

## **Women in Climate Change Crises Solutions: Centrality and Empowerment for Resilience**

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### **Abstract**

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*This study examines the crucial role played by women in fighting climate change crises and underscores the urgent need for their empowerment. Recognizing the complex challenges faced by women, including health risks, violence, displacement, and limited access to resources, the study delves into the underlying systemic factors intensifying their vulnerability. While adopting Radical Feminism theory as a lens, we acknowledge the importance of considering intersecting factors such as race, class, and geography in understanding women's experiences. Drawing from a comprehensive analysis of secondary sources, the study explores the ways in which women, despite their vulnerability, emerge as key agents of adaptation and resilience. Through their traditional roles in resource management and caregiving, women often lead efforts to mitigate environmental degradation and develop adaptive strategies in the aftermath of crises. Notably, our findings highlight the relationship between female leadership and effective crisis response, as evidenced by the instantaneous and decisive actions taken by states led by women during the COVID-19 pandemic. In light of these insights, the study proposes plausible recommendations for empowering women in the face of climate change crises. These include the establishment of gender-sensitive projects, support for women in green economies, and the promotion of women's participation in decision-making processes. Moreover, the study emphasizes the importance of integrating gender considerations into resilience-building efforts and increasing funding for initiatives addressing gender-specific vulnerabilities. By amplifying the centrality of women in climate change solutions and advocating for their empowerment, the study aims to foster greater resilience in the face of environmental challenges.*

**Keywords:** Women Empowerment, Climate Change, Climate Crises, Climate Resilience.

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### **1. Introduction**

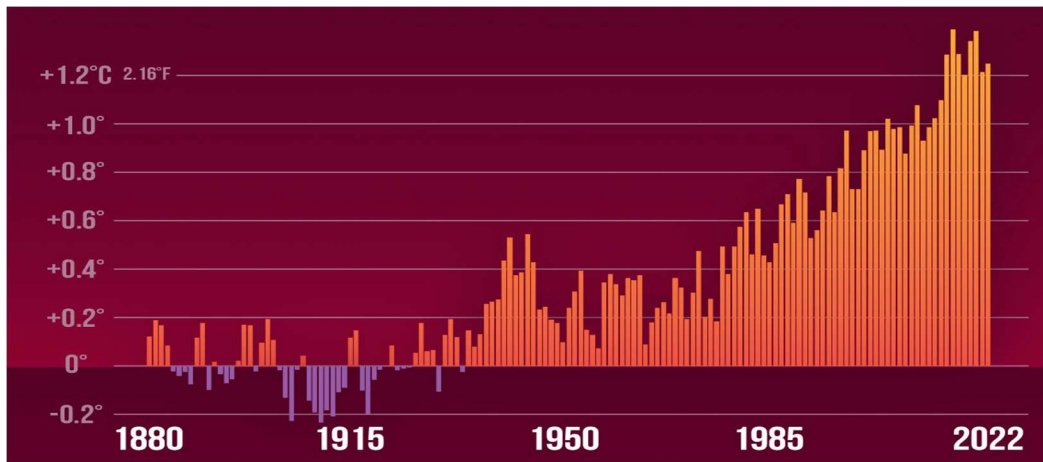
Climate change describes a continuous alteration in temperatures and forms of weather. These changes could be naturally induced, arising from variations in the movement of the sun and or massive volcanic explosions. However, since the period as far back as 1800, climate change has been attributed to various forms of human activities primarily revolving around boiling of fuel remnants (generally referred to as fossil fuel) such as coal, oil and gas. Fossil fuels originate from natural processes on the remains of dead and buried organisms - dead plants and animals. Thus, fossil fuel is a generic term for

non-renewable energy such as coal, coal product, natural gas derived gas, crude oil, etc (European Commission, 2023). Burning fossil fuel results in emission of greenhouse gas which is likened to a blanket enveloping the earth, and trapping the heat from the sun and rising temperatures generally referred to as climate change.

However, carbon dioxide and methane are the major greenhouse gases causing climate change. The alteration of climate arises from the use of gasoline for driving vehicles or coal for heating a building. Other human activities that can release carbon dioxide and methane emission into the atmosphere include land clearing and deforestation, agriculture, oil and gas operations, etc. Thus, energy, industry, transport, buildings, agriculture and land use are among the elements causing greenhouse gases (UN, 2023). Accordingly, climatologists and climate scientists have revealed that in the past 200 years, man has been responsible for nearly all global heating; human activities like the ones mentioned above result in production of greenhouse gases that warm the world faster than anytime at least in the last two thousand years (UN 2023)

Consequently, global climate is in constant change and it is estimated that the variation will continue beyond the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The degree of climate variation over the next few decades will however be determined primarily by the amount of greenhouse (heat-trapping) gases emitted globally, and on the level of the uncertainties surrounding the earth's sensitivity to those emissions. With significant reductions in the emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs), global annual average temperature rise could be limited to 2°C or less. However, without major reductions in these emissions, the increase in annual average global temperature, relative to pre-industrial times, could reach 5°C or more by the end of this century (World Bank, 2023). The trending increase in global average temperature, rise in sea level, upper-ocean heat content, land-based ice melt, arctic sea ice, depth of seasonal permafrost thaw, and other climate variables provide consistent evidence of a warming planet.

The plot below shows global average temperature anomalies; from 1880-2022 global average temperature has warmed approximately 1°C annually.



**Figure 1.** *Global Average Temperature Anomalies (Worldbank, 2023)*

Source: <https://www.climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org>

Experts have observed that climate change goes beyond just warmer temperatures as erroneously thought by many. They noted that temperature rise is only the beginning of climate change. The systemic nature of the earth connects everything such that, changes in one aspect invariably leads to changes in all others areas. Hence, other consequences of climate change include: intense droughts, water scarcity, severe fires, rising sea levels, flooding, melting polar ice, catastrophic storms and declining biodiversity (World Bank, 2020).

Consequently, climate change can affect human health, food security, housing, safety and work. Besides, some persons have become more vulnerable to the impact of climate change, such as people living in small island nations and other developing countries. Conditions like increase in sea-level and saltwater invasion have progressed to the point where whole communities were forced to relocate as displaced persons, and prolonged droughts put people at risk of famine. In future therefore, the number of “climate migrants” is expected to rise. Without doubts, the negative impact of climate change has implications for access to natural resources, as limited resources such as land, water, rainfall, forest, timber, etc (on which communities depend for their livelihood) can cause severe hardship, and can tendentially exacerbated conflict. There is thus, a strong connection between climate change and natural resource conflict.

However, the capacity of individuals to cope with climate change related crises situations such as psychological, food and water insecurity, displacement, loss of livelihood assets, social exclusion and other impacts of conflict, is strongly

influenced by their gendered roles and responsibilities especially as it concerns access to and management of natural resources. Invariably, those with little resources will most likely suffer more negative effects—particularly women - the world's dominant poor. In many parts of the world, women still face exclusion from decision-making, formal monetary systems, land ownership, reproductive health care, education and information, undermining their wellbeing as well as that of their families and communities (Haas, UNFPA 2009). Thus, women invariably become more vulnerable to changes in the availability and quality of these resources during and after conflict.

Women's susceptibility to climate issue is mostly attributed to intrinsic inequality, gender related marginalisation, ethnicity, low income and other socio-economic and cultural circumstances. Osman-Elasha (2009) pointed out that seventy per cent of the 1.3 billion people living in conditions of poverty are women. In municipal areas, 40 per cent of the poorest households are headed by women, 50 – 80% of world's food production is dominated by Women, but they own less than 10 per cent of the land. Notwithstanding their vulnerability, women have remained the unexploited resource in efforts to cope with climate change and reduce the emission that causes it. As visionaries, managers, leaders, educators and caregivers, women are exclusively positioned to help curb the damaging effects of a changing climate. (UNFPA 2009)

Against this background, the aim of this paper is to examine the centrality of women in climate change crisis, focusing on vulnerability, catalyst to climate crises management and the need for empowerment required for solutions. This paper is structured to cover introduction, review of literature, methodology, result and discussion, conclusion and recommendations.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **Climate Change**

Climate change refers to the longstanding changes in temperature and weather conditions. This shift might be natural arising from changes in the activities of the sun, or volcanic explosions, since 1800 however, human actions have been the main driver of climate change, basically arising from burning of fossil fuel, such as coal, oil and gas. Climate change is affecting the equilibrium of the ecosystem that sustain life and biodiversity, and impacting health. It equally leads to more life-threatening weather condition, such as intense and/or frequent hurricanes, floods, heat waves and droughts, and also lead to rise in sea level and coastal erosion

resulting from warming ocean, melting of glaciers, and loss of ice sheets. (UN Climate action; 2023). The Encyclopaedia Britannica – Science & Tech (2024) describes climate change as periodic modification of earth's climate brought about by the changes in atmosphere, as well as interactions between the atmosphere and various other geologic, chemical, biological, and geographic factors within the earth system. As the world seeks solutions to climate change, In 2015 world leaders met in Paris and endorsed a major treaty to practicalise the following suggestions solutions to climate crises: reducing and eventually getting to zero the level of greenhouse gases emission; increasing the natural ability of forests and oceans to absorb carbon dioxide, countries to diversify their economies away from fossil fuel, investment in renewable energy such as solar, wind, wave, tidal and geothermal power, shift to sustainable transport: electric vehicles, reduce air travels to reduce greenhouse emission as well as environmental pollution, use of heat pumps, heat homes in green ways such as insulating walls and roofs, use of heat pumps instead of oil and gas boilers, improve farming and encourage vegetable diets while avoiding meat and dairy products, restore nature to reduce more carbon, deforestation/forest protection, safeguard the oceans, reduce production of plastics which comes from oil and utilizes intense carbon to produce (Greenpeace, 2023)

### **Climate Crises**

The International Rescue Committee (2023) views climate crises as severe problems caused by or likely to be caused by changes in the planet's climate. This includes weather extremes and hazards, acidification of ocean and rise in sea level, loss of biodiversity, food and water uncertainty, health hazards, economic distraction, dislodgment and violent conflicts. Thus, climate crises denote a severe interruption of the natural earth climate pattern, orchestrated by changes induced by man. Climate crises occurs when there is an increase in greenhouse gas emitted into the atmosphere resulting from human activities such as burning of fossil fuels, deforestation, agricultural activities, industrialization; leaving severe environmental and social impact. To address climate crises requires promoting global cooperation for lasting solutions and resilience. The problem of climate crises can also be addressed by reverting to renewable energy sources such as the solar energy, wind, etc; and promoting climate finance etc, the committee noted.

However, the activities that lead to climate change and climate crises are all necessary for human existence and happiness. It therefore becomes difficult to reconcile between the hazards associated with climate crises and the benefits from natural gas, industrialization, agriculture, use of automobile etc. Although it has

been suggested above that a shift to non-renewable energy sources may provide a panacea to climate crises, but it is not to be expected that the global community will easily or automatically abandon these activities in totality, considering the gain of humanity from these sources. Besides that, even if the west manages to make this shift, the economic conditions of developing countries pose severe impediments against this shift owing to paucity of finance, poor political will, technological backwardness, environmental issues etc.

### **Climate Resilience**

The Climate Dictionary (as cited in UN Climate action; 2023) refers to Climate resilience as the capacity of a community or environment to anticipate and manage the impacts of climate change, such as extreme weather conditions, rise in sea level and famine, to minimize their damage, recover and transform as needed after the initial disaster. Climate resilience requires preparing and adapting to the effects of climate change. It further explained that the best way to safeguard societal wellbeing, economic activity and the environment; is for people, communities and governments to be equipped to deal with the unavoidable impacts of climate change. Equipment in this context should be in form of tackling what may be the possible challenges to reliance which include adequate funding of climate policies and program implementation, training people to acquire relevant skills and competence, possessing the right psychological disposition to expect and resist climate change impact, diversifying their sources of livelihood, building more disaster response and recovery capacities, enhancing climate information and early warning systems, working on long term planning etc. Thus, a true resilient society is one based on equity and climate justice that prioritises support for people and communities most susceptible to climate impacts or least able to cope with them. (Intl Rescue Commission; 2023).

### **Women Empowerment**

The European Institute for gender equality (EIGE) (2024) describes women empowerment as the 'process by which women gain power and control over their lives and acquire the ability to make strategic choices' EIGE identified five components in women empowerment which include: women sense of self-worth, their right to have and determine choices, access to opportunities and resources; right to have power to control their own lives, both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just and economic order, nationally and internationally. However, the major obstacle to women's access to resources has been cultural practices and norms on gender role

assignment. In most parts of the world men are traditionally ascribed the superiority position, while women are naturally regarded as subservient, and having no traditional right to own or inherit natural resources such as land, waterfront, forest, extractive minerals etc. The cultural role and classification basically determine one's relationship with these resources.

In many countries especially in Africa, women hardly enjoy the opportunity to occupy sensitive political positions to qualify for a voice in decision making on resources allocation and management. Besides cultural consideration, the violent political process prevalent in developing societies has been a major barrier to women access to resources; it discourages women from actively participating in politics. Thus, women naturally assume that climate resilience is an entirely government prerogative and men's talk, and therefore not encouraged to engage in any major discussion on climate action, or engage in any reasonable profit making venture such as the growth and development of enterprises, improve productivity, keep bank accounts, nor access bank loans due to non-possession of property for collateral, or enter into any contract agreement without approval from their husbands or a male relation. UN Womenwatch (2012) suggests enhancement of financial services that target women to be linked to a robust policy framework that guarantees rural women access to financial services that can empower women. Such empowerment can support women adopt measures to survive climate change.

Women empowerment embodies social, educational, economic, political and psychological or healthy living (Mahila B.Ed College 2023). The institution noted that women empowerment aims at creating a system where women have power and freedom to live their lives, without discrimination or gender based limitations. Thus, policy actions such as training, creating awareness, building self-confidence, expansion of choice, increase access to and control over resources, are among strategies required to transform the structures and institutions that reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality. These are important tools for empowering women and girls to claim their rights. (UN Commission on the status of women; 2002). However, factors such as patriarchal, limited access to education, economic inequality, violence and discrimination, traditional gender roles, lack of legal and political support, limited mobility are among the issues inhibiting women empowerment ((Mahila B.Ed College 2023)

### **Climate change, gender imbalance and social justice**

Researchers and climate change scientist are often confronted with the challenge of establishing a link between gender, social equity and climate change, especially the

emphasis on how climate change impact women and girls. Thus, UN Women (2022) has decried that climate crisis is not “gender neutral”. Women and girls experience the greatest impacts of climate change, which intensifies existing gender disparities and poses terrible threats to their livelihoods, health, and safety. Globally, women depend more on land and other natural resources, yet have less access to these resources caused by the prevailing social structure. In many areas, women suffer lopsided distribution of responsibility for securing food, water, and fuel. Farming is the most significant employment sector for women especially in low- and lower-middle income countries, in times of famine and unpredictable rainfall, women, as farmers and primary procurers, increase their labour to secure income and resources for their families. This puts additional pressure on girls, who often have to [drop out of school](#) to support their mothers manage the increased household burden. UN Women (2022) has described climate change as a “threat multiplier”, implying that it heightens social, political and economic tension in delicate and conflict-affected zones. As climate change exacerbates conflict across the world, women and girls face higher susceptibilities to all forms of gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, human trafficking, child marriage, and other forms of violence.

Corroborating the impact of climate change on gender, USAID (n.d.) reveals that women are prominent in many sectors. According to the USAID, women produce 60% to 80% of the food consumed in developing countries. Frequent and severe drought, flooding, and pest damage due to climate change is expected to reduce crop yields, which could result in less income and food for the household. In many countries, women perform the primary role of collecting water and firewood. As climate change intensifies scarcity of resources, women and girls are compelled to walk long distances to access water and firewood, this exposes them to various unsafe conditions, affecting productivity in other areas like farming, and available time for schooling and child care. Climate change has the tendency to increase the frequency and severity of life-threatening weather conditions. During and after conflicts, the role of women as care givers is intensified, possibly leading to exhaustion and illness, domestic and sexual abuse after disaster. Women thus, become more vulnerable to malnutrition, worsened by lack of access to Medicare; climate change can aggravate this situation. Changing temperatures can alter the courses for diseases like malaria, higher sea-surface temperatures are correlated with cholera epidemics, and more frequent droughts and floods will worsen sanitation and hygiene. Thus, women are less likely to survive crises and suffer greater tendency to sustain injuries and body pains; resulting from age-longed gender inequalities which have created variations in information, mobility, decision-making,



and access to resources and training. As a result, women and girls are less able to access relief and assistance, further threatening their livelihoods, wellbeing and recovery, and creating a vicious cycle of higher exposure in future.



**Photo:** UN MINUSTAH/Logan Abassi

**Source:** <https://www.unwomen.org/en/stories/explainer/2022...>

Figure 2: shows a section of women in Haiti displaced by Hurricane in 2016. Despite their plight and despicable condition, they still strive to care for their children and live up to other domestic chores due to their nature of resilience.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study anchors on the strands of Radical Feminism Theory. Radical Feminism is a feminist viewpoint that seeks to challenge traditional patriarchal power and gender roles. This idea was developed by Kate Millet in her book- ‘Sexual Politics’ where she concisely articulated her position on gender inequality. The ideas expressed in this book heightened much of women's equality movement. In her analysis, she discussed the power that men hold over women in society, and argued that this oppression is socially orchestrated. She maintained that men's control in society is not fundamentally biological, as they had previously perceived, but rather, a systemic oppression built over time. Radical Feminist thus, centers around the fundamental belief that power within society is fundamentally unequal; and therefore, hold the view that the societal framework should be completely overhauled, male dominance, they believe is the main cause of oppression in the social system, and this could be eliminated by including women in positions of power and eradicating traditional gender roles (Armstead & Teasley, 2021)

Corroborating her idea, Krenshaw (cited in Holt, 2020) in his analysis, supported the patriarchy, but extended his argument to capture other factors that promote social inequality. He highlighted the intersectionality in feminism theory. Intersectionality posits that various dimensions of oppression such as racism, classism, and sexism interrelate to produce a pattern of oppression in which varied methods of discrimination interconnect. Thus, intersectionality implies that different factors such as biological, social and cultural categories, including gender, race, class and even ethnicity interact and contribute to organised social inequality. Accordingly, various forms of oppression do not exist independently, but are interconnected.

Weathers (cited in Holt, 2020) provided a practical idea of intersectionality by drawing attention to the different experiences of white women vs women of colour on the discrimination board. She noted that the working-class women of colour personified the idea of intersectionality in the period of twentieth century. Weather revealed that the first and second waves of feminist movement was majorly engineered by white women, in which the feminist movement was not represented as a whole to include consideration for black women. It was therefore important to always appreciate the fact that white women suffered a different form of discrimination from the working-class women of colour, who in addition to contending with sexism, fought racism and class oppression as well.

Another strand of feminist theory considered relevant for this paper is the Ecofeminism. Ecofeminism is aspect of feminism and political ecology that explores the connection between women and nature. The term was coined by a French feminist writer Francoise d' Eaubonne in her book '*Le Feminisme ou la Mort* (1974) (cited in Miles; 2024) Ecofeminism is a political ideology that is linked to climate change and the global climate crises and its impact on the environment; it seeks to analyse the relationship between gender and environmental degradation. Proponents of this theory argue that while women are the focus of ecofeminism debate, ecofeminism is not exclusively for women because the overall health of the environment affects everyone irrespective of gender. Nevertheless, ecofeminism points out that the prevailing oppressive patriarchal structure subject women more to the detrimental impact of environmental disasters than men. Ecofeminism thus, seeks equality of all genders. (Studysmarter, 2024).

Amartya and Nussbaum (cited in cmi & ucav; 2020) developed Capability Approach as a framework for understanding the moral significance of social

arrangement, evaluated according to the degree of freedom enjoyed by the individuals to achieve a life they value. (The capability theory involves two core normative values: i) the supposition that freedom to achieve well-being is of primary moral importance; ii) freedom to achieve well-being must be understood in terms of people with capabilities. This suggests the real opportunity people have to do and become what they value; without freedom therefore, individuals find it difficult to do or live a life they value. Although Amartya and Nussbaum are the leading scholars of the capability theory, but while Amartya's capability theory focuses on enhancing human freedom, Nussbaum emphasised respect for human dignity (Well; n.d.) Thus, within the framework of gender and climate change, the Capability Approach analyses how the social structure that promote gender inequality can limit the ability of an individual to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change, and to identify strategies for promoting women's agency, capabilities, and well-being in the face of environmental challenges.

### **Literature Gap**

The ideas expressed on the literature reviewed above though explored the critical issues about climate change and its impacts on women; however, little was said about what makes women central in climate action, or the obvious factors explaining their vulnerability to climate crises; the literature was also silent on the specific reasons underlining women empowerment and the institutional strategies as recommendations for empowering women for resilience. This lacuna has been identified in literature and which this study seeks to fill. In other words, this study questions why women are most vulnerable, why should they be empowered and what are the empowerment options.

### **3. Materials and Methods**

This study employed both secondary and primary sources to collect relevant data. Secondary sources include publications comprising of books and online sources, particularly institutional documents on women central role in climate change resilience and the need for empowerment. The study adopted survey method to source primary data through interviews and focus group discussion with selected relevant resource persons. The study adopted the qualitative research design which allowed for exhaustive review, through content analysis of available data, to establish possible trends. The design also aided the study to establish if women empowerment was manifest in the responses obtained. Based on the analysis, recommendations for policy actions were provided.

#### **4. Result and Discussions**

##### **Women are vulnerable in climate change crises**

This study has noted above that women are the most vulnerable in climate change crises. Logically speaking therefore, to reduce their vulnerability, they need to play active role in managing climate related crises. Thus, Schueman (2023) the author and producer of ‘One Earth’, pointed out that despite the worldwide persistence of gender inequality, women have remained the key in climate change crisis, being at the forefront and leading the fight to secure our planet. Globally women and girls respond more successfully in times of crises and actively making effort towards creating a more just and sustainable future for all. Despite that, women have remained the most targeted in times of crises. According to him, the susceptibility of women to climate change crises is underscored by the following conditions:

##### **Women bear the burden of natural disaster and violence**

On a subdued note, the impact of a warming planet is not equally felt by men and women. According to UN’s estimates, 80% of those displaced by climate change are women. These displacements are usually caused by more regular natural disasters which include droughts, floods, cyclones, hurricanes, and wildfires. The situation is worsened by the fact that even after these severe weather conditions, instead of receiving assistance, women still suffer more harm such as rape, intimidation, kidnapping and outright killing. Evidence has shown that violence against women and girls increases in crises periods. Besides, a twenty-one-year study with a sample of 141 countries revealed that more women die from catastrophic events than men. (Schueman, 2023).

##### **Women are more exposed to pollutants**

By their natural body composition, women and children are more susceptible to pollution than men. Mercury produced from coal-fired power generators is an astounding example. Research conducted by the American Environmental Protection Agency shows that in the US alone, about forty-eight tons of the poisonous chemical is pumped annually into air, resulting in one, out of every six American women of child bearing age carrying enough mercuries in their blood to put the fetus at the risk of developmental problems, estimating that over 300,000 babies are born each year at the risk of mercury poisoning (Hitt; 2011). A later study approximates the number of babies born with the risk of neurological damage attributable to prenatal mercury exposure. (Schueman; 2023)

### **Economic standing and gender roles**

It is quite disturbing that the world's most economically deprived countries are more susceptible to natural calamities and pollution; and women make up the majority of the 1.5 billion people living on less than \$1 per day. Globally, women in the age range of 25-34 are 25% more likely to live in abject poverty than men. Their traditional roles of gathering water, food, fuel and other household consumables equally expose women more to the negative effects of climate change. These activities to a large extent depend on natural resources and are thus, more predisposed to the effects of environmental degradation orchestrated by increasing global temperature. This can result in heightened cycle of poverty (Schueman; 2023)

Despite these daunting challenges, women worldwide have shown their resilience after environmental catastrophes, improved livelihoods, and thereby creating effective climate solutions.

### **Empowering women as active leaders in times of crises**

The unpleasant situations faced by women in crises periods, make it very imperative to build capacity in them through empowerment, to position them strategic for alleviating their ugly experience. The relevance of empowerment in development process is underlined by the fact that major development institutes such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), World Bank, Oxfam and many smaller NGOs have recognised empowerment as an unquestionable goal of development; viewed as necessary ingredient for challenging and transforming unequal socio-economic and political structures. Empowerment, regarded as the weapon for the weak, can best be employed through participatory, grass-roots, community-based NGOs. Thus, by the mid-1990s, majority of the global development agencies had embraced empowerment as a major roadmap to development; such that while not ignoring their credence to liberal economic policies, the language of participation, partnership and empowerment progressively become key consideration in many development discourses (Parpart, cited in Desai & Potter; 2008).

Besides that, women have been proven as better managers of crises situations. The events of Covid-19 pandemic proved the fact that if women are empowered during disaster and emergency response planning, they showcase unique knowledge and skills that help communities to recover quicker and more effectively. A study of 194 countries showed that pandemic responses were systematically better in

women-led countries. For instance, a study of governors in USA during Covid-19 pandemic found that states with female leaders had lower fatality rates (Zenger & Folkman; 2020) as female leaders responded more quickly and thus, recorded half as many deaths from Covid-19 as male-led countries (RHR International, 2022). One may wonder why Covid-19 was brought into the discussion of climate change considering that not much link exists between the two phenomena. However, both of them represent crises of life threatening situations that require quick response, and the notion of quick response revolves around responsive policy framework, human action and funding which are critical in every crises management situation.

On that consideration, during the 2023 celebration of International Women's Day, the UN Women identified five (5) broad reasons why women play active role in climate change action. They include:

### **1. Climate action requires Joint action of stakeholders**

In her articulation of the place of women in climate crises management, UN Women (2023) noted that women and girls constitute about half of the world's population, yet they are often not part of decisions on climate change action. Nevertheless, UN Women maintain that every hand must be on deck in order to achieve the Paris Agreement target of reducing global temperature rise to 1.5 degree Celsius. This implies that both men and women/girls need to be empowered and strategized to be part of every action required to achieve that goal.

Therefore, all categories of women need to participate all levels from climate negotiations to decision room, and to forests and fields, particularly in areas most affected by the impact of climate change such as African countries with climatic conditions ranging from tropical to arid temperature (McGregor, cited in Desai & Potter; 2008) By including more women in climate change action, especially native women, who have been frontline environmental protectors, and have vital information and know-how that can aid resilience, and reduce emission of greenhouse gas, a more sustainable and equitable future can be secured for all. (UN Climate Change news, 2023). Indigenous women naturally lead an inherently low-carbon life style, advocating an equilibrium between man and his natural environment; their traditional practices have minimal effect on the ecosystem and are responsive to it, thereby promoting self-sustaining bionetworks. (The Climate Dictionary; 2023)

## **2. Empowering women means better climate solutions**

In a similar way, women make up half of the agricultural labour force in developing countries. UN Women argued that women can increase their technological know-how and agricultural yields by 20 to 30 percent if given the same access to resources as men. Besides, UN maintained that increase in output can help address the problem of world hunger, reduce poverty and enhance individual adaptations by 12 to 17 percent, as well as improves total agricultural output by 2.5 to 4 percent. For example, at her re-election, the New Zealand's Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern and her 40% women cabinet, declared a "Climate Emergence"; she noted that the declaration is an acknowledgement of the burden of the next generation if they don't get things right, and do not take action now. They therefore came up with a proposal to make the country's public sector carbon neutral by 2025 (Aljazeera, 2020).

## **3. Women are central in building climate resilience in communities**

Involving women is crucial for building coping strategies in communities. In fact, the UN Women reports that when women are part of the planning process, communities are more likely to develop capacity-building strategies to confront the challenges of climate change.

Besides, women tend to react quicker when communities need to respond to natural disaster, they are better leaders in reducing the risk of disaster, and contribute to post recovery by focusing their effort on salvaging their families from adverse effect of climate change, as well as strengthen their community against future occurrence.

## **4. The impact of Climate change is not equally felt by all.**

Although everyone feels the impact of climate change affects everyone, but not at the same level. It is very obvious that the world's most vulnerable suffers the impact of climate change greatly in all countries, and increase existing disparities. Factors such as poverty associated with existing roles, economic conditions cultural norms etc, have subjected women to the burdens and higher risk of the impact of climate change. For example, in many countries, women bear the burden of household energy, food, water and care giving. Thus, the consequences of climate change can increase the problem for women and girls, especially in developing countries where certain structural factors such as economic conditions, unequal access to resources and discriminatory social norms predisposes women to abject poverty, subjecting them to much struggle including travelling a long distance to obtain daily supplies.

This condition leaves little or no time for paid work and potentially exposing them to greater risk.

### **5. Countries consider the importance of women in climate planning**

UN women however observed that countries are increasingly empowering women and girls in the climate change process, mobilizing them across various priority sectors with their national climate change action plans to contribute to, and benefit from, climate action.

Within the UN Climate Change process, many countries have shared their experiences in integrating gender across different priority sectors within their national climate action plan. Within the Africa continent, research shows that as at August 2023, 40 out of 41 African countries that submitted updated Nationally Determined Contribution (NDCc) planning and implementation, have included gender consideration in them. Out of this, 25 countries have included gender-responsive action in the area of adaptation, while 12 included gender-responsive action related to migration. In 2022, Nigeria revised her National Gender Policy, and adopted a national action plan on gender and climate change. Malawi also established a National Technical Committee on climate change where the ministry of gender, community development and social welfare is represented. (Jasmin B; UNDP; 2023) Thus, the Gender Action Plan agreed by governments under the UN Framework Convention on climate change (UNFCCC) calls for women's full, equal, and meaningful participation in the international climate process, and to ensure a prominent role for women in decision-making and in climate action.

Thus, it becomes interesting to know that investing in women's empowerment has far-reaching benefits, including environmental conservation, poverty reduction, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Addressing climate change from the perspective of gender can equally address the issue of women rights, and thus promote greater gender equality.

However, factors which include among others: structural inequalities, discriminatory laws, limited access to resources and educational opportunities, unequal pay, gender-based violence, etc., have become key challenges to women empowerment.



## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

The hallmark of the above study is simply inclusiveness and empowerment. Inclusiveness gives one a feeling of belonging and restores a sense of pride and relevance, while empowerment supports an individual to overcome challenges. Recognizing women in the societal and national scheme of things with necessary empowerment will provoke their nature-giving potentials and in fact spurs them into positive actions. This will enhance the problem-solving capacities women are naturally endowed with, and enable them adapt to crises associated with climate change, and in the long run, women - the earth's untapped resources, will have the opportunity to lend their support and contribute their efforts to transform society for the good of all. It is important to state here that the recommendations provided below should be adopted with respect to the ecological milieu and leanings of each society.

Therefore, the study recommends ensuring gender-friendly project in social protection and livelihoods diversification measures. This requires floating programs to expand livelihoods and increase women representation in natural resource-based sectors, and ensure their tenure rights, natural resource management capacity, and use of approaches based on specific areas; particularly those led by women and indigenous people. This will thus, boost resilience & adaptive capacity in gender sensitive ways. Also to Support women to strive in Green economies (employment & entrepreneurship) which entails encouraging girls' education in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM); and enhance employment after school. At institutional level the study recommends gender integration through creating sensitive programs that are inclusive as well as to promote women's leadership and decision making capacity, others are to promote policy and legal frameworks protecting women from violence

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