

**"Women, Girls and the Right to a Clean, Healthy**

**and Sustainable Environment"**

**Questionnaire**

## Question #1

While climate change is a universal problem that impacts all of us, women and girls remain disproportionately affected.

Women have widely been recognized to suffer from various societal ills worldwide. From [income inequality](https://ourworldindata.org/economic-inequality-by-gender) to downright [exploitation](https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/03/08/how-women-are-exploited-todays-global-workforce) and [victimization](https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/not-object-sexualization-and-exploitation-women-and-girls/30366), there is consensus that women continue to feel the effects of archaic sexism, despite the significant strides made by modern society.

More than that, it's widely recognized that these facets cannot be understood in a vacuum. Instead, they are connected and interrelated, creating an overall negative impact disproportionate to the female population.

For example, it has been shown that adverse environmental changes can affect [women's and girls' health](https://www.carbonbrief.org/mapped-how-climate-change-disproportionately-affects-womens-health/). Poor mental health, food insecurity, and domestic violence also affect women more than they do the opposite sex – resulting in an [overall higher fatality rate](http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/723731468234284901/Making-womens-voices-count-integrating-gender-issues-in-disaster-risk-management-overview-and-resources-for-guidance-notes).

[Fortune magazine](https://fortune.com/2022/07/25/why-climate-change-disproportionally-impacts-women/) also published an article about financial vulnerability and more physical and societal burdens ascribed to women post-disasters.

States should be able to ensure a gender-responsive approach for the protection of women and children with regard to a healthy and sustainable environment, such as the following:

* **Mitigate.** Governments should allocate time and resources to reducing the disproportionate impact of environmental disasters on women and girls. A good example of this is the [UN program](https://www.unv.org/news/women-agents-change-after-natural-disaster) of increasing women's involvement in volunteer-coordinated activities, especially during recovery from disasters, which is typically a male-dominated area.
* **Prevent.** A [wide body of research](https://climate-gender.aon.com/climate-gender/actioning-gender-equity-to-reduce-volatility) is revealing that increasing gender diversity in planning and high-level decision-making improves resilience and helps identify risk factors that will foresee and prevent disproportionate impact from happening. Government agents should ensure high rates of participation in disaster risk reduction and management.
* **Encourage.** Lastly, states should actively recognize and encourage women-led efforts in this area. This includes funding relevant organizations, studies, and programs that ensure the protection and equal access of women and children during times of disaster.

## Question #2

Policies that fulfill these responsibilities have already been put into place.

For example, both the [2015 Paris Agreement](https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/l09r01.pdf) and the [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](https://www.unisdr.org/files/43291_sendaiframeworkfordrren.pdf) already stipulate gender-aware policies for disaster management and climate change agreements.

Another example is the government of India, where the Ministry of Home Affairs highlights gender inclusivity among the leadership in its Disaster Risk Reduction [10-Point Agenda (2017)](https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=156233).

In this, we firmly believe that they have the same duty as that of the governments; to mitigate the effects, prevent the harms, and encourage the participation of women in disaster reduction – all within their respective industries.

One specific policy they can focus on is [ESG metrics](https://www.esgthereport.com/what-are-esg-metrics/), or Environmental, Social, and Governance. The higher the ESG, the more equitable a company is, and the likelier they are to emphasize issues affecting women's rights to a clean and sustainable environment.

## Question #3

The right to a safe, clean, healthy, and sustainable environment has recently been qualified as a universal human right in a [historic declaration](https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/07/1123482) that earned 161 votes in favor.

Among the countries that responded positively to this resolution, various measures have already started to be implemented to ensure that this right is protected. More than that, steps are being taken to ensure that the most vulnerable sectors, such as women and girls, are equitably prioritized in this protection.

In the Philippines, for example, the [2019 Disaster Risk Reduction Status Report](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/68265_682308philippinesdrmstatusreport.pdf) highlighted that legal provisions had been created to secure and protect the rights of women and children when it comes to access to social protection.

In Korea, specific provisions are included in the 2010 [Incheon Declaration](https://www.unisdr.org/files/16172_roadmapfinalversion08272350.pdf), recognizing the need to implement additional protection for the most vulnerable and for all stakeholders to mainstream gender sensitivity to their policies, including analysis, policies, and advocacies.

## Question #4

Gender inclusivity needs to be included in every state policy, especially regarding equal access to a healthy and clean environment.

Women and girls are [disproportionately affected](https://fortune.com/2022/07/25/why-climate-change-disproportionally-impacts-women/) by any environmental disaster. They are more likely to suffer physically, economically, psychologically, and emotionally. Policies need to be aware of this reality, and states need to approach responses and prevention equitably and inclusively.

[Japan International Cooperation Agency](https://www.jica.go.jp/english/our_work/thematic_issues/gender/c8h0vm0000f9zdxh-att/COVID-19_01.pdf) extensively notes the gendered dangers that women disproportionately face during the pandemic, such as the following.

* Higher infection rates due to more women being healthcare workers and caregivers
* Reduced access to reproductive health
* Rise of gendered-based violence
* Disproportionate impact on livelihood
* Loss of education
* Unequal representation in decision making

Aside from what the JICA reported, other effects include increased home care responsibilities because of the closure of primary establishments. For example, women in traditional homes in [Malaysia](https://www.nst.com.my/opinion/columnists/2020/07/605777/need-gender-inclusive-policies-post-pandemic-world) now bear the burden of tutoring their children because of the closure of schools.

Fortunately, this problem isn't going unnoticed. Various laws are being codified and put into practice by states that recognize the issue.

For instance, Japan integrated [gender-inclusive policies](https://www.preventionweb.net/files/32983_32983insidetoprint1.pdf) into its disaster risk reduction management plans long before the pandemic. Recently, the country issued guidelines for planning, response, and reconstruction that include anti-discrimination actions, improved involvement of women in planning and management, and gender inclusivity in every step of disaster response.

Malaysia also prioritized women's struggles through its [various inclusive measures](https://www.nst.com.my/opinion/columnists/2020/07/605777/need-gender-inclusive-policies-post-pandemic-world) toward recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. One of the beneficiaries is single mothers, who received one-off financial aid. Female entrepreneurs were also provided a generous stimulus package. The [United Nations](https://malaysia.un.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/UN%20in%20Malaysia%20Singapore%20and%20Brunei%20Darussalam%20Country%20Results%20Report%202021%20FINAL%20lo-res.pdf), as well as other non-government entities, has also lent an active hand towards empowering women's organizations to withstand the pandemic and contribute to nation-recovery efforts.

In the Philippines, both state and non-state organizations have launched initiatives and implemented policies that ensure non-discriminatory access to equitable post-covid recovery. A good example of this is the [BRAVE project](https://www.who.int/philippines/news/detail/05-11-2021-un-agencies-launch-joint-programme-to-support-vulnerable-women-and-young-people-amid-covid-19) headed by the WHO, UNICEF, and UNFPA. Various government agencies have also spearheaded women's involvement in [entrepreneurship](https://www.dti.gov.ph/archives/women-entreps-important-in-ph/), [emergency response](https://reliefweb.int/report/philippines/enabling-women-led-emergency-responses-philippines), [disaster management](https://pcw.gov.ph/serve-womens-specific-needs-involve-women-in-disaster-management/), and more.

## Question #5

Marginalized or vulnerable women need to have access to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment without discrimination based on sex or gender. Of course, one of the primary functions of the state is to ensure that their rights are protected, and their needs are met. However, it can be difficult to translate gender mainstreaming to policies applicable on the ground.

Nevertheless, we believe in the power of collective, coordinated action. Together, we can push for the protection of disadvantaged groups during environmental disasters and act as significant agents for environmental restoration.

Here are some ways that state agencies, NGOs, and private entities can help make that happen.

* Ensuring an equitable post-disaster recovery by establishing gender-sensitive stations or booths during relief efforts.
* Protecting women and girls' access to financial, educational, and emotional support.
* Increasing awareness about gender discrimination, gendered impacts, and gender violence, specifically during times of environmental disasters.
* Encouraging women's participation in environmental protection and advocacy.
* Supporting academic and practical research about women's impact on climate leadership, disaster response, relief operations, green revolutions, and more.

## Question #6

Although various states worldwide are already pursuing productive measures, many challenges still need to be overcome to ensure equal rights to a safe and sustainable environment. Here are the top three things that need to be paid attention to the most.

* **Cultural transformation.** Many countries around the world still seem to hold cultural norms that place unnecessary and harmful pressures on women. Countries with strong macho-feudalist traditions need to undergo rapid cultural shifts that can be brought about through policy, conversations, activism, and mass-media communication, among others.
* **Socioeconomic transformation.** In Bhutan, Vietnam, and Thailand, women-led businesses are rising in numbers, but tend to stay on the sidelines because they are typically [small, informal, and not as productive](https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/459551/women-entrepreneurship-lessons-asia-pacific.pdf). Investing in women's businesses positively contributes to a country's economy and even mitigates the disproportional impact of environmental catastrophes on their livelihoods.
* **Legal transformation.** More representation should be given to women and girls' representatives, especially in high-profile scenarios, so that the public can realize these concerns are being addressed. Also, states must include gender inclusivity when making policies, implementing initiatives on the ground, and encouraging academic research on the topic.

## Question #7

Environmental agencies are currently being mandated to integrate gender inclusivity and equality into the crafting of policies.

One example is the [Philippines' Position on Gender and Climate Change](https://niccdies.climate.gov.ph/files/documents/6.%20Philippine%20position%20on%20Gender%20and%20Climate%20Change.pdf), published by the National Integrated Climate Change Database and Information Exchange System (NICCDIES), which states several provisions pertaining to gender-related concerns.

While the international scene is necessarily a different ballgame altogether, there should be a similar approach towards policy.

* **Specificity.** States and international groups should clearly define their niches and their goals so that the proper checks and standards can be used to measure the impacts of their budgets.
* **Transparency.** All financial transactions should be open to the public to hold decision-makers accountable and reduce instances of corruption. Status reports that include detailed use of their financial resources should be posted periodically.
* **Communication.** Information and reports need to be actively communicated to stakeholders, the masses, and other relevant groups. In the age of easy and instantaneous data sharing, steps should be taken to popularize gender responsiveness and equality when it comes to the environment and sustainability.
* **Collaboration.** States, NGOs, grassroots campaigns, and other relevant actors should be able to collaborate with each other through nationwide or international conferences, networking organizations, and more.
* **Representation.** More women should be included in these processes, with their needs taken into account. There should also be gender action plans, gender-responsive budgets, or budgets specifically devoted to gender equality.

It's important to monitor and review these policies at regular intervals so that they remain effective. At the global level, a shift is needed in the way that climate and biodiversity finance mechanisms are structured to be more gender-responsive.

## Question #8

There are already many practices being brought to the mainstream that incorporates several aspects of women's and children's right to a clean and sustainable environment.

In the business world, the representation of female leaders is already on the rise. Things such as gender quotas in executive leadership are already popular in European countries such as [France](https://gemmaq.org/new-blog/2021/5/17/gender-quotas), [Germany](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/338062639_Who_supports_gender_quotas_for_company_leadership_An_empirical_analysis_of_determinants_of_support_and_rejection_among_German_citizens), and the [UK](https://www.grantthornton.co.uk/insights/are-gender-quotas-good-for-business/), although it's still not that widespread in Asia.

[Research has shown](https://carleyhauck.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Report-Women_Create_Sustainable_Value.pdf) that women in the executive ranks can improve the company's priority for environmental and social responsibility, so increasing representation will increase women's stake in their rights.

Additionally, some of the [world's biggest companies](https://www.goveva.com/esg-focused-companies/) are successfully implementing [ESG policies](https://www.diligent.com/insights/esg/policy/) to improve their ratings and be more equitable for their employees and stakeholders.

## Question #9

There is a pressing need to improve the image of environmental defenders in their countries, especially in places where defending the environment can be downright fatal.

One prominent example is the Philippines, where being an environmental activist can [get you killed](https://earthjournalism.net/stories/philippine-environmental-defenders-in-the-crosshairs-of-red-taggers). Another is China, where publicly criticizing the state's actions against the environment caused one activist to be sentenced to [54 months in prison](https://www.sixthtone.com/news/1008437/environmental-activist-sentenced-to-54-months-in-prison).

Around the world, more and more environmental and land defenders are [ending up dead](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/sep/13/murders-environment-land-defenders-record-high). The luckier ones are jailed.

Therefore, it's only prudent that organizations and state agencies should include this sensitive issue in the conversation for environmental conservation and rights protection.

## Question #10

Some benefits of respecting, protecting, and fulfilling women's rights to a clean and sustainable environment include:

* **Health.** Protecting women's rights means access to essential services, such as water, sanitation, education, and healthcare, that will lower mortality rates and preserve lives.
* **Economically.** Women can get more chances to participate in the local and national economy. Mortality rates in conflict zones and poverty-stricken areas will be lessened, and able-bodied women can participate more in productive work for themselves and their local area's economy.
* **Environmental.** Ensuring that women have access to a clean and healthy environment increases their stakes in the conversation about sustainability, environmental protection, and green conversation.
* **Educational.** When their rights are protected, young girls can be educated about the importance of their environment and can spur a new generation of environmentally aware individuals, climate change activists, change-makers, and policy-makers.