**Questionnaire in relation to Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/38/4 on human rights and climate change**

**Ireland’s response**

**January 2019**

**1. Please describe the impacts of the adverse effects of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of women and girls. Where possible, please share specific examples and stories.**

At a global level, women and men face differentiated impacts from the effects of climate change, largely owing to structural inequalities. The impacts of climate change are exacerbated by discrimination and the resilience of women and men to climate change can vary significantly. Climate change impacts on the structural lack of access to women’s human rights across many areas of their lives. For example, the burden of unpaid domestic and care work is deepened by the increasing impacts of climate change across the world. Climate change also impacts on access to services, opportunities, decent work and decision making, exacerbating existing structural inequalities. Full understanding of the impacts of climate change on the human rights of women and girls requires analysis of factors such as age, geographical status, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation and gender identity and others, which play a significant role in determining the adverse impacts of climate change.

At a policy and programming level, Ireland recognises the acute challenges that climate change impacts pose to women and girls and the enjoyment of their human rights. Through its work with Key Partner Countries, Irish Aid has identified that climate change disproportionately impacts on women and girls across services such as energy, agriculture, social protection, health, nutrition and livelihoods. For example, women play an important role in small holder farming (including resilience), but climate change is intensifying the risks posed to women farmers when producing food. Climate risks increase women’s household responsibilities (e.g. water collection), causing damage and loss of assets, and increasing the burden of agricultural labour as men migrate to find work.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Irish Aid has noted that gaps still exist in relation to integrated programming, generating evidence to inform policy and programmes, as well as strengthening partnerships for addressing gender and climate issues.

Research partners of Irish Aid also highlight[[2]](#footnote-2) that key climate and development objectives can benefit greatly from greater inclusion of women in programming; for example, water resource management, small-holder farming and energy access.

**2. Please describe any relevant commitments, legislation and other measures that you have taken to promote a gender-responsive approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation at the local, national, regional and international level and to ensure the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of women and girls impacted by the adverse effects of climate change. Please include relevant mechanisms used to promote accountability and/or implementation.**

Ireland is committed to implementing and achieving Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 13 and their related targets, on gender and climate action.

From the perspective of gender inclusive climate action, the Gender Action Plan (GAP) in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) agreed at COP23 in 2017 is one important starting point. The GAP has the potential to inform and guide regional and national measures to better integrate gender equality in national mitigation and adaptation plans. Ireland chaired the discussions and stands fully behind efforts to strengthen gender-responsive climate action in the context of the UNFCCC and the implementation of actions under it.

At a programming level, Ireland has conducted analyses in the preparation and review of Country Strategies, as well as political economy and vulnerability analyses. Key relevant programmes include gendered access to pro-poor renewable energy sources, gender and climate resilience agriculture, adaptive social protection and greening the health sector to tackle issues of access, nutrition and livelihoods. Gaps still exist in relation to integrated adaptive programming, generating evidence to inform policy and programmes, as well as strengthening partnerships for addressing gender and climate issues.

At a policy level, Ireland’s upcoming White Paper on sustainable development places gender equality and climate action as clear and interlinked priorities for our international development cooperation. The upcoming policy will indicate the necessary step-change to ensure that gender equality and climate action are addressed across multiple decision-making bodies and in a more coherent manner.

Domestic climate mitigation and adaptation actions by the State are designed within a legal infrastructure which ensures public participation in their design and equal rights in their application. Accountability in respect of gender equality and human rights takes place within the context of the Employment Equality and Equal Status Acts.

The *National Strategy for Women and Girls 2017-2020* proposes that all reviews of existing policies should include a gender perspective, as should all policies developed over the lifetime of the Strategy. The following actions are relevant to the strategies of all Government Departments, including the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment:

**Action 6.6** – Consider gender impact in the development of new strategies and the review of existing Strategies.

**Action 6.11** – Ensure that the design and review of funding and grant schemes includes measures to ensure gender equality. Where required, initiate positive steps to eliminate sources of bias, including unconscious bias, in the design and operation of schemes.

**Action 6.13** – Identify knowledge gaps in relation to gender inequality and use this as a base to drive improvements in the data infrastructure and analysis required to close those gaps. Ensure that evidence generated through improved data infrastructure and analysis regarding gender inequality is linked to relevant policies.

Also, Section 42 of the *Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act 2014* (IHREC Act) provides for a positive duty on public bodies. Public sector bodies are required, under law, to have regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, promote equality of opportunity, and protect human rights in carrying out their functions. This is an important development in Irish equality and human rights legislation and presents a valuable opportunity to public sector bodies.[[3]](#endnote-1)

Section 42 of the IHREC Act 2014 also sets out three core steps to be taken by public bodies:

1. In preparing strategic plans public sector bodies must assess and identify the human rights and equality issues that are relevant to their functions. These issues must relate to all of its functions as policy maker, employer and service provider.

1. Public bodies must then identify the policies and practices that they have in place or that they plan to put in place to address these issues.

1. Finally, in their annual reports, or similar documents, they must report on their achievements or developments with regard to these issues. Requirements in relation to human rights are confined to those human rights that have been incorporated in domestic legislation.

Where the Commission considers there are failures to fulfil the Public Sector Duty, it can invite a public body to carry out an equality and human rights review of the work of the organisation and prepare and implement an action plan.

**3. Please share a summary of any relevant data that captures how the adverse effects of climate change have affected women and girls, taking into account multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.**

The domestic impacts of climate change to date have centred on more extreme weather events, and domestic climate adaptation measures and policies are governed by the National Adaptation Framework, published in February 2018. To date, no gender-disaggregated data has been collected on the impacts of climate change on men and women.

Globally, data on the adverse impacts of climate change on women and girls is gathered by UN-WOMEN, while the UNFCCC has undertaken under the Lima Work Programme and its Gender Action Plan to gather disaggregated data.

**4. Please describe mechanisms and tools, which can be used to measure and monitor the impacts of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of women and girls.**

At policy and decision-making level, international and national decision-making process mechanisms can be put in place to support the inclusion and participation of women. For example, the UNFCCC should work with Parties to improve the gender balance in national delegations and identify ways to support women in maximising their voice, confidence and negotiations skills while ‘at the table’. More funding at grassroots level will also help to empower women.

In relation to specific development and climate action instruments, transparent consultation processes should be established and/or strengthened, with a view to reaching and engaging women’s rights groups. Bi-lateral and multilateral climate finance mechanisms can also promote equal rights and opportunities for women through strengthening their land rights, access to finance, technology and other inputs, and working conditions.   
Existing or potential grievance mechanisms could be utilised at local, national and international level to provide a space for women to raise issues surrounding climate impacts and /or policies.

**5. Please identify and share examples of good practices and challenges in the promotion, protection, and 'fulfilment of the human rights of women and girls in the context of the adverse effects of climate change. Please include examples that highlight multilateral cooperation, gender mainstreaming, gender responsive approaches, and the full, meaningful and effective participation of women and girls in relevant decision-making processes.**

The recently adopted Paris Agreement Work Programme establishes the mechanism under which climate policies will be implemented, communicated and strengthened over time. Under this framework, an optimal outcome would see governments providing information on how their national climate policies contribute to the promotion of both human rights (including gender equality) and sustainable development. At the national level, this means integrating existing human rights commitments into national climate plans; including a fair transition away from carbon intensive activities, gender equality and public participation in decision-making.

The Women’s Delegate Fund under the UNFCCC is a good example of a mechanism which enhances women’s participation in climate negotiations through travel support, capacity building and networking, and outreach and advocacy.

The Gender Action Plan is another good example of the promotion of gender-responsive climate action through its five thematic areas.

**6. Please provide any additional information you believe would be useful to support efforts to integrate a gender-responsive approach into climate action at the local, national, regional and international levels for the full and effective enjoyment of the rights of women and girls.**

Gender-responsive climate action is promoted by a range of organisations including UN WOMEN, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNFCCC, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the Global Gender and Climate Alliance. These organisations have a range of additional information which can support gender-responsive climate action.

1. <https://www.climatelearningplatform.org/sites/default/files/resources/guidance_note-climate_resilient_agriculture_in_smallholder_farming_final_1.pdf>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.wri.org/blog/2018/10/women-are-secret-weapon-better-water-management>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. 42. (1) A public body shall, in the performance of its functions, have regard to the need to—

   a) eliminate discrimination,

   b) promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services, and

   c) protect the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom it provides services. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)