

Task Force 02

SUSTAINABLE CLIMATE ACTION AND INCLUSIVE JUST ENERGY TRANSITIONS

Enhancing Role of Young Girls and Women in Climate Action through Fair and Equitable Access to Technology

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Abstract

Environmental injustice towards women and girls has been recognized as a major concern by the Women's Empowerment Working Group set up under India's G20 Presidency in 2023. Their close association with agriculture, forestry and other natural resource systems not only puts them at risk of loss and damage on account of climate hazards, but the same association and their role as caregivers in the community uniquely positions them to contribute to as well as anchor climate resilience efforts. This vulnerability to climate change and potential as agents of change in climate action calls for enhanced inclusion of young girls and women in climate discourses and decision-making.

In order to operationalize this, technology transfer from Global North to Global South, and within Global South, to young girls and women in backward communities of the developing countries is paramount. By enhancing equal and fair access to climate mitigation and adaptation technologies, especially related to renewable energy, young girls and women can be both economically empowered and safeguarded against the impact of climate change. Through transfer of technologies such as AI and open data platforms and building communities' capacities to use these, gaps which currently prevent participation of women in the decision-making processes can be resolved.

In this context, this Policy Brief draws from existing mechanisms and good practices across the G20 economies to devise recommendations for promoting an equal and fair access to climate technologies for equipping young to combat the effect of climate change. Adoption of these recommendations will not only improve adaptive capacities but also enhance women's representation in climate action at local, national and global level among the G20 economies.

Keywords: Policy Reforms, Climate Financing, Technology Transfer, Gender Inclusion, Social Equity

Diagnosis of the Issue

Climate change impacts marginal and vulnerable communities in more ways as they are most reliant on natural resources for their livelihoods and/or who have the least capacity to respond to natural hazards, such as storm surges, droughts, and floods. According to IPCC Report 2022, “Gender and other social inequities (e.g., racial, ethnic, age, income, geographic location) compound vulnerability to climate change impacts. [...] Addressing inequities in access to resources, assets, and services as well as participation in decision-making and leadership is essential to achieving gender and climate justice.”

While the world grapples with the triple planetary crisis, studies have noted that women share the burden of this crisis. According to UN Women, climate-related extreme events can lead to increased violence against women and girls. We know that biodiversity loss places profound pressures on women and girls as land managers and resource users. As food producers, women are frequently at greater risk through endocrine-disrupting chemicals in pesticides or persistent organic pollutants.

Developing countries in the Global South, and within these, young girls and women with their pre-existing economic vulnerabilities, bear a disproportionate impact of this polycrisis. Traditionally responsible for securing food, water and fuel for their households, unavailability of these resources due to climate change require them to travel longer distances, increasing drudgery and exposing them to greater health and safety risks. They are often also the first to drop out of school and/or engage in menial jobs when a crop fails, or income dwindles due to climatic shocks. They comprise 80% of all those displaced by climate change. Due to their limited access to information, technology,

decision making opportunities and resources, they are also 14 times more likely to die than men in case of climate-induced disasters.

Factors that make young girls and women vulnerable to climate change also uniquely position them to act as first responders in building community resilience against it. In times of crisis, young girls and women care for sick and injured, support post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation efforts. Their heavy dependence on agriculture, forestry and other natural resource systems has made them learn to work in harmony with nature. Passed through generations, their traditional knowledge of soil, water and forest management is key to decelerating climate change and can be preserved for replication across different countries and generations.

Despite their potential, young girls and women have been excluded from shaping climate policies, strategies and programmes. Less than 2% of national climate strategies mention girls. More than half of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) across 160 countries do not make any reference to women or gender. Only one-third of 192 national energy frameworks from 137 countries include some gender considerations – this too, in context to women as a vulnerable group instead of agents of change towards climate action. Through empowering them with access to information, financing and technological resources, and ensuring their fair representation in decision-making at different levels (local, subnational, national and global), climate change can be tackled in a more effective manner and climate justice secured for all.

International forums and accords have acknowledged this challenge. The Women's Empowerment Working Group - set up under India's G20 Presidency in 2023 – has identified environmental injustice towards women and girls as a major concern. This builds upon India's G20 Summit Declaration in 2023 that advocated for “an increased

women’s participation, partnership, decision-making and leadership in climate mitigation and adaptation, disaster risk reduction strategies and policy frameworks on environmental issues.” The Cancun Agreements adopted at the UNFCCC COP16 (2010), the 18th Session of UNFCCC negotiations in Doha (2012), and the formation of Feminist Action for Climate Justice Action Coalition through the Generation Equality Forum (2021) also point towards climate justice with an increased recognition of the role of women as changemakers.

Addressing climate justice for young girls and women needs to be tackled on three fronts:

A. Representation in natural resource governance and decision-making on

climate action: Often it is noted that women have greater dependence with nature and natural resources but get excluded when decisions are taken for its management and governance, reducing their agency.

B. Data and knowledge gaps, leading to policy and financial challenges:

In the absence of absolute numbers, information and data, responses related to disaster risk reduction, mitigation, and green transition policies in the Global South for young girls and women are greatly limited. This undermines the development of governance and financial solutions for empowering them and reducing their climate change burden.

C. Access to information and technologies for women for combating climate

shocks: Especially in rural and tribal communities in the Global South, women could be seen depending upon the male members of their household for mobile phones, do not have access to ‘soft’ technology in terms of information (on insurance schemes, control measures for climate induced crop diseases etc) and

struggle with capacity and knowledge gaps to handle the ‘hard’ technology such as clean energy solutions.

Recommendations

Through the G20 Presidency, Brasil has an opportunity to address the above mentioned challenges and steer a systemic shift towards gender-inclusive and just climate action among G20 member countries. Women’s representation in decision-making can be enhanced at local, national and international level in climate action through the following recommendations.

At a local level,

a. Through capacity building and training, young girls and women can be empowered to act as data collectors and monitoring agents for the natural resources they so heavily depend upon and/or govern. Development Alternatives has been building capacities of school going children, including young girls, on testing quality of water through water-testing kits in the Udaipur district of Rajasthan State in India. This hasn’t only resulted in enhanced vigilance among them and, through them, among their families, but has also provided data to identify patterns and suggest corrective policy solutions. Similarly, through the ‘Solar Mama’ project, Barefoot College has trained 1708 rural women from underserved communities in 96 countries to become solar engineers and provide renewable electricity to their villages.

- b. Similarly, satellite and other technology solutions can be made available to young girls and women for self-monitoring of climate solutions – leading to inclusive data governance and decision-making on corrective interventions.
- c. Through women’s participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions and Gram Sabhas, the existing social contract involving young girls and women can be strengthened and their representation in collective decision making improved.

The G20 could encourage such technology solutions through StartUp20 and promote diffusion among young girls and women in coordination with the Women20 Engagement Group.

At a national level,

- a. Conditioning for social inclusion should happen from early on. The G20 member countries should make provision for climate justice to be added as a subject in higher and secondary education. Through e-learning solutions, this could also be made available across different platforms, countries, and generations. This would build intergenerational awareness on the unequal climate burden shared by young girls and women, and nudge the future generation/changemakers to design, develop and deliver solutions that leverage women as agents of change instead of mere beneficiaries.
- b. These countries should also enhance women’s representation in green sectors. On average, there are 76% fewer women than men working in the energy sector, with only one in five senior level or leadership roles in the energy sector held by a woman. A survey covering 72 countries found that women represent only 6% of the ministerial positions responsible for national energy policies and programmes. **The G20 Women’s**

Empowerment Group, as a part of its study, could assess the country policies for gender inclusion at designing stage and suggest best practices and solutions.

Similarly, at the international level, **the G20 could ensure representation of the most unheard voices from the Global South through leveraging digital technologies.** More and more young girls and women from local and Indigenous communities, from the Small Island Development States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) could be involved in different working groups to share their stories.

Enablers to Enhanced Representation

Enhancing women's representation in decision-making is also dependent upon availability of robust data to establish incidental and representation challenges faced by women, and finally enabling technology and information mechanisms to support it. These are listed below as enablers.

Enabler 1: Closing data gap for evidence-based climate policies and programming


a. The Women's Empowerment Working Group shall be commissioning research on the incidences of environmental injustice in the lives of women and girls, and the actions and public policies related to this matter among the G20 member countries. Cases of public policies empowering women to combat climate injustice and own the decision-making processes is crucial to this research. Satellite mapping and other digital technologies could map these stories to the locations accurately, which could be positioned through UN Women, Women20 Engagement Group and other forums for cross-country knowledge exchange and South-South Cooperation.

b. Best practices identified through the research should feed into climate policies including but not limited to the National Determined Contributions, National and State Action Plans for Climate Change, Disaster Risk Reduction and Green Transition Policies, which could then be assessed and monitored for its impact on the well-being, agency and access to opportunities for women through gender disaggregated data. Considering the scale of this exercise, young girls and women from within the communities can be employed and their capacities built on the data collection tools to capture the ground impact of these policies in a regular and self-governing manner. **This data should annually feed into the Disaster Risk Reduction, Development, Energy Transitions, and Environment and Climate Sustainability Engagement Groups for setting their issue notes and priorities under G20.**

Enabler 2: Building information channels for young girls and women

a. A basic provision of enabling access to mobile phones and internet services for young girls and women, especially in the rural and tribal communities, is essential to activate any form of information channel. In cases where per capita availability cannot be ensured, community radios, phone booths and internet centers could be employed to provide these services. Taking it a step ahead, women could be trained to provide these services, leading to their economic empowerment. **The Women's Empowerment Working Group within the G20 could propose this as a part of its compendium on climate change and its impact on young girls and women.**

b. **Among the non-economic losses and damages of climate change is the loss of traditional knowledge.** This ranges from crops to grow in erratic monsoon and preventing pest and diseases to predicting weather events, storing, and managing crops in



a manner that works in harmony with nature. Open data repositories and traditional knowledge databases can conserve this heritage through translating, storing, and making it accessible for continued use across countries and generations. Similar databases have been deployed in four countries in the South Pacific and are regularly used by their national meteorological services and partner organizations. As anchors of this intellectual property, young girls and women have an important role to play in this process, **the information from which could feed into the G20 Bioeconomy Initiative and be positioned through the G20 Radio Bulletin.** International agencies working on data governance (such as Open Collective) could be engaged on this node.

c. Young girls and women should have fair access to clean energy cookstoves, solar rooftops and other renewable energy technologies as well as capacities to be able to run and maintain these. In most cases, international and domestic climate projects make provision of technology distribution, but since the communities' capacities to use them are not built, the technology is either run sub-optimally or isn't run at all. This could be resolved through investing into capacity building and education for young girls and women to be able to operate climate technologies. Sufficient provisions are also required to **train, mentor and financially support** them in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) to be able to engineer solutions and pivot from beneficiaries to solution designers and providers. **The Employment Working Group, the Energy Transition Working Group and the Women's Empowerment Working Group could co-anchor this within the G20 structure.**

d. A shift in perspective is also needed in regard to the emerging applications of artificial intelligence (AI). **The G20 Research and Innovation Working Group could invest into identifying and disseminating best practices related to using AI for**

community resilience building against climate change, especially of young girls and women.

All of this would require financial resources, which makes it the third enabler. Through pushing for gender inclusivity in investments for climate solutions, the G20 Sustainable Finance Working Group and Financial Inclusion Working Group within the Finance Track could lead those efforts.

Scenario of Outcomes

The following outcomes are expected to emerge from the adoption of the above-mentioned recommendations for the G20 and its various working groups and engagements.

- a. Quantitative and qualitative data/evidence establishes a clear understanding on the impact of climate change on young girls and women. This, along with the North-South and South-South exchange of best practices regarding policies that promote climate justice, lead to focused policy and financial solutions especially in the Global South. Through capacitating women as data governors and monitoring agents, the data collection process is sustained at low-cost and in a way that leads directly to local decision-making.
- b. Adoption of digital technology leads to conservation of traditional knowledge as a cultural heritage and ensures its accessibility across countries and generations. Enhanced access to climate adaptation and mitigation technologies enables young girls and women to not only build their own resilience/decarbonize but nudge that for the whole community.
- c. Enhanced women representation in decision-making at local, national and international levels in climate actions, including as participants in the G20, Adaptation Futures and other international forum's processes through digital technology, results in more pragmatic action plans in alignment with the Paris Agreement and in spirit of the Common But Differentiated Responsibilities principles.

In a longer run, this would lead to a more effective climate action in a manner that it leaves no one behind.

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