



TAKE URGENT ACTION TO COMBAT CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACTS

Sustainable Development Goals from a feminist viewpoint

The participation of women in decision-making has important implications for mitigating climate change.

Is climate change the greatest challenge facing humanity and the planet?

- The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) estimates that over the next 50 years there could be **250 million to 1 billion displaced persons**¹ owing to the climate.
- An annual average of 21.5 million people have been forcibly displaced each year since 2008 by sudden threats related to the climate, such as floods, storms, forest fires and extreme temperatures.
- **Women represented more than 80% of persons displaced by climate change.** They constitute 20 million of the 26 million persons (77%) who it is estimated have been displaced by climate change.²
- During and after disasters, the **rates of sexual and gender violence often increase:** it has been estimated up to 300%. Similarly, it has also been shown that human trafficking increases from 20% to 30% during disasters.³

In 2013, the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in its *Fifth Assessment Report*, categorically concluded that **climate change is real and human activities are its main cause.** Science has demonstrated, with a reliability of 95%, that human activity is the principal cause and to curb it, it will be necessary to substantially and sustainably reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Can the 2030 Agenda fight climate change from the current logic of economic growth?

Feminism, along with many other social movements, is fully aware that **climate change is the product of an economic model where an extractive logic and processes of accumulation and exacerbated consumerism prevail** that generate millions of expelled and displaced persons and destroy and deplete natural resources. Moreover, feminism underlines the fact that this economic model should be understood as **part of the patriarchal system.**

It is an economic model where large transnational companies are the main culprits responsible for climate change, being the biggest GHG-emitting agents. For example, in Spain, ten companies emit 65% of all the CO₂ originating from the Spanish industrial and energy sectors.⁴

These transnational companies, that shape corporate power, enjoy an unprecedented concentration of power that permits them to impose their interests across the planet without there being any opposing mechanisms to control them. This results in the militarisation of territories, the dismantling of local economies, the contamination of water, an increase in diseases and the generation of violence. And, most importantly, **it generates sexual violence against women** as a means of annihilating the social and community fabric that contributes to eradicating any possible **resistance arising from the communities.**

1. http://blogs.fuhem.es/forotransiciones/wp-content/uploads/sites/51/2017/05/GranEncrucijada_feb2017_baja.pdf

2. Women's Environmental Network. Gender and the Climate Change Agenda: The Impacts of Climate Change on Women and Public Policy. 2010

3. United Nations Women. Why Is Climate Change a Gender Issue?. 2014. + UNEP Women at the Frontline of Climate Change - Gender Risks and Hopes, 2010

4. <https://www.diagonalperiodico.net/global/20984-top-ten-empresas-mas-contaminan.html>



How does climate change impact the lives of women?

Climate change impacts the lives of men and women differently. The distinct climatic impacts are not only the consequence of this model of economic development, but also of the **patriarchal system** that it forms part of.

The relationship between the land and women has always been and continues to be a key element in the work of reproduction and the sustainment of life. Historically, women have selected the seeds, have cultivated the land, and have gone in search of water. As Silvia Federici tells us, “capitalism changed the relationship between the land and women”. But even today, **70% of persons responsible for subsistence agriculture are women.** Subsistence agriculture is vital for being able to cope with crises, periods of food shortages and famine. The occupation of a territory by a megaproject, whether it be an extractive industry or infrastructure, signifies the disappearance of lands intended for traditional agriculture. Women know this, and for this reason, it has traditionally been them who have most resisted the commercial use of land. And for this reason also, it is mainly **women that lead the movements to slow down climate change and the fights against transnational companies.**

For example, **Nigerian women** have been fighting for decades against the effects of oil companies in their territory as they know that they destroy the environment and are harmful to health. In **Kenya, Wangari Maathai** founded the *Green Belt Movement* through which they have managed to plant more than 30 million trees to redress the effects of deforestation. In **Latin America, community feminists and popular feminists** have linked the defence of their territory against the attacks of transnational companies with the **defence of their own body.** In Asia, a fight has begun in defence of seeds and of indigenous peoples that has brought them to take on the large transnational companies.

In spite of this, **women are not owners of the land and furthermore have no decision-making power over how to use it.** They have been, and continue to be, under-represented in environmental policy-making despite the fact that their participation in decision-making has important implications for climate change.

What is the relationship between sexual and reproductive rights and climate justice?

Many feminist activists have been warning about the **dangerous message that seeks to interrelate population control with debates to halt climate change.** This message links climate change to the increase in population and hints that the number of children of women with low incomes, of black women and of women in the global south is one of the main causes of climate change.

Apart from being a false message, as the GHG-emitting countries are the “developed” countries, it is a racist, class-based and male chauvinistic message that distances us from the **true causes of the warming of the planet: war and militarism, environmental racism and the neoliberal economic model.**

Feminist organisations remind us and reiterate that the exercising of **sexual and reproductive rights** by women is a Human Rights issue and not a vehicle to stop the effects of climate change. And they also remind and caution us on population control strategies that have resulted in violations of the Human Rights of women. For this reason, it is necessary to continue focussing on the need to **fight against the manipulation of discourses of rights** that is increasingly widespread and used by fundamentalist movements. And, above all, it is essential to **guarantee sexual and reproductive rights as inalienable, universal and interdependent rights for all persons.**

Catalonia Legislation

- Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, 1992.
- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 1994.
- Kyoto Protocol, 2005.
- Paris Agreement, 2015.
- Catalan Law on Climate Change, 2017.
- Catalan strategy for adapting to climate change Horizonte 2013-2020.

Morocco Legislation

- Framework law no. 11-03 on the protection and enhancement of the environment.
- Law no. 13-03 on the fight against air pollution.
- Framework law no. 99-12 on the National Charter for the Environment and Sustainable Development. 03/06/2014.



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