous) women's sustainable land use practices.
- Deliver on gender-responsive climate financing, including direct financing to support women and girls most impacted by climate change. This is critical for a just transition to a more sustainable future.
- Assess the gender-differentiated impacts of climate change, and invest in the procurement of gender-disaggregated data and gender analysis.
- Ensure gender-responsive implementation of climate action policies by addressing gender barriers and simplifying access. Provide adequate technologies, capacity building, and support to women enacting sustainable development measures in their communities.