

# **WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM (WILPF)**

## **POSITION & BACKGROUND PAPER ON CLIMATE SECURITY**

**May 2008**

### **POSITION**

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is the oldest women's peace organisation, founded in 1915. The League is part of numerous international networks and coalitions of non-governmental organisations participating in United Nations forums related to sustainable development, human rights and security, contributing a gender and peace perspective.

WILPF recognises climate change as one of the most urgent security challenges of our time. Predictions of future climate impacts vary from disruptive to catastrophic - severe natural disasters, hunger, drought, widespread displacement, conflict and suffering.

There are powerful solutions to climate change – proven and clean technologies are ready to be implemented now in developing and developed countries. Simply stopping the excess and waste in the North through energy efficiency measures will have a big impact. Public transport, refitting homes, recycling, buying local - these won't be cheap, but they will work.

Narrow military notions of security can do nothing to alleviate this security challenge; bombs, guns and landmines will not destroy a tsunami, a hurricane, a flood, a virus, or a water shortage. Instead, the acquisition of arms and current global military expenditure of 1.2 trillion dollars per year diverts enormous financial, technical and human resources from where they are really needed.

Rich and poor countries do not emit the same amount of carbon and have different responsibilities to address climate change. The richest 20% burn 80% of fossil fuels, producing 80% of the problem gas; Western countries generate 16 times more greenhouse gas per person as those in developing countries.

WILPF believes that the international climate change negotiation process, as well as climate policies at regional, national, and local levels, must adopt the principles of gender equity at all stages – from research to analysis, and in the design and implementation of mitigation and adaptation strategies. This applies in particular to the process towards a post-2012 climate protection system.

Due to women comprising the majority of the world's poor, climate change will impact disproportionately on women. Due to the lack of democracy in decision-making, women are not equally participating in decision-making on climate adaptation and mitigation strategies. Ironically, surveys show that women are more concerned than men about climate change, want more far-reaching changes and are more willing to alter their behaviour and lifestyle.

WILPF urges that all national and global policies incorporate the gender aspects of climate change, guided by the many global agreements on gender mainstreaming and human rights treaties such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This will require improved international environmental governance structures, cohesion between UN agencies, as well as tools such as gender-specific indicators to guide national reporting to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Governments should be encouraged to mainstream gender perspectives into their national policies, action plans and other measures on sustainable development and climate change, through carrying out systematic gender analysis, collecting and utilizing sex-disaggregated data, establishing gender-sensitive indicators and benchmarks and developing practical tools to support increased attention to gender perspectives. Investment should be made into research on gender specific resource-use patterns; gender-specific effects of climate change; gender aspects of mitigation and adaptation; women's capacity to cope with climate change; and gender related patterns of vulnerability.

When preparing contributions to the post-2012 process, inputs should be requested from relevant international bodies such as the UN Commission on the Status of Women, the UN Division for the Advancement of Women, the UN Development Fund for Women UNIFEM, and women's organizations and networks as well as gender experts should be invited to comment on draft documents. Gender analysis should be included in all preparations of commitments and mechanisms. In this regard, the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation's contribution as a technical UN agency is crucial, also because of the excellent work of analysis and research made by its Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division.

WILPF urges routine and ongoing consultation between governments with affected communities.

WILPF asserts that nuclear power will never solve any crisis – nuclear energy IS a crisis.

No matter how you calculate it, we are in ecological, carbon and radiation debt. We already have internationally agreed commitments, which as a start, should be transformed into reality. Climate change means change; business as usual is not an option, in fact, it's suicidal.

## **BACKGROUND PAPER**

**Poverty:** The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) recognize the need to promote gender equality and empower women to participate in all facets of economic and social life as vital to achieving sustainable development. Climate change poses a significant challenge to the achievement of sustainable development for the rural poor. It is widely acknowledged that the negative impacts of climate change will hardest hit the poorest in the poorest countries. Since women comprise 70% of the world's poor and are often more dependent on natural resources, they are likely to be disproportionately vulnerable to the effects of climate change.

In addition, women make up 85% of people who die from climate-induced disasters due to reduced means of information, transportation and increased number of dependents.

**Food:** Women are responsible for 75% of household food production in sub-Saharan Africa, 65% in Asia and 45% in Latin America. Erratic weather causes women to spend more time in producing food, if indeed it is available, which means less time for education, and personal and family life.

**Forests:** In forested areas deforestation is likely to harm women differently and disproportionately than men, as women's livelihoods and social roles rely directly on forest resources to meet the nutritional, health and cultural needs of their families and communities. Forest resources are crucial to woman's income generating capacities, while men are involved in timber extraction and the use of non-timber forest products for commercial purposes.

**Water:** Climate change is going to increase water scarcity. The UN estimates that 1.2 billion people lack access to safe water and about 2.5 billion are without access to proper sanitation. The time-

consuming task of gathering and transporting water is also usually the responsibility of women. As water becomes scarce their work overload increases drastically as they have to walk longer distances in search of water. This increases the rate of school dropouts for young women as they take on extra workloads, reducing the opportunities for women to participate in non-traditional activities that would empower them. The cost of water even for urban people will increase, making access to this vital resource more and more difficult.

**Disease:** The risk of contracting a serious illness can also be further aggravated by environmental effects caused by climate change. Almost half of all urban residents in Africa, Asia, and Latin America are victims of **diseases** associated with poor water and sanitation facilities. Increases in temperature will increase cholera bacteria and malaria incidences. Malaria will spread to dry areas where flooding will rise with climate change. Because of their roles in relation with household water supply and domestic chores, women are particularly at risk. Children and pregnant women are particularly susceptible to water borne diseases such as diarrhoea and cholera (same with malaria-worse in HIV cases). Poor access to health care aggravates the situation.

**Energy** plays a key role in the climate change context, as the combustion of fuels (oil, gas, and coal) contributes to the production of green house gas emissions. There will be need to transform the world's energy systems to promote energy efficiency and to increase renewable energy technologies. Since poor countries have the least access to modern energy technologies and rely on burning traditional biomass fuels such as wood, dung and crop residues, renewable energy technologies need to be modified to ensure they reach the poorest populations, particularly women.

**Including women in contingency planning for disaster development:** It is important that disaster risk management incorporate gender mainstreaming in the planning, implementation and evaluation processes. Because of their roles, unequal access to resources and limited mobility, women in many contexts are disproportionately affected by natural disasters, such as floods, fires, and mudslides. Still, women in disaster areas continue to fulfill important household obligations. As a result, women find themselves facing a "double burden" in disaster related situations. Very valuable lessons can be learned from the rich documentation and literature around the gender-differentiated impacts of disasters and disaster mitigation, adaptation and recovery, for example the lessons collected by the Gender and Disasters Network.

The dead and missing in Indonesia caused by the 2004 tsunami numbered 95.000 and 133.000 respectively. In this regard, the situation in Aceh has revealed that the absence of gender sensitive policy has caused untold misery for women who were victims of the tsunami. In Aceh the number of women dead and missing in this disaster amount to 56% of the total. In the early weeks after tsunami struck Aceh and some other parts of Indonesia, the survivors experienced a severe crisis and great material deprivation. It has been observed that 41.4 % of women of productive age got immediately involved in active work. This data suggests that the capacity of women to recover from tsunami's impact and to find productive work afterwards has been considerable.

**Women as agents of change:** Men and women perceive climate change differently and they react differently to it. Behavioral patterns of women and men, young and old, rich and poor differ greatly. The activities carried out by women and men differ significantly, and they both impact climate change differently. Women are the most affected by climate change, but they are also effective agents of change in relation to both mitigation and adaptation. Their knowledge and experience is fundamental for a successful mitigation of climate change, as well as for climate change adaptation.

Women's responsibilities in households and communities as stewards of natural resources has positioned them well for livelihood strategies adapted to changing environmental realities. Women

have a strong body of knowledge and expertise that can be used in climate change mitigation, disaster reduction and adaptation strategies since they have been adapting to environmental change for generations. Women have already made a visible difference in disaster responses.

There is a need to differentiate between men and women as far as the climate change process is concerned because of the different roles the two sexes play in society today. Gender-sensitive strategies should be identified to respond to the environmental and humanitarian crises caused by climate change. Women's empowerment and active participation in climate change policy planning and implementation are preconditions for any policies in the area of climate change to be successful. Gender inequalities in access to resources, including credit, extension services, information and technology, must be taken into account in developing mitigation activities. Adaptation efforts should systematically and effectively address gender-specific impacts of climate change in the areas of energy, water, food security, agriculture and fisheries, biodiversity and ecosystem services, health, industry, human settlements, disaster management, and conflict and security.

**Financing** of climate change adaptation has to be a serious effort in the process if the international community wants to maintain any chance of reaching the MDGs. Financing mechanisms must be flexible enough to reflect women's priorities and needs. The active participation of women in the development of funding criteria and allocation of resources for climate change initiatives is critical, particularly at local levels. Gender analysis of all budget lines and financial instruments for climate change is needed to ensure gender-sensitive investments in programmes for adaptation, mitigation, technology transfer and capacity building.

**Technological developments** related to climate change should take into account women's specific priorities and needs and make full use of their knowledge and expertise, including traditional practices. Women's involvement in the development of new technologies can ensure that they are user-friendly, effective and sustainable. Women should also have equal access to training, credit and skills-development programmes to ensure their full participation in climate change initiatives.

## **RELEVANT POLICY FORA ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

**The Bali Action Plan** (December 2007) confirmed that effectively addressing climate change requires both mitigation and adaptation action as well as technology and financing.

**Mitigation** involves a process of curbing greenhouse gas emissions from human activities, for example, emissions from fossil fuels as well as deforestation, with a view to stabilizing greenhouse gas concentration at a safe level.

**Adaptation** involves a range of activities to reduce vulnerability and build resilience, for instance in key sectors such as water, agriculture and human settlements.

The **52nd session of Commission on the Status of Women** considered "Gender perspectives on climate change" as an emerging issue. All UN processes are mandated to embody the principles of gender equality. To build a future climate regime that is effective, sustainable and just, gender sensitive mitigation and adaptation policies and measures should be designed and necessary resources provided for this.

In its recent **follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action**, the General Assembly highlighted the need to "involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels; integrate gender

concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development; and strengthen or establish mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels to assess the impacts of development and environmental policies on women”

The network of women’s organizations (gender cc – Women for Climate Justice) gathered in **Bali** during **the United Nations Climate Change Conference** in December 2007 demanded that a future climate regime be designed in a framework of gender equality and sustainability guidelines, instead of being driven by dominant economic factors.

The women’s milestones for the Bali roadmap calls for governments to:

- a. Recognize the vital urgency of gender equality in the growing climate crisis and demonstrate leadership through top-level support for considering gender concerns in all UNFCCC and related processes (also known as “gender mainstreaming.”) and including the installation of a ‘gender watch system’ within UNFCCC.
- b. Integrate gender aspects into adaptation plans and tools, focusing on specific adaptation needs, and ensuring women’s participation in developing the plans;
- c. Commit to sustainable and equitable financing schemes and ensure gender equity in all phases and aspects of funding.
- d. Allocate 20% of all donor funds to be earmarked for activities and projects addressing women and designed and implemented by women and gender experts.
- e. Go beyond the narrow focus on solutions devoted to market based mechanisms.
- f. Make full use of the knowledge and capacity of women.
- g. Adopt a global non-market-driven effort to preserve tropical forests, based on addressing direct and underlying causes of deforestation in each region and country.

Gender equality is a critical component of responses to climate change at all levels.

It is important to ensure that women participate in all decisions related to climate change at all levels, in order to build a truly global and effective alliance for climate protection and gender justice.