

MAY 2022

ISSUE BRIEF: STRENGTHENING SOLUTIONS THROUGH INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

A Case for Women-Just Climate Action



SHE
changes climate

THE CLIMATE CRISIS IS A LEADERSHIP CRISIS

We sit at a critical juncture, collectively faced with “a brief and rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a liveable and sustainable future for all” [1]. In the last 22 years, we have experienced 20 of the hottest years recorded on earth [2]. Without rapid and transformative action, humanity heads towards a planet that will be 3°C warmer than pre-industrial levels, with wide-reaching and unequal consequences for human and natural life [3].

Climate change has been declared a state of emergency, and so is the impact that it has on women. Numerous studies show that climate change deepens existing inequalities and exacerbates systemic disadvantages, such as race and gender. Women are **14 times** more likely to die during an extreme weather event [4], and around **80%** of climate refugees are women [5].

Yet, perspectives on, and decisions about, the climate emergency and interlinked global issues have been made mainly by men, and even then, leadership lacks geographical and intersectional diversity. At COP26, women numbered just **35%** on delegation committees, and women led **37%** of delegations as heads or deputies [6] - despite the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan requiring **50%** participation of women in all levels of climate action [7]. At the last G7 meeting, only one woman was amongst the decision makers [8]. In 2021, **26** women sat as the head of state or government in 193 countries around the world [9]. 119 countries have **never** had a female leader [10].

The climate crisis is a leadership crisis.

The UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, has stated that achieving women's equality is 'the unfinished business of our time, and the greatest human rights challenge in our world' [11]. Women's inequality is not only persisting, it is also regressing. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and increasing climate risk has widened the global gap and laid bare the state of intersectional inequalities. Research by the World Economic Forum estimates it will now take 136 years to bridge the growing gap and achieve global parity [12]. Yet, with the latest IPCC report stating urgent action is needed in the next couple of years to redress humanity's impact on climate change, 136 years is problematic and beyond the scope of action.

Women hold the potential to lead climate solutions. However, women's full potential is not being platformed, invested in, or recognised. Seats at the top tables are not being given to enough women. The lack of women in top decision-making positions needs to be bridged across sectors. This paper aims to cover the vastness of these disparities across international climate negotiations and within the political, business, and governmental sectors.

Each section aims to centre the Sustainable Development Goal 5 and empower all women and girls. If SDG5 is not achieved, the outcome of all the goals will be compromised and delayed -- from climate action to peace and security to equitable health outcomes and more. Utilising the latest evidence and research, this paper demonstrates that the inclusion of women in leadership positions across sectors will yield stronger environmental policies, better results against emission targets, increased economic growth and equality, and thus lead to more sustainable and peaceful outcomes.



PROMOTING WOMEN IN UNFCCC PROCESSES

Despite an incremental increase in rhetorical commitments to female representation across UNFCCC frameworks, women's experiences and perspectives are frequently excluded from climate policy and decision-making in practice. In 2001, negotiating parties adopted resolution 36/CP.7 that urged parties to enhance the equal participation of women at all levels of decision-making related to climate change, recognising women's empowerment is the basis of equality in all spheres of society, as per the Beijing Declaration of 1995 [1]. Yet, by COP25 in 2019, Parties were still negotiating how to solve disparities in representation within UNFCCC processes. Parties agreed on a 5-year enhanced Lima work programme, formalising the commitment to achieve and sustain the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women in the UNFCCC process [2]. However, at COP26 in 2021, women still only represented 35% of named party delegates [4].

The issue also extends beyond negotiating party delegations. Decision-making and technical bodies under UN Climate Change (also known as constituted bodies) also lags behind the UNFCCC's equality target. In 2021, only 3 out of 16 constituted bodies reported having achieved an equal representation of women and men. The Adaptation Committee peaked with 58% of the body represented by women, whilst the Paris Committee on Capacity-Building (PCCB) and Adaptation Fund Board (AFB) both reported 50% female members [3].

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of UNFCCC constituted bodies also lag behind women equality [5].

only 35%

of named party delegates were women at COP26. [6].

2/12

of Initial appointments to the UK COP26 Presidency team were women [7].

78%

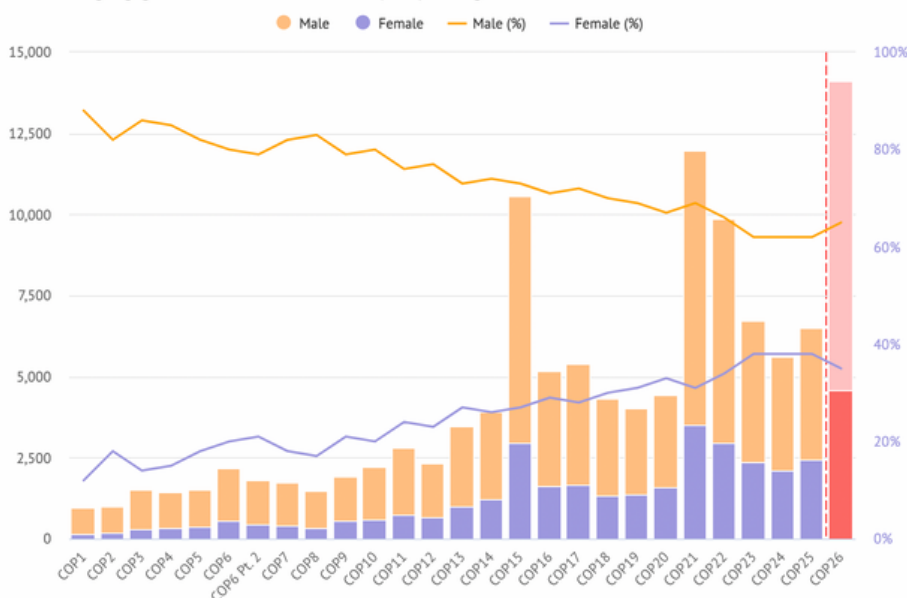
of all articles on climate change are authored by men [8].

only 20%

of authors of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) were women as of 2018 [9].

Figure 1 - There are four all-male named delegations registered for COP26 - Yemen, Turkmenistan, North Korea and Holy See.[4]

The changing gender balance of named party delegations since COP1 in 1995



PROMOTING WOMEN IN UNFCCC PROCESSES

At the highest levels of executive leadership within the UK's COP26 Presidency team, men initially took up 10 of the 12 posts. This action resulted in an open letter signed by 450 women climate leaders and allies ahead of COP26 [10].

It is evident that the wider composition of the U.K. COP26 Presidency team did have a much higher representation of women (45%), but their roles tended to relate to event organising, or serving as advisors or deputies rather than on the core leadership team. This division of labor within the COP26 leadership team is characteristic of wider systemic issues in climate negotiations [11].

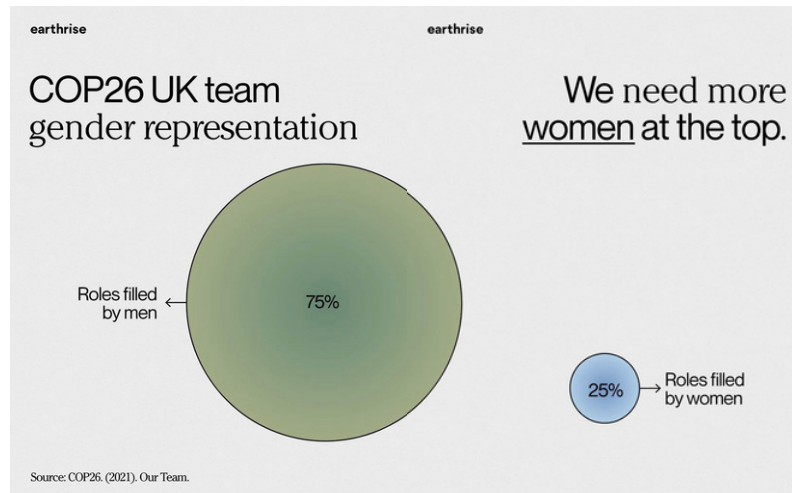


Figure 2 [12]

The full and equal representation of women within UNFCCC processes, -- and in environmental leadership of all levels -- is mandated by the Lima Work Plan [2]. Further, evidence shows that it is beneficial and necessary to outcomes of the climate agreements:

- Women's equality and environmental goals are mutually reinforcing, with slow progress on environmental actions affecting the achievement of equality, and vice versa. [13]
- A 2019 study found that increasing women's representation in national parliaments leads to the adoption of more stringent climate change policies, resulting in lower emissions. [14]
- At the local level, the participation of women in natural resource management is associated with better resource governance and conservation outcomes. [15]
- Employing a climate justice framework with female leadership and inclusive climate action is more likely to ensure that policy accounts for differences in social roles, experiences and needs relating to climate change. [16]
- Women leaders are more likely to recognise and address sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in climate policy. SRHR is essential for both equality and climate action but is often overlooked by policymakers [17].
- Indigenous land encompasses about 22% of the world's surface and overlaps with areas that hold 80% of Earth's biodiversity [18]. Indigenous women hold vital local knowledge on climate change and adaptation solutions that is untapped and overlooked by decision-makers, often rendered less important than traditional western science [19].

PROMOTING WOMEN IN POLITICS

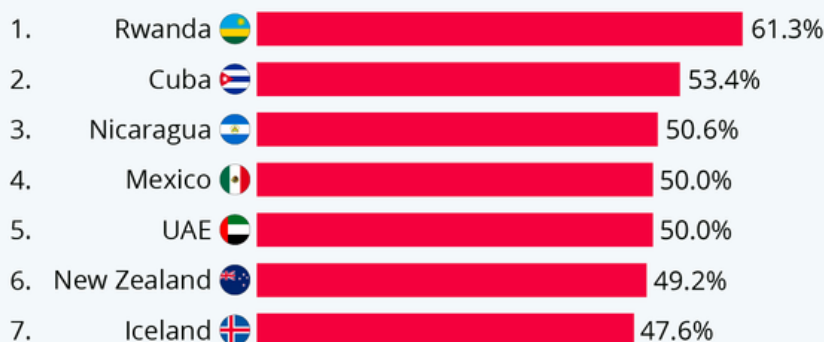
From passing climate legislation to assuring net-zero funding commitments are met, national politicians play a crucial role in dictating the speed of climate action and the extent citizens are engaged on the issue. As political leaders have decisive power over how climate change is tackled domestically and internationally, intersectional political leadership is crucial to ensuring that climate decisions are the product of diverse voices, needs and priorities. Yet, structural barriers through discriminatory laws and institutions still limit women's options to run for office in many nation states, and capacity gaps mean women are less likely than men to have the education, contacts and resources needed to become effective leaders.

At the current rate of change, UN Women estimate that female representation will not be achieved in the highest positions of political power until 2151 [1]. From heads of state to national parliamentarians to local government, data indicates that women are underrepresented at all stages of the political system. Balanced political participation and power-sharing between women and men in decision-making are internationally agreed on targets set in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action [2]. Yet, Figure 1 shows that just 5 countries have reached or surpassed targets for gender parity [3]. Of the 23 that have achieved over 40% female representation, at least two-thirds of these countries have had to apply quotas – either legislated candidate quotas or reserved seats – in order to open up space for women's political participation in national political positions [4].

Figure 3 [3]

The Countries With the Most Women in National Parliament

Share of women in the national unicameral or lower house of parliament (as of Jan 2022)



10

countries have a woman Head of State [5].

26%

of all national parliamentarians are women, up from 11% in 1995, based on global averages. [6].

only 5

countries have 50 per cent or more women in parliament in a single or lower house [7].

27

States had less than 10% of parliamentary positions held by women in 2020 [8].

2063

Equal female representation in national legislative bodies will be achieved, based on current rates of change [9].

PROMOTING WOMEN IN POLITICS:

There is established and growing evidence that women's leadership in political decision-making processes improves these processes, particularly in relation to the inclusivity and ambition of climate commitments.

- Research on panchayats (local councils) in India discovered that the number of drinking water projects in areas with women-led councils was 62 percent higher than in those with men-led councils. [10]
- In Norway, a direct causal relationship between the presence of women in municipal councils and childcare coverage was found [11].
- Women are more likely to foster political partnerships, working across party lines through parliamentary women's caucuses—even in the most politically combative environments—and by championing issues of gender equality (such as the elimination of gender-based violence, parental leave and childcare, pensions, equality laws, and electoral reform) [12].
- Evidence from 25 countries across the globe indicates that countries with higher female parliamentary representation are more likely to set aside protected land areas [13]
- Women as parliamentarians are more likely to adopt more stringent climate change policies [14]
- Studies suggest that various international campaigns to address climate change may succeed more in places where more females are represented in political power [15]
- Nations with greater female representation in governing bodies have lower climate footprints, controlling for domestic (urbanization, production) and global (world-system integration) drivers. [16]

Case Study - Political representation in Rwanda

Rwanda's Constitution, adopted in 2003, enshrines that at least 30 percent of parliamentary seats be reserved for women. Importantly, the quota includes 24 of the 80 seats in the Lower House of Parliament, elected by an innovative special electoral college composed of voters from local women's councils and district councils.. This paved the way for record-breaking 64% of seats secured by female parliamentarians following the 2013 elections, hugely above the global average. Yet, many women have faced continued challenges sustaining women's political participation such as patriarchal stereotypes and structural and financial barriers, showing the need to go beyond quotas [17].



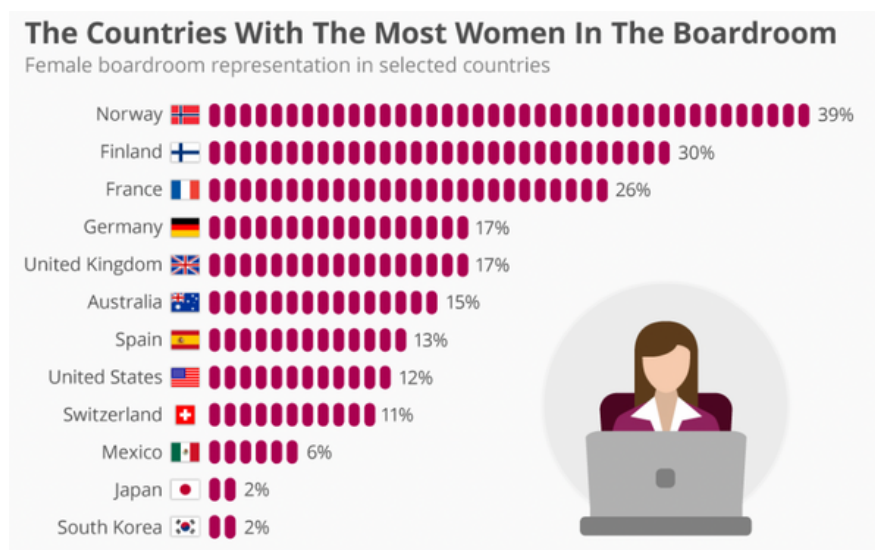
PROMOTING WOMEN IN BUSINESS AND TECH:

The global pursuit of net-zero carbon emissions is a huge undertaking, and only possible with the full commitment of businesses in every sector. Business leaders have a responsibility to not only act with speed to decarbonise and divest their own work and supply chains, but to also support and promote global climate regulations.

Research is increasingly demonstrating the correlation between leadership diversity and strength of environmental action. Firms with greater female representation reduced their CO2 emissions by about 5% more than firms with more male managers [1]. Women's senior leadership roles are shifting, and there is increasing recognition of the perspective and merits of female leaders in securing the net zero economy, green tech, sustainable business and innovation. In 2021, the proportion of women in senior management roles globally grew to 31%, the highest number ever recorded [2]. Women are also increasingly taking top roles: 26% of all CEOs and managing directors roles held by women in 2021, compared to only 15% in 2019 [3].

Whilst this improvement must be recognised and celebrated, it is still far from the 50:50 parity required, and the increase in diverse leadership is uneven across continents and sectors [4]. For instance, only 4.4% of the organisations from BoardEx's Global Gender Balance Report study (2021) achieved the target of having more than 50% female participation on the board. [5] Women also face continued bias in the male dominated business arena. A study by Harvard, MIT and Wharton School provided evidence for a bias that favors men: when the same idea was pitched by a male and a female voice, two-thirds of investors picked the male voice [6]. McKinsey and Company showed that corporate models -- historically designed by men -- form the pillars on which the glass ceiling is supported [7]

Figure 4 - Female boardroom representation in selected countries, 2016. [13]



88%

of decision-makers in venture capital firms are men. [8].

2%

of venture capital funding in the US went to all-female-founded startups. [9]

2%

of bank CEOs are women [10]

only 19%

of green technology startups have at least one female founder. [11]

only 23

women were CEOs of Fortune Global 500 companies in 2021, and only 6 were women of colour. [12]

PROMOTING WOMEN IN BUSINESS AND TECH:

Studies show that greater female representation in Executive and Non-Executive leadership positions across the private sector has multiple and reinforcing benefits for businesses, and society at large:

- Studies show that balanced female representation on boards is more successful than on mono-cultural boards on every measure, including innovation, financial performance, and environmental values. [14]
- Female entrepreneurs are more likely than their male counterparts to innovate to address social needs [14] and more likely to generate higher returns for society as a whole. For instance, the Clinton Global Initiative has shown that women invest more of their income in their families compared to men. [16]
- Addressing culture within the workplace, female-founded businesses tend to employ 2.5 times more women than male-founded businesses; empowering female entrepreneurs would also mean that more women could access job opportunities. [17]
- Empowering female entrepreneurs place greater value on social services and community, in turn social services have an important role in decoupling prosperity from pollution-based growth. [18]
- A study of banks across Europe, the Middle East and Africa regions concluded that diversity is an important driver of environmental sustainability in banks, which are increasingly involved in environmental issues either directly as companies, or indirectly, through their lending activity [19]
- Collaborative organisational structures, in which women often form partnerships, are crucial to environmental outcomes. Women CEOs who enjoy the support of women interlinked board members are less likely to struggle with environmental concerns, as interlinked board members may have more influence and power over firm outcomes, and are more likely to glean relevant and trustworthy information about the practices at other firms [20].
- Accenture's 2021 CEO survey found that 54% of female CEOs reported having adopted more ambitious sustainability milestones due to the COVID-19 pandemic, compared to 44% of male CEOs. [21]
- Women's leadership is associated with increased transparency around climate impact: higher percentages of women on corporate boards positively correlates with the disclosure of carbon emissions information. [22]

Case Study - Norway's Board Membership Rule

Coming into force in 2008, Norway passed legislation requiring that all publicly listed company boards be composed of at least 40 percent women. Companies that fail to comply risk dissolution. As a result of the law, female representation increased from 4 percent of board members in 2002 to all boards reaching the goal of 40 percent women by 2009 [23].

PROMOTING WOMEN IN PEACE AND SECURITY:

Two decades have passed since the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1325 on women and peace and security (WPS) on 31 October 2000. The landmark resolution emphasised the importance of women's equal participation in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security, from the prevention of conflicts to post-conflict reconstruction [1]. Yet, after 22 years of WPS discourse and resolutions, women still only represented 23 percent of conflict parties' delegations in UN-supported peace processes in 2020 [2].

War and conflict hinder progress on equality, social protection, and climate action. Although the causal link between climate change and conflict is not straightforward and is highly context-specific, there is growing consensus among researchers and policy-makers that climate change is a threat-multiplier to insecurity and fragility [3]. Female representation and inclusion considerations are often the missing links to successfully joining the dots between climate and security issues. The UN Secretary General has issued a call for the urgent need for better analysis of the linkages between climate change and conflict from a women's perspective [4]. Likewise, the recent Secretary-General's report to the Security Council called women's leadership and participation in peacebuilding a "prerequisite for the fulfillment of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development" [5].

The Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund has demonstrated how direct support to women leaders and organizations can make a difference. Yet, in the wake of the pandemic, they are in dire need of funding. In the meantime, global military expenditures rose 2.6 percent in 2020, reaching almost USD 2 trillion [6]. In response, the Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action Compact was launched in July 2021 at the Generation Equality Forum, and provides further impetus and action to finance and promote women's leadership and agency across peace, security and humanitarian sectors. [7]

Figure 5 - CEO Lunch at Munich Security Conference [13]



13%

of negotiators were women, on average, between 1992-2019 [8].

6%

of peace mediators were women, on average, between 1992-2019 [9].

6%

of signatories on peace deals were women, on average, between 1992-2019 [10].

28.6%

of peace agreements contained provisions for women [11]

Women's participation in public administration in fragile and conflict-affected countries averages 23% , less than half of the average in all other countries [12]

PROMOTING WOMEN IN PEACE AND SECURITY:

Research demonstrated that women's leadership at all stages of the conflict cycle, from peace talks to prevention, is fundamental for successful conflict resolution and maintaining inclusive, sustainable peace.

- Women's participation is a predictor of peace --- Evidence shows that when women are involved a truce is 64% less likely to fail [14]
- Where women take part in a peace process, peace lasts longer. The UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs showed that where a peace agreement includes women, it is 35 percent more likely to last at least 15 years [15]
- Women's involvement yields better outcomes, as concluded by UN Women and the Council on Foreign Relations, following an analysis of all peace talks from 1992 to the present. [16]
- The Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization suggests that women's propensity to deliver on peace may be that they are perceived as more trustworthy and public-spirited, and often take on the community-level mediator and dispute resolution roles [17, 18].
- Women are more likely to bridge divides and mobilise coalitions.
- In addition to this horizontal bridge-building (e.g. across social, cultural and religious divides), women also bridge the vertical divide between elites and the grassroots, which may in turn increase the chances that peace will last by promoting buy-in and generating legitimacy [19].
- An analysis conducted by social psychologists of more than 50,000 respondents across 22 countries on 5 continents, found that women are much more likely than men to reject hierarchies based on group belonging [19].

Case Study - Women, Peace and Security in Ukraine

Evidence from the UN Women Rapid Gender Analysis indicates that the war in Ukraine has exacerbated already existing inequalities [20]. Since the beginning of the war on 24 February 2022, over 3.7 million people have fled the country, 90% of those people being women and children [21]. Under the current state of disaster, men between the age of 18 and 60 are not allowed to leave [22]. Additionally, concerns regarding sexual and gender-based violence have arisen, with a lack of services and resources to protect and assist the people left behind [23]. This is one example of many where war and conflict are highly gendered.

The United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, Sima Bahous addressed the UN Security Council in April 2022 regarding the war in Ukraine. Her speech highlighted the impact that war has on women as well as the critical role women have in building peace and safety [24]. Bahous made a plea that Members of States, development, and humanitarian partners "ensure the meaningful participation of women and girls, including from marginalised groups, in all decision-making processes, in peace, diplomatic, and humanitarian processes" [25].

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Compiled by Emily Vernal and Frances Storey
May 2022

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