

# Fair, sustainable and effective

Gender equality as  
the basis for climate and  
biodiversity policies



SEPTEMBER 2024

# Contents

Summary	04
Introduction	06
Inclusive decision-making	10
Inclusive and effective finance	15
Policy coherence	24
Glossary	36

## Imprint 2024

This is a publication of: ActionAid Nederland, Both ENDS, CARE Nederland, Milieudefensie, Simavi, Women Engage for a Common Future and WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform

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Coordination: WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform

Graphics & design: Engine Creative Agency

Supported by:



Front cover photo: Three women working jointly with their community in Mozambique on repairs after cyclone Idai. Photo credit: Josh Estey/CARE (February 2020)

Back cover photo: The successful entrepreneur Jeanne Sekongo (front right) rides to a local market in Ivory Coast together with other women who are part of the 'Women in Enterprise' programme. Photo credit: Tim Mwaura/CARE (February 2019)

Photo on the right: A trainer of CARE Bangladesh giving a leadership training to female textile workers for the 'Empowering Women Workers' project. Photo credit: Jorja Currington/CARE (July 2019)





# Summary

The worldwide climate and biodiversity crises<sup>1</sup> and ongoing gender inequality are intrinsically linked. These pressing challenges can only be solved with an integral and inclusive approach.

## How are gender equality, climate, and biodiversity connected?

Investing in women's rights and gender equality is essential in order to address the climate and biodiversity crises effectively. Women – in all their diversity (see box 1) – contribute to the conservation of biodiversity, restoration of our ecosystems, and to successful climate solutions using their expertise, including their local and Indigenous Knowledge. It has been known for many years that the structural participation of women in decision-making is crucial for achieving more commitment and results on climate action and biodiversity preservation.

However, in spite of their knowledge, strength, and creativity, women frequently are not provided a seat at the tables where political decisions are made. What's more, they often do not have proper access to funding to carry out their activities. This also applies to the LGBTQI+ community, Indigenous Peoples, and others in a marginalised position, such as people living in poverty. These groups are disproportionately affected by the impacts of the climate and biodiversity crises. Not only is this unjust, the enduring gender inequality prevents us from effectively addressing the climate and biodiversity crises.

## The Netherlands as a leader in women's rights and gender equality

For decades, the Netherlands has been one of the international frontrunners when it comes to women's rights and gender equality. At the UN climate summit in Dubai, for example, the Dutch government prioritised gender equality in their mandate. In addition, the Netherlands has committed itself to internationally agreed objectives to promote women's rights, gender equality, climate action, and biodiversity. That is why we're calling on the Dutch government not to relinquish this role as a

champion of women's rights and gender equality, and to put locally led (women's) organisations from the Global South centre stage in addressing the climate and biodiversity crises. They are key to the advancement of effective solutions.

## Recommendations

This paper is about the intrinsic link between gender equality, climate and biodiversity. These goals can only be achieved if Dutch policy is set up in a way that safeguards equal rights and challenges unequal power dynamics. For this reason, we call on the government to draw from successful examples on the ground, often led by local (women's) organisations from the Global South. The case studies in this paper serve as inspiration and demonstrate what works and what does not work at the local level.

We make the following three comprehensive recommendations:

- » Prioritise in Dutch policy and programmes structural and meaningful participation in political decision-making by women and girls in all their diversity – ranging from local levels to international climate negotiations.
- » Ensure that funding becomes more accessible for local (women's) organisations and that all climate and biodiversity finance advances gender equality.
- » Ensure that different policy initiatives are mutually reinforcing instead of hindering or undermining each other. Priority should be given to universal human rights, including women's rights, and environmental and climate agreements. Bring all financial flows in line with the Paris Climate Agreement and ensure that this fossil fuel phase-out plan promotes international equity and gender equality.

## BOX 1

SEE THIS BOX FOR FREQUENT IN-TEXT REFERENCE THROUGHOUT THE DOCUMENT

## Who are we talking about when we say 'women'?

### The importance of an intersectional approach

Women do not constitute a homogenous group. They have all sorts of different – and at times, divergent – interests and needs. Significant differences exist between women residing in urban and rural areas; between poor and wealthy women; between girls, young women, and elderly women; between women of different races and ethnicities. These differences also extend to people who identify as female and those who are transgender or non-binary. They all experience discrimination based on sex and gender, but also a wide range of other forms of discrimination – for example, based on their ethnicity, religion, partner choice, education, country of origin, disability, or sexuality.

**When using the term 'women' in this paper, explicit reference is made to women and girls in all their diversity.\*** The various forms of injustice and inequality that women face, are taken into consideration. To be specific, they are closely connected and can also exacerbate one another. Equality is only possible if we address the various root causes of power imbalance. In other words, an intersectional gender lens is used in this paper as an analysis instrument. **Although gender and sex may be our starting point, we are continuously aware that various other identity characteristics are just as determinative and may result in very contrasting positions in society.**

For the record: men, in all their diversity, are also affected by the climate and biodiversity crises, and they play an important role in climate solutions. Men and those who identify as male, can experience obstacles resulting from restrictive masculine norms.<sup>2</sup> An example of this can be found at firefighting departments where the great majority are male. A significant increase in forest fires as a result of rising temperatures has a disproportionate impact on this group.<sup>3</sup>

In sum, we are conscious of the fact that everyone is affected by gender inequality in their own way. In this paper, we have limited ourselves to the impact and consequences of the climate and biodiversity crises, in combination with gender inequality, with a particular focus on women in all their diversity.

\* We are aware of the fact that using the umbrella term 'women' may not be considered inclusive by all groups who we represent when using the term. Unfortunately, much of the research data used in this paper still takes a simple, binary and biological distinction between women and men as a basis. For the sake of this paper's clarity, we have opted for referring to the explanation in this box at the start of every chapter, in order to do justice to the various experiences and positions.

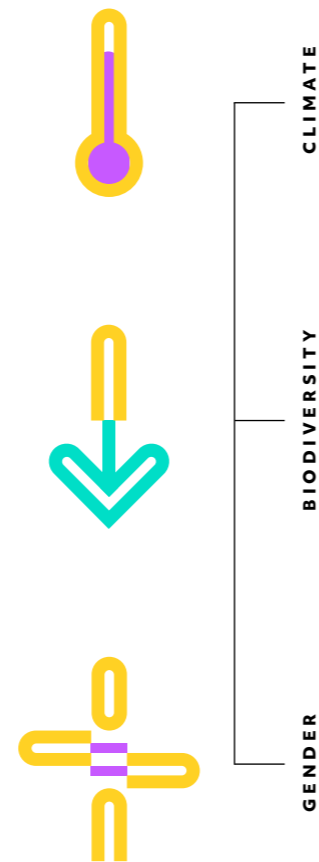
<sup>1</sup> On page 36, a glossary can be found containing the definitions of the terms underlined in yellow.

<sup>2</sup> MenEngage Alliance (n.d.), Climate Justice.

<sup>3</sup> Nagel & Lies (2022), Re-gendering Climate Change: Men and Masculinity in Climate Research, Policy and Practice.

# Introduction

## Where do climate, biodiversity, and gender intersect?



The short answer to this question is: everywhere! **Climate change**, biodiversity loss, and gender inequality are three closely connected global crises.<sup>4</sup> The challenges in each of these areas can only be solved with a common and integrated approach.

There is, of course, a more comprehensive answer. It starts with the finding **that the biodiversity crisis and climate crisis both reinforce and exacerbate one another**. The climate crisis is causing the acidification of oceans, and prolonged drought and extreme heat are leading to forest fires. If global warming continues to increase, biodiversity will be lost even more rapidly. Should the earth warm a further two degrees, it is estimated that 5% of species will be under threat of extinction. The reverse is also true: biodiversity plays an indispensable role in combating climate change. A greater species diversity contributes to a better absorption of greenhouse gases, and healthy, resilient ecosystems serve as a natural buffer against the climate crisis.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, solutions to the biodiversity and climate crises are often dealt with separately, both in science and policy. As a result, there is a risk that neither problem will be adequately addressed. The first joint report of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), dated June 2021, also identifies this risk.<sup>6</sup> One of the key recommendations in this regard is that biodiversity loss and climate change must be tackled together from a policy perspective.

A second important finding: The biodiversity crisis and the climate crisis are both the result of an economic system that is based on unlimited growth and that reinforces inequality. Wealthy countries have fully benefited from economic growth based on the use of fossil fuels, resulting in the current climate crisis. The consequences are predominantly felt by people, groups, countries, and regions who have not contributed or have contributed a lot less to the climate crisis.<sup>7</sup> They have the least resources to defend themselves against the consequences and do not have a voice in the decision-making on how the crisis is handled.

The Advisory Council on International Affairs [Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken] noted in 2023 that although investments in sustainability and global climate action are on the rise, they still fall far short of achieving the goals of the Paris Climate Agreement of 2015 and halting the climate crisis. The council argues that international **climate justice** is necessary to achieve the climate ambitions. In other words, the burdens and costs of the climate crisis and **climate damage** must be distributed

fairly – that is, much more fairly than is currently the case. At present, countries with the largest (historical) responsibility for the climate and biodiversity crises are not doing enough to assist in the timely reduction of emissions. They also fail to support countries in the Global South which have barely contributed to these crises but are now nonetheless experiencing their most profound and significant consequences.<sup>8</sup>

“ A world citizen from the top 1 per cent of the largest emitters, a group that largely overlaps with the wealthiest world citizens, emits 72 times more greenhouse gases than the average fellow world citizen from the bottom 50 per cent.

Advisory Council on International Affairs, 2023, p.21-22



Female farmers in Nepal. Photo credit: Alex Kazachok

<sup>4</sup> This paper builds on *Onlosmakelijk verbonden: gendergelijkheid, klimaat en biodiversiteit. Concrete aanbevelingen voor integraal beleid* [Intrinsically linked: gender equality, climate, and biodiversity. Concrete proposals for an integrated policy], a joint publication from 2021 by ActionAid, Both ENDS, Women Engage for a Common Future, and WO=MEN Dutch Gender Platform.

<sup>5</sup> Wageningen University (n.d.), *Biodiversiteit en klimaatverandering* [Biodiversity and climate change].

<sup>6</sup> IPCC-IPBES (2021), *Biodiversity and Climate Change - Scientific Outcome*.

<sup>7</sup> UN (n.d.), *Causes and Effects of Climate Change: OxfamNovib (2023), Klimaatgelijkheid - Naar een planeet voor de 99%* [Climate equality - Off to a planet for the 99%].

<sup>8</sup> Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken [Netherlands Advisory Council on International Affairs] (2023), *Klimaatrechtvaardigheid als noodzaak* [Climate justice as a necessity].



Third finding: **The climate and biodiversity crises reinforce existing gender inequality.**<sup>9</sup> **Women \***

usually have less access to income, funding, education, employment, and agricultural land as a result of legislation, policy, social norms, and discrimination.

They are also underrepresented in political decision-making processes, and where they do participate, their input is often disregarded or undervalued. Due to these inequalities women and girls are often hit harder by the effects of the climate and biodiversity crises. Deforestation, for example, has specific consequences for women and girls. In many areas of the world, girls do not regularly attend school as they are required to help with collecting wood. As a result of deforestation, the distances girls must travel to collect wood has increased, requiring more of their time, which in turn results in them missing out on even more school. Not only is this extended travel an impediment to their development, it also makes them more vulnerable to sexual violence.<sup>10</sup>

Another example: The changing weather patterns adversely affect food production. In the Global South, where women produce 60 to 80% of food, these changing weather patterns have many consequences for women.<sup>11</sup> Access to resources that would allow women to adapt to the changing situation and to remediate any possible damage caused by climate change, is crucial to them and would make a significant difference. Sadly, they either do not have such access or it is very limited.<sup>12</sup> An alarming statistic: In the worst-

*With this, explicit reference is made to women and girls in all their diversity. Please see box 1 on page 5.*



case scenario, as many as 158 million more women and girls will descend into poverty halfway through this century as the result of the climate crisis. In comparison, the number for men and boys is 16 million less.<sup>13</sup>

Fortunately, the link between climate, biodiversity, and gender equality also works the other way; investing in gender equality helps to tackle climate and biodiversity problems. **To be specific, women play an essential role in, for example, soil and water management, forestry, and the preservation of crop varieties. These activities enhance biodiversity and adaptation to the climate crisis.** As a result, women are also often pioneers in important sectors, such as sustainable energy, water management, forestry, and agriculture.<sup>14</sup> For example, women in Latin America are taking the lead in setting up forest gardens where they are able to produce food even in a changing climate.<sup>15</sup> Besides, (Indigenous) women lead the resistance against fossil fuel projects and the degradation of ecosystems. For example, women activists in the Philippines – at the risk of their own lives – stand at the forefront in the fight against land reclamation projects in Manila Bay which threaten the well-being of local communities and climate-sensitive habitats.<sup>17</sup>

## Reading reference

**In this paper, we show that an effective climate and biodiversity approach requires just and structural solutions.** Not policies that are focused on excessive growth and that allow big polluters to profit; but policies centred on the planet, the environment, and human beings. Using a gender lens is crucial in this regard. The experiences of women, particularly those from the Global South, related to the impact of the climate crisis, and their involvement with the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity provide valuable insights into the climate and biodiversity crises. We need their voices to create sustainable solutions. That is why we emphasise the need to facilitate, acknowledge, and (financially) support contributions made by women and girls.

**In the following chapters of this paper, we indicate how the Netherlands can put this into practice through the themes of 'inclusive decision-making', 'inclusive and effective finance', and 'policy coherence'.** For each theme, concrete policy recommendations are provided to the Dutch government to encourage joint efforts towards a coherent, effective, and inclusive international climate and biodiversity policy.



<sup>9</sup> OECD (2023), *The Gender Equality and Environment Intersection. An overview of development co-operation frameworks and financing.*

<sup>10</sup> UN Women Watch (n.d.), *Fact Sheet Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change.*

<sup>11</sup> FAO (2023), *Women produce up to 80% of food in developing countries.*

<sup>12</sup> UN Women (2023), *Feminist Climate Justice. A Framework for Action.*

<sup>13</sup> UNDP (2016, p. 1-8), *Gender and Climate Change. Overview of linkages between gender and climate change.*

<sup>14</sup> UN Women (2023), *Feminist Climate Justice. A Framework for Action.*

<sup>15</sup> ActionAid, Both Ends, WECF & WO=MEN (2021), *Onlosmakelijk verbonden: Gendergelijkheid, Klimaat en Biodiversiteit.* [Intrinsically linked: gender equality, climate, and biodiversity].

<sup>16</sup> Heuvelmans & Melissen (4 maart 2023), *Het klimaat is te belangrijk om alleen aan mannen over te laten.* [The climate is too important to be left to men alone].

<sup>17</sup> Global Witness (14 september 2023), *Two Filipino environmental advocates violently abducted after opposing controversial airport project.*





The Ngape women group from Kajjado who meet monthly to discuss local problems and solutions in the context of the area's persistent drought. Kenya. Photo credit: Sascha de Boer (March 2023)

## Inclusive decision-making

Due to the unequal balance of power, there are still too few women and girls\* at the tables where decisions are being made about how to address the climate and biodiversity crises. Not only is this unjust, but it is also a missed opportunity to create more effective policies. **Women's equal participation in decision-making processes and leadership structures, helps to raise the ambitious commitments regarding climate and biodiversity action and contributes to more effective solutions.** Various studies make this clear.

Women in decision-making positions tend to be more mindful of the needs of children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. This comes as no surprise: As a result of gender-related norms, women are often the primary caregivers of these groups.<sup>18</sup> An OECD report from 2014 shows that gender diversity in decision-making bodies promotes public trust.<sup>19</sup> In the Netherlands, the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation stated in 2021: "Gender equality, and the socioeconomic and political participation and leadership of women is not only a matter of justice, it also results in more effective policy as well as more prosperity and peace."<sup>20</sup>

With this, explicit reference is made to women and girls in all their diversity. Please see box 1 on page 5.



The most recent report from the IPCC argues that "empowering women benefits both [climate], mitigation and [climate] adaptation because women prioritise climate change in their voting "... [and in their] community leadership."<sup>21</sup> The Netherlands also recognises that "only a diverse climate policy is effective and sustainable."<sup>22</sup> The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) underlines that communities become more resilient when women participate in decision-making and planning, and that by including women, their ability to counter the climate crisis is strengthened.<sup>23</sup> The calculations of Farming First provide an excellent example as they demonstrate that 100 to 150 million people globally can be saved from hunger if female farmers would have the same rights and access to resources as their male counterparts.<sup>24</sup>

### BOX 2

## Under-representation of women in decision-making & management positions: the numbers

Unequal opportunities and gender norms limit the participation of women in decision-making processes concerning climate and biodiversity. Currently, only 15.96% of ministerial positions for the environment and top civil service positions at environment-related ministries<sup>28</sup> are held by women worldwide.<sup>29</sup> According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), if current gender equality efforts remain unchanged, it will take 162 years before women hold 50% of the top civil service positions at environmental ministries, based on the existing growth trajectory.<sup>30</sup> Men are currently much more often included in (government) delegations at international negotiations on climate policy. For example, during the international climate negotiations in Dubai in 2023 (COP28), only 34% of the delegation members and 19% of the heads of a delegation were women.<sup>31</sup>

Similar effects can be seen when it comes to biodiversity. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) argues that meaningful participation - real participation and not just idle talk - by women in forest management and biodiversity protection has a "considerable positive effect".<sup>25</sup> A study from India shows that women's participation in forest projects is associated with a 28% greater probability of forest regeneration.<sup>26</sup> Studies also show that in countries with higher female representation in parliament, there is a greater likelihood of efforts to safeguard protected lands.<sup>27</sup>

In short: For an effective and just climate and biodiversity policy, it is essential that the knowledge and

needs of women are taken into consideration at a local, national, and international level. This makes the structural under-representation of women in decision-making processes addressing the climate and biodiversity crises all the more tragic.

Fortunately, the participation and leadership of women in decision-making processes concerning climate and environment are included in the goals of the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan (GAP)<sup>32</sup> and the Convention on Biological Diversity's Gender Plan of Action.<sup>33</sup> However, it is up to the member states themselves to implement these goals, and the GAP, for example, does not provide any funding for this.

<sup>18</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union (2008), *Equality in Politics: A Survey for Women and Men in Parliaments*.

<sup>19</sup> OECD (2014), *Women, Government and Policy Making in OECD Countries. Fostering Diversity for Inclusive Growth*.

<sup>20</sup> Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal [Netherlands House of Representatives of the States General] (2021, p. 2), *Brief van de ministers van Buitenlandse Zaken en van Buitenlandse Handel en Ontwikkelingssamenwerking - Kamerstuk 33 625 nr. 331* [Letter of the Dutch Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation - Parliamentary Paper 33 625, no. 331].

<sup>21</sup> IPCC (2022, p. 525), *Climate Change 2022. Mitigation of Climate Change*.

<sup>22</sup> Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken [Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs] (14 maart 2022), *Vrouwen nemen het voortouw in de strijd tegen klimaatverandering*. [Women lead the way in the fight against climate change].

<sup>23</sup> UNFCCC (8 maart 2023), *Five Reasons Why Climate Action Needs Women*.

<sup>24</sup> Farming First (2023), *The Female Face of Farming*.

<sup>25</sup> FAO (2022, p. 99), *The State of the World's Forests 2022. Forest pathways for green recovery and building inclusive, resilient and sustainable economies*.

<sup>26</sup> United Nations Development Programme (2016, p. 5), *Gender & Climate Change. Gender and REDD+*.

<sup>27</sup> United Nations Development Programme (2016, p. 5), *Gender & Climate Change. Gender and REDD+*.

<sup>28</sup> This also covers ministries that deal with agriculture, forestry, fisheries, water, transportation, infrastructure and housing according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

<sup>29</sup> IUCN (2024, p. 8), *Gender equality for greener and bluer futures*.

<sup>30</sup> IUCN (2024, p. 8), *Gender equality for greener and bluer futures*.

<sup>31</sup> WEDO (24 januari 2024), *Release: New Data Shows 34% Women's Participation on Party Delegations at COP28, the Same Percentage as 10 Years Ago*.

<sup>32</sup> UNFCCC (2019), *Gender and Climate Change. Proposal by the President*.

<sup>33</sup> UN Environment Programme (2022), *Convention on Biological Diversity*.

## How do we ensure the participation of women in political decision-making?

- » Promote and support equal representation in decision-making in the area of climate and biodiversity, and ensure more women in leadership positions. For example, gender quotas could be introduced, and investment in initiatives promoting political participation by women and female leadership could be made.
- » Involve (local) gender experts at all levels of policy development and decision-making. Integrating a gender perspective in climate and environmental policy requires expertise and an inclusive approach.

One way of making progress in the field of inclusive decision-making is by introducing gender quotas for political decision-making processes on climate and biodiversity. Studies published in the scientific magazine *Nature* show that gender quotas increase the fairness and effectiveness of climate policy and climate measures.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, in a 2019 article published in the *European Journal of Political Economy*, researchers stated that female representation in parliaments causes countries to adopt more stringent climate policy, resulting in lower CO2 emissions.<sup>35</sup>

Another way to encourage female participation is by **investing in programmes that promote political participation** – such as the Women Delegates Fund.<sup>36</sup>

This programme provides financial support and training to women from predominantly the poorest countries. This support enables them to take part in meetings and negotiations of the UNFCCC on behalf of their country.<sup>37</sup>

In addition to this, **gender experts** should, as a rule, be involved in all stages of policy development and monitoring. For example, consultations with women's and gender rights organisations should be considered, particularly those from the Global South. Besides the expertise concerning the enhancement of gender equality, local and Indigenous Knowledge is essential to ensure that risk assessments, as well as project and policy development, serve the right people as effectively and just as possible.

<sup>34</sup> Cook, Grillos & Andersen (2019), [Gender quotas increase the equality and effectiveness of climate policy interventions](#).

<sup>35</sup> Mavisakalyan & Tarverdi (2019), [Gender and Climate Change: Do female parliamentarians make a difference?](#)

<sup>36</sup> WEDO (n.d.), [Women's Leadership: Women Delegates Fund](#).

<sup>37</sup> In international negotiations at the UN, member states are represented by so-called negotiating groups in which various member states jointly take certain positions. In this context, the term 'the poorest countries' refers to countries constituting the Small Island Development States (SIDS) group and the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) group.

## What must be done to achieve access to decision-making for women and civil society organisations from the Global South?

- » Involve local groups of women and other groups of people who personally experience the disproportionate impact of a policy in their daily life when drafting, implementing, monitoring and evaluating climate and biodiversity policies.
- » Take into consideration the reality of the local culture which may impede women's efforts in achieving equal rights and opportunities. Integrate and prioritise their interests in government programmes and policies. Consider in this respect policies and programmes aimed at providing socio-economic security, including water and food security. These are the essential building blocks for strengthening the position of women in their communities and society.

An essential duty for the Dutch government is to enhance and safeguard meaningful – i.e. appreciated for its true merit – participation of (local) women's organisations from the Global South in the decision-making process. This contributes to a good alignment of policy with practice, and to a transparent accountability mechanism, since the implementation is determined in collaboration with the local target group. **In this regard, it is essential to render the drafting, execution, and evaluation into an actual process of co-creation.**

Common sense dictates that improvement is needed in the current – quite limited – access for women to decision-making at a local level. Globally, women take on the majority of domestic and care work, making them more dependent on natural resources from their immediate surroundings than men are. In 70% of the

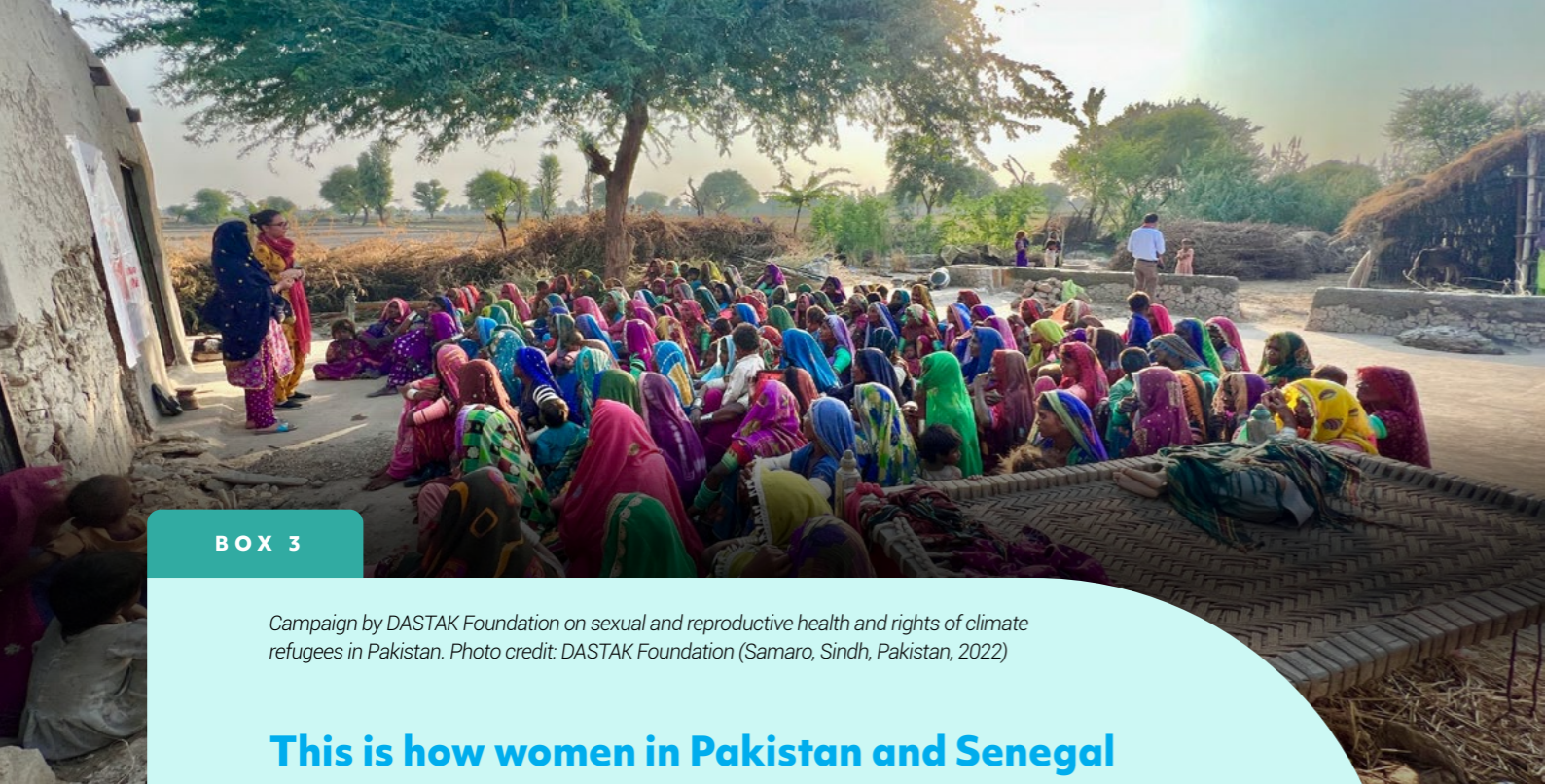
households without access to water close to home, women are responsible for maintaining the water supply. This is a full-time job that will require even more time and effort as a result of the impacts of the climate crisis.<sup>38</sup> With regard to decision-making power over food production, it is relevant to note that women constitute 43% of all agricultural labourers globally, while fewer than 15% of all agricultural land owners are women.<sup>39</sup> This is due to the fact that only 37 of the 161 countries have specific laws that guarantee equal ownership and equal access to land for both men and women.<sup>40</sup> The fact that women have no control over natural resources like water and land, despite being caretakers and knowledge holders, is harmful both to women and to the ability of communities to address the climate and biodiversity crises. The same applies to the lack of access to financial resources and technology. It is time to change this.

<sup>38</sup> UNICEF (2023), [Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene 2000-2022: Special focus on gender](#).

<sup>39</sup> FAO (2018), [The gender gap in land rights](#).

<sup>40</sup> CSW (16 March 2018), [Gender equality in land rights, ownership vital to realizing 2010 Agenda, Women's commission hears amid calls for Data collection and tenure security](#).





BOX 3

Campaign by DASTAK Foundation on sexual and reproductive health and rights of climate refugees in Pakistan. Photo credit: DASTAK Foundation (Samaro, Sindh, Pakistan, 2022)

## This is how women in Pakistan and Senegal are effectively involved in decision-making

At every UN climate summit, the Women and Gender Constituency (WGC) in association with Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF) organises the Gender Just Climate Solutions Awards. Three grassroots climate actions focusing on female leadership and gender equality receive a monetary prize. They also get the opportunity to participate in a mentorship programme and international climate negotiations.

In 2023, Ayesha Amin and Hira Amjad received an award on behalf of the Pakistani **DASTAK foundation and Baithak CSO**. They actively work towards a gender-just approach to address the disastrous droughts and floods in Pakistan. They held extensive consultations with female stakeholders and developed a strategic framework for policymakers and practitioners. In doing so, they provide recommendations for response measures which meet the specific needs of women and girls during climate disasters and which prioritise their health, well-being, and safety. This includes access to menstrual products, WASH-services<sup>41</sup>, pregnancy kits, and pre- and postnatal care after a climate disaster. But also activities to raise awareness on the gender differentiated impacts of climate disasters, such as exacerbated gender-based violence and additional unpaid care work.

**Enda Graf-Sahel** offers another inspiring example of a 'climate effective' inclusion of women in local decision-making processes. This Senegalese organisation received the Gender Just Climate Solution Award in 2016. It supports female fisherfolk in the Saloum Delta in restoring the mangrove ecosystem affected by intensive industrial fishing and the climate crisis. For example, Enda Graf Sahel has dedicated herself to reforestation and energy-efficient processing methods for shellfish and small fish which reduce emissions caused by the use of firewood by 75%. Thanks to specific trainings, in which they coach women in public speaking and advocacy, the organisation has also been successful in implementing a new consultation structure regarding the management of natural resources. In doing so, they have managed to set up local committees that regulate fisheries, limit access to protected areas, and curb the excessive issuance of fishing permits.

# Inclusive and effective finance

**Providing international financial support to countries in the Global South is crucial for the development of a just approach to the climate and biodiversity crises.** On this subject, both the UN Climate Convention (UNFCCC) and the Paris Climate Agreement contain agreements. Many countries and communities in the Global South do not have sufficient financial means to protect themselves against the climate crisis – a crisis they themselves did not cause. Climate finance from wealthy countries that have contributed the most to the climate crisis enables these countries and communities to adapt to the consequences of climate change (also called 'adaptation') or to repair any damage where it can no longer be avoided. This funding can also be used to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases ('mitigation') and transitioning to sustainable energy. These actions can also promote biodiversity.

In 2009, the Netherlands and other wealthy countries promised to invest annually, starting in 2020, at least 100 billion dollars in mitigation and adaptation in the Global South. It was not until 2022 that this goal was reached for the first time. Unfortunately, the vast majority of the investment was provided in the form of loans, which further increases the indebtedness of countries vulnerable to climate change and, as a result, deepens global inequality.<sup>42</sup> The financial goal is

currently being renegotiated (that is, in 2024); it is evident that the funding must increase substantially – from billions to trillions – to enable countries in the Global South to handle the climate crisis effectively.

**It is also evident that gender equality in the access to and awarding of funding is essential for climate finance to have a lasting effect.** Unfortunately, the reality is that **women \*** have very little access to existing climate funds.<sup>43</sup> For example, legislation impeding women from owning land can create obstacles when ownership requirements are attached to funding. The biggest problem is that gender equality is insufficiently prioritised in the existing funding, even though we know that an inclusive approach renders a programme both more effective and more sustainable. This is true for addressing the climate and biodiversity crises and for combatting gender inequality. For that reason, embedding gender equality in climate and biodiversity finance requires conscious, targeted, and transformative policy.<sup>44</sup>

With this, explicit reference is made to women and girls in all their diversity. Please see box 1 on page 5.



The biggest problem is that gender equality is insufficiently prioritised in the existing funding, even though we know that an inclusive approach renders a programme both more effective and more sustainable.

<sup>42</sup> OECD (2024), *Climate Finance Provided and Mobilised by Developed Countries in 2013-2022*.

<sup>43</sup> Equality Fund & Mama Cash (2023), *Funding Our Future: Resourcing the Feminist Movements Driving Climate Action*.

<sup>44</sup> Both ENDS, Heinrich Böll Stiftung North America, Aksi! for gender, social and ecological justice & Prakriti Resources Centre (2018), *Local actors ready to act: Six proposals to improve their access to the Green Climate Fund*.





BOX 4

Displaced family from the Cercle of Niono, commune of Niono in Kolinzi, Mali. Photo credit: Tony Campbell/CARE (November 2021)

## Funding for sustainable and transformative climate initiatives for Malian women in the agricultural sector

The climate crisis continues to place more pressure on food security in Mali. In this country, approximately 80% of the population is active in the agricultural sector, while it faces extreme periods of drought and floods. Women play a prominent role in the agricultural sector but find themselves in a vulnerable position. They are often victim to gender-related violence and disadvantaged by social and religious restrictions. Moreover, it is very difficult for women to take out loans, which limits their access to the labour market and makes their position worse. As a result, women and girls are hit disproportionately hard by the consequences of the climate crisis: They do not have the means to adequately adapt to changing conditions. Besides, due to flooding and droughts, the amount of labour increases in order to produce sufficient food.

The Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Project (GEWEP III) of CARE Mali empowers women and girls in vulnerable circumstances in various regions of Mali. The project supports sustainable agricultural practices that are resistant to the climate crisis. At the same time, it advances gender equality. In doing so, the project addresses gender-related violence, and improves access to health services and political decision-making for women and girls. Joint savings and lending groups, as well as access to formal financial institutions, are being used to invest in improving their financial situation.

The project actively focuses on strengthening local organisations by offering training in leadership skills, advocacy, and financial management. Men and boys are involved too, so that restrictive social and cultural norms are addressed. As much as 91.6% of the men involved took specific action to reduce inequality between men and women within their family, at work, or in their community. This comprehensive approach enables sustainable change, both to the climate and the position of women and girls.

## How can we enhance access to funding?

- » Make funding more accessible to local organisations led by women. For example, use eased accreditation procedures and accountability mechanisms, offer lower starting amounts, and provide long-term funding with more flexibility.
- » Make use of existing national and regional small grant funds with direct access to local women's organisations.
- » As a board member of an international financial institution or fund, such as the Green Climate Fund, commit to improving access to local environmental and women's organisations.

The lion's share of current climate finance is routed through the large projects of international financial institutions, UN agencies, and private parties. Only 10% of international climate finance immediately reaches the local level.<sup>45</sup> Locally-led women's organisations are even harder reached. In 2018–2019, only 0.22% of climate-related development cooperation reached women's rights organisations.<sup>46</sup> **Data from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) shows that only 1% of the funding for development cooperation aimed at gender equality as a whole, actually reaches women's rights organisations.**<sup>47</sup>

A similar trend is noticeable in philanthropic institutions where only 3% of the total amount of grants earmarked for climate-related issues reaches women's action groups dedicated to environmental issues.<sup>48</sup>

What is the reason for this? To start, the mechanisms to gain access to climate finance are slow, complicated, intensive, project-oriented, and seriously lacking transparency.<sup>49</sup> **Funds often have complicated accreditation procedures and extensive reporting requirements, making them much more accessible for large players rather than for small parties.**<sup>50</sup>

Additionally, donors often focus on the largest possible impact and attracting private funds. This results in many donors preferring comparatively large projects because they are considered to be easily scalable and more 'cost-effective', and they offer governments and financial institutions a relatively easy way to spend a lot of money in one lump sum.<sup>51</sup> The Dutch Fund for Climate and Development (DFCD)<sup>52</sup>, established by the Dutch government in 2020, predominantly invests in large companies with an annual turnover of at least 5 million euros.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Both ENDS, Heinrich Böll Stiftung North America, Aksi! for gender, social and ecological justice & Prakriti Resources Centre (2018), [Local actors ready to act: Six proposals to improve their access to the Green Climate Fund](#).

<sup>46</sup> Black Feminist Fund (2023), [Where is the money for black feminist movements?](#)

<sup>47</sup> OECD (2020), [Aid Focused on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: A snapshot of current funding and trends over time in support of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#).

<sup>48</sup> McKinsey (2021), [It's time for philanthropy to step up the fight against climate change](#).

<sup>49</sup> OECD (2023), [More Effective Delivery of Climate Action in Developing Countries: DAC perspectives on effective development co-operation](#).

<sup>50</sup> Both ENDS, Heinrich Böll Stiftung North America, Aksi! for gender, social and ecological justice & Prakriti Resources Centre (2018), [Local actors ready to act: Six proposals to improve their access to the Green Climate Fund](#).

<sup>51</sup> ActionAid (2021), [Climate finance & Just transition, case study: The Netherlands](#).

<sup>52</sup> DFCD (n.d), [Who we are - The DFCD](#).

<sup>53</sup> ActionAid (2024), [Making climate finance work for women and marginalised groups: Lessons from the Dutch Fund for Climate and Development first phase](#).







Residents of the Satkhira District (Bangladesh) who are literally ankle-deep in water seven months of the year. As a result of climate change, the number of floods in the area is increasing. Photo credit: Tareq Mahamud (November 2021)

The Green Climate Fund (GCF)<sup>54</sup>, a large climate-financing fund established under the UN Climate Convention, is also aiming high. 79% of funding by the GCF is routed through international institutions, and 40% of its funding is managed by five international actors who primarily focus on large-scale projects. These have been shown to be insufficiently effective in reaching the local level.<sup>55</sup>

The emphasis on large projects and complicated access means that **marginalised groups** – including women – are not being reached. This is visible in both the portfolio of the Dutch Fund for Climate Development as well as that of the Green Climate Fund. However, locally-led action is pivotal when it comes to achieving long-term and effective solutions. Local actors know their local ecosystems and have better knowledge on how to protect them. They can respond both quickly and effectively to changing circumstances and act with transparency towards their communities.<sup>56</sup> Women play an essential role in this because of their social position and knowledge.

  
**The good news?**  
**The infrastructure required to fund these organisations is already in place!**  


**The good news? The infrastructure required to fund these organisations is already in place!** Globally, there are local players and small grants funds which may act as a link between large donors and local organisations aimed at women and the environment. They are capable of raising large amounts of funds from donors and passing them on in smaller amounts – often no more than a few thousand euros – to local organisations and groups. In doing so, small funds and intermediary organisations ensure that the 'big money' reaches those who know best what is needed at a local level.

**BOX 5**

Women from the Indigenous Miskito community in Central America. Photo credit: Fondo Tierra Viva (November 2023)


## More low-barrier access to funding through small grants funds

Small grant funds are crucial actors in the current international funding landscape. They provide flexible financial support to communities, organisations, and grassroots groups in the Global South. These are the types of groups that are overlooked by mainstream financing mechanisms like the Green Climate Fund.

Small grants funds:

- » bridge the bureaucratic hurdles that regular climate funds and donors create;
- » where possible, leave the decision-making on how to best invest the money to local communities themselves;
- » encourage climate action that is locally supported and put gender equality and social justice centre stage;
- » provide additional support, apart from funding, such as institutional support or peer to peer exchange and access to networks.

A good example of the latter is **GAGGA: the Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action**.<sup>57</sup> This network of local, national, and regional women's and environmental funds is led by the Latin American women fund FCAM in cooperation with the Dutch organisations Mama Cash and Both ENDS. GAGGA supports grassroots groups and initiatives which develop 'gender-just climate solutions'. In other words, they work on climate change adaptation from a perspective of gender equality and climate justice. One of GAGGA's members is the Latin American small grant fund Tierra Viva which has proven to be very good at channelling climate finance to local Indigenous women cooperatives. For example, women from Indigenous communities return

Box continues on the next page 

<sup>54</sup> Green Climate Fund (n.d.), [A unique fund for humanity's greatest challenge](#).

<sup>55</sup> Green Climate Fund (2024), [Consideration of funding proposals - Board Meeting 39](#).

<sup>56</sup> IIED (2017), [Delivering real change: Getting international climate finance to the local level](#).

<sup>57</sup> GAGGA Alliance (2021), [What exactly does GAGGA do? Find out in this new animation](#).



dried out areas to fertile land through innovative agricultural processes, thereby strengthening their social positions and generating long-lasting income.

Another example is the **Water Justice Fund (WJF)**, established by Simavi, which supports women groups in Kenya, Bangladesh, and Nepal who set up local water solutions using small-scale investments. Its funding design is such that it puts the power and decision-making in the hands of the women and girls who are themselves most at risk of water scarcity and experience its impact most severely. The result is sustainable local measures for climate change adaptation, such as collecting rainwater and preventing the occurrence of floods through a strengthening of riverbanks and reforestation. The activities the women groups are able to undertake with the help of this fund also strengthen their relationships with the local authorities and their positions within the community.

*Photo: Nirmala Chaudhary, leader of the Mehenatishel women group, funded by the Water Justice Fund, Nepal. Photo credit: Shirish Bajracharya (2023)*



## How can gender goals be achieved with the help of climate finance?

- » Ensure that all funding for the improvement of climate and biodiversity actively advances gender equality (through a **gender-responsive approach**). This can be achieved by, among other ways, including required objectives for the support of women-led initiatives in the design, monitoring, and reporting of projects. Implement this, for example, in the second phase of the Dutch Fund for Climate Development (2024-2027).
- » Ensure that multilateral organisations and private funders also report on gender goals using the OECD Gender Marker (see the explanation below) or another marker tailored to this purpose. Doing so provides more transparency on the impact of climate finance on gender equality.
- » Aim to spend 88% of the total amount of climate finance on initiatives pursuing gender equality, and at least 15% of that amount on initiatives having gender equality as their main objective – as agreed in the Global Acceleration Plan of 2021.<sup>58</sup>
- » Call for embedding gender responsiveness in the new international goal for climate finance which will be set at COP29 in November 2024.

Poor access to funding for women and locally-led (women's) organisations is not the only issue. Another problem is that climate finance is often not aimed at reducing gender inequality. OECD member states have agreed to use the **OECD Gender Marker** to measure and monitor efforts in gender equality – also called gender responsiveness – in funding for development cooperation.<sup>59</sup> Donors are asked to indicate whether gender equality is a principal objective, significant objective, or not targeted.

The result? **As much as 65% of reported climate-related development financing in OECD context essentially ignores gender issues.<sup>60</sup> Less than 3% has gender equality as its principal objective.<sup>61</sup>** As a result, women do not benefit – or experience negligible benefits from these programmes, and their needs resulting from the climate crisis are inadequately addressed. Meanwhile, many donor countries currently do not use OECD Gender Marking in their reporting. Similarly, multilateral organisations and private funders rarely use this marker or report using their own markers, which are difficult to compare.

<sup>58</sup> UN Women (2021), *Global Acceleration Plan van de Actiecoördinatie*.

<sup>59</sup> OECD (2016), *Handbook on the OECD-DAC Gender Equality Policy Marker*.

<sup>60</sup> In 20.9% of the entire climate finance, gender equality is not included as an objective, 45% has not applied the Gender Marker.

<sup>61</sup> Oxfam (2023), *Climate Finance Shadow Report 2023: Assessing the delivery of the \$100 billion commitment*.





After attending a training on the dangers of floods and the climate crisis, Jerin Akhter encourages her fellow villagers to plant trees and undertake sustainable action. Photo credit: Asafuzzaman Captain/CARE (September 2023)

The good news is that the Netherlands is above average when it comes to bilateral funding of climate change adaptation: 80% of its programmes are partly or fully aimed at gender equality.<sup>62</sup> The situation as regards private and multilateral funding from the Netherlands, where large sums are also being spent, is not very clear. Unfortunately, evaluations show that although gender equality is often stressed as being a priority when planning Dutch international climate support, the gender dimension is nevertheless not consistently integrated into projects. An evaluation of Dutch climate finance over the period of 2016-2019 by the Netherlands Policy and Operations Evaluation Department [Directie Internationaal Onderzoek en Beleidsevaluatie] (IOB)<sup>63</sup> shows that gender goals are not being met and that women and other marginalised groups are not consistently involved in the design and approval, monitoring and reporting on projects.<sup>64</sup> In 2023, the IOB noted again that poverty and gender are insufficiently

considered during the design and implementation stages of climate change adaptation programmes.<sup>65</sup>

A recent study by ActionAid on the Dutch Fund for Climate and Development – see also box 6 – has uncovered that this Dutch fund lacks specific gender goals and that the projects it supports do not sufficiently take gender inequality into account.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, an external evaluation of the fund argues that there is insufficient consideration of projects on women and other marginalised groups, as well their involvement in the projects.<sup>67</sup> On top of this, local communities have reported on various DFCD projects, stating that they are harmful to local biodiversity. Fortunately, the DFCD has defined both gender equality and biodiversity as its key objectives for the second phase of the fund. This offers an opportunity to firmly embed both elements in the fund going forward.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>62</sup> ODI (2023), *Gender equality targeting in adaptation finance*.

<sup>63</sup> The Netherlands Policy and Operations Evaluation Department (IOB) is the independent evaluation body of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>64</sup> IOB (2021), *Financiële toezeggingen in transitie Nederlandse klimaatfinanciering voor ontwikkeling 2016-2019* [Funding commitments in transition - Dutch climate finance for development 2016-2019].

<sup>65</sup> IOB (2023), *Rapport – Evaluatie van de integratie van klimaatadaptatie in door Nederland gesteunde water- en voedselzekerheidsprogramma's* [Report - Evaluation of the integration of climate adaptation in water and food security programmes supported by the Netherlands].

<sup>66</sup> ActionAid (2024), *Making climate finance work for women and marginalised groups: Lessons from the Dutch Fund for Climate and Development first phase*.

<sup>67</sup> SEO (2024), *External evaluation of the Dutch Fund for Climate and Development (DFCD)*.

<sup>68</sup> DFCD (20 september 2023), *DFCD receives €40M top-up from Ministry*.

## BOX 6

Janet Mnyazi, 42, at her farm in Gung'ombe (Mombasa county, Kenya).  
Photo credit: Natalia Jidovanu/ActionAid (October 2019)

### Gender equality and biodiversity in the Dutch Fund for Climate and Development (DFCD)

In 2018, the Dutch Ministry for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation stated that the Dutch Fund for Climate and Development (DFCD) would “actively focus on projects serving the poorest groups and those having a positive effect on women”.<sup>69</sup> In 2023, in the context of a study, ActionAid asked local communities in Uganda, Kenya and Bangladesh about their experiences with DFCD projects. This study shows that in practice, neither objective is being met. On the whole, participation of women in the projects was low – for example, in a shrimping project in Bangladesh, only 5% of the participants were women. Additionally, several DFCD projects applied participation criteria which exclude women, such as formal land ownership or owning a minimum number of hectares of land.<sup>70</sup>

*“I am interested in participating in the Komaza project, but I do not have a land title deed. It is frustrating that I cannot take advantage of this opportunity because I do not have the required document.”*

**- woman from Nyari (Kenya), where Komaza was doing a forestry project with funding from the DFCD**

Gender inequality may be exacerbated when a project is **gender-blind**. This was the case with both Komaza in Kenya and with the New Forest Company in Uganda. Both projects aim to restore local ecosystems through sustainable forest management and increase the earnings for local communities. However, it turned out that while women provide support with tree maintenance, the income derived from forest management goes to their partners because the latter are the formal owners. And some men plant trees on land that is used by women to grow food to provide for their families. The result is that food security is threatened and women's workload is increased (without direct access to the additional income).

In addition, local communities complained about biodiversity loss. For example, Komaza and the New Forest Company plant eucalyptus trees which use a lot of water and are known for their invasive nature resulting in the loss of native species. Concerns about the loss of biodiversity also exist with regard to the shrimping project in Bangladesh. The new method used to grow shrimp causes, among other things, leads to an increase in salinity compared to the traditional method. This development negatively affects crabs and other species of fish.

<sup>69</sup> Kaag (19 november 2018), *Kamerbrief, vergaderjaar 2018–2019, 31 793, nr. 183* [Letter to the Dutch House of Representatives, session year 2018-2019, 31 793, no. 183].

<sup>70</sup> ActionAid (2024), *Making climate finance work for women and marginalised groups: Lessons from the Dutch Fund for Climate and Development first phase*.



# Policy coherence

**Coherent policies are essential for a sustainable and climate just system.** The Netherlands positions itself internationally as a frontrunner for gender equality and has committed itself to internationally agreed upon objectives to promote women's rights<sup>71</sup>, fight climate change<sup>72</sup>, and protect biodiversity.<sup>73</sup> If the Netherlands aims to transition to a just and sustainable economic system, it is essential that policy efforts reinforce each other instead of impeding or undermining each other.

All policies have an impact on the effectiveness of tackling the climate and biodiversity crises, not solely climate and biodiversity policies. Likewise, every policy has an effect on the protection of women's rights and achieving global gender equality, not only the policies aimed at emancipation. Consequently, policy coherence in foreign policy and related policies is essential. In fact, in the reviewed Action Plan Policy Coherence' [het Herziene Actieplan Beleidscoherentie], the Netherlands itself has

set out that Dutch policy must not undermine the obligations to which they have already committed to achieve objectives of gender equality, climate and biodiversity.<sup>74</sup> Policy coherence is not only important, it is also smart. By simultaneously addressing gender inequality and the loss of biodiversity coupled with achieving the objectives of the Paris Climate Agreement, we are able to increase the positive impact of our investments, also known as the 'multiplier effect'.<sup>75</sup>

**The good news is that there are specific opportunities for a more coherent approach to gender inequality and the climate and biodiversity crises.** These opportunities lie in various policy domains, including trade agreements and investments, the energy transition (and the Dutch strategy concerning critical raw materials for this transition), and the regulation of companies.

If the Netherlands aims to transition to a just and sustainable economic system, it is essential that policy efforts reinforce each other instead of impeding or undermining each other.

<sup>71</sup> The Netherlands has signed various international conventions that are specifically aimed at the protection of women's rights. For example, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Istanbul Convention of the Council of Europe, as well as the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development including goal number 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment, and the third European Gender Action Plan.

<sup>72</sup> Since 1992, the Netherlands has signed several international agreements with the aim of reducing the emission of greenhouse gases on which it reports. With the UN Paris Climate Agreement, it was agreed in 2015 to limit the warming of the earth to 1.5 degrees Celsius. The European Green Deal and the Climate Act outlined that Europe would be climate-neutral by 2050. Agreements have also been made at a national level.

<sup>73</sup> The Convention on Biological Diversity was concluded in 1993, and the Kunming-Montreal Global Diversity Framework (GBF) was adopted in 2022.

<sup>74</sup> Schreinemacher (2022), Kamerbrief over herziening actieplan beleidscoherentie voor ontwikkeling [Letter to the Dutch House of Representatives on a revision of the action plan on policy coherence for development].

<sup>75</sup> OECD (2023), *The Gender Equality and Environment Intersection*.

## Building blocks for a coherent investment policy

- » Stop all (export) support and all subsidies under Dutch authority for fossil fuels and ensure that all financial flows are in line with the Paris Climate Agreement. Ensure that a phase-out plan is internationally just and promotes equality, using instruments such as increasing Dutch climate finance for countries in the Global South. Invest those funds in projects that promote energy access and ownership in particular for **women \***.
- » Continue exercising influence with and within the International Coalition to Phase Out Fossil Fuel Subsidies,<sup>76</sup> initiated by the Netherlands, to get other countries to also adopt reforms. Work actively to expand the coalition at the European level - the more countries that join, the bigger the impact. Ensure that these reforms are done in a transparent and democratic manner in line with the 'ILO Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all'.<sup>77</sup> This way, civil society organisations – including trade unions – can be involved, and (women) employees and communities dependent on fossil fuels can be meaningfully consulted and/or compensated.

*With this, explicit reference is made to women and girls in all their diversity. Please see box 1 on page 5.*



In 2021, the Netherlands signed the Glasgow Commitment<sup>78</sup>, pledging to end all international public finance for fossil fuels. Despite this, an amount of 39.7 to 46.4 billion euros in public resources and tax breaks is still paid within the Netherlands annually to national and international companies in the form of fossil-fuel subsidies.<sup>79</sup> The Dutch government also continues to provide diplomatic support to fossil-energy companies through trade missions and embassies.

<sup>76</sup> The Netherlands launched the international coalition to phase out fossil-fuel subsidies during COP 28 (2023).

<sup>77</sup> ILO (2016), *Guidelines for a just transition towards environmentally sustainable economies and societies for all*.

<sup>78</sup> Rijksoverheid [Netherlands Central Government] (2021), *Nederland stopt met nieuwe steun aan fossiele export* [The Netherlands stops with new aid to the export of fossil fuels].

<sup>79</sup> NOS [Nederlandse Omroep Stichting (Netherlands Broadcasting Corporation)] (15 september 2023), *Fossiele sector krijgt tussen de 39,7 en 46,4 miljard euro subsidie, nog meer dan gedacht* [The fossil fuel sector receives between 39.7 and 46.4 billion euros in subsidies; even more than expected].





Feminist Just Transition Conference. Photo credit: Johanna Ansiporovich/Tierra Nativa (2023)

By continuing to invest in fossil-fuel projects, the emission of CO2 not only continues to rise – resulting in a further warming of the planet. Such projects also have disastrous effects on ecosystems and the people that depend on them.

By continuing to invest in fossil-fuel projects, the emission of CO2 not only continues to rise – resulting in a further warming of the planet. Such projects also have disastrous effects on ecosystems and the people that depend on them.<sup>80</sup> This impacts entire communities, but women and girls are affected in specific ways (and are often disproportionately affected as a result of existing unequal power relations). For example, they may be faced with reproductive health issues, a lack of compensation for loss of land because they do not have land rights, and reduced access to natural resources while the responsibility for the management of these resources is carried by women

and girls. They may also experience gender-based (sexual) violence if they speak up against or oppose mining projects.

The latest report of the IPCC states that in order to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees, a direct, fast, and full phase-out of fossil fuels is necessary.<sup>81</sup> **The Netherlands must end its support of all existing and new fossil fuel projects and companies if it wants to bring its policies in line with the goals that are set up by international human rights and environmental treaties and the Paris Climate Agreement.**

<sup>80</sup> Campanha pelo Território Pesqueiro (2017), DOCUMENTÁRIO - No Rio e No Mar.; Down to Earth (2023), *We vechten niet alleen tegen Chevron, maar tegen een systeem*. [We do not only fight against Chevron but against a system].

<sup>81</sup> IPCC (2023), *Climate Change 2023. Synthesis Report. Summary for Policymakers*.



Two Somali trainees working on a solar panel. As part of an extensive educational programme, more young people receive a technical education. Photo credit: CARE SOM/Noura (April 2018)

#### BOX 7

### What are critical raw materials?

Critical raw materials are natural metals and minerals that are important to the energy transition, such as lithium, copper and cobalt. The Netherlands does not possess many of these deposits on its territory. As a result, the Netherlands is dependent on the import of these materials from other countries, so far mostly from the Global South. These raw materials are, for example, necessary for solar panels, wind mills, and rechargeable batteries.

Currently, the European Union (EU) already uses 25 to 30% of the global production of metals, whereas the EU population only constitutes 6% of the world's population.<sup>82</sup> The extraction of those critical raw materials that are needed for our transition currently occurs mostly in the Global South, and is largely controlled by international companies.

<sup>82</sup> CRMA coalition (2023), *A Turning Point: The Critical Raw Materials Act's needs for a Social and Just Green Transition. A position paper on the Critical Raw Materials Legislation*.



## Building blocks for a coherent and sustainable energy policy

- » Reduce Dutch dependence on critical raw materials by giving priority to the reduction of our own use of energy and raw materials and by stimulating recycling and re-use.
- » Support countries in the Global South – who are often the suppliers and producers of critical raw materials – in making the transition to renewable energy. When doing so, focus on the sharing of knowledge and technology. Prioritise women, Indigenous Peoples, and other marginalised groups as they are important stakeholders in the energy sector. Guarantee their meaningful participation in negotiations on strategic partnerships and projects, both in the implementation and monitoring. Promote local energy access as well as local ownership for these groups.
- » Ensure strong regulation of mining companies to better protect the climate, environment, and human rights (including women's rights). This cannot be guaranteed by existing certification schemes. When assessing applications for strategic partnerships, ensure that internationally acknowledged instruments and legislation for Corporate Social Responsibility are applied and enforced, with a gender-responsive approach.
- » Reform export credit insurances (ECIs) as a financing instrument before they are used to incentivise the energy transition. Ensure they are aligned with the objectives of development policies and that information on, and accountability for, the impact of transition projects on climate, the environment and the community is publicly available. In particular, this must be available to communities affected by these projects. In particular, investigate obstacles concerning the accessibility of information for women and girls and adjust the provision of information accordingly.

Projects supported by the Netherlands with an ECI regularly come under scrutiny because of severe environmental and human rights violations.

Accelerating the energy transition by transitioning to renewable energy and reducing our demand for energy and raw materials are essential to remain within planetary boundaries.<sup>83</sup> **But the Global South cannot end up as the supplier of raw materials and energy for the North again while their own energy transition and social and environmental objectives are undermined.** It is for that reason that the Netherlands is responsible for ensuring that the transition to renewable energy is sustainable, fair and just. The current raw materials strategy is predominantly aimed at ensuring access to sufficient critical raw materials for Europe and the Netherlands' own energy transition. One way of doing this is through the use of 'strategic partnerships' where local added value is one of the criteria. Unfortunately, there are no detailed measures and criteria which would safeguard such local added value. A concrete plan to assist countries in the Global South with making their transition to renewable energy is also missing.

**And what's more: extraction by mining companies often involves significant human rights violations and environmental damage.** Apart from violence and the violation of Indigenous rights<sup>84</sup>, communities also experience the consequences of deforestation, environmental damage, exploitation, and health problems.<sup>85</sup> For example, take the Democratic Republic of the Congo where approximately 75% of the global supply of cobalt is mined. This is a necessary mineral for batteries and the arms industry. People work under appalling conditions, and women face many reproductive health

issues and miscarriages due to contaminated water.<sup>86</sup> These examples show the importance of companies complying with the internationally agreed-upon standards for Corporate Social Responsibility, such as the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises (for more information, see the next section).<sup>87</sup> European efforts on certification schemes for mining companies and mining projects are not sufficient to ensure compliance with human rights and sustainability obligations.<sup>88</sup>

The use of **export credit insurances** (ECIs) must also be considered carefully. The Netherlands promotes them as a useful financial instrument for the protection of investments in the value chain of critical raw materials.<sup>89</sup> The Dutch state offers ECIs as a guarantee for projects carrying substantial financial risks against which companies cannot take out insurance with commercial credit agencies – often projects in the Global South.<sup>90</sup> ECIs are primarily aimed at the promotion of exports and the interests of Dutch exporters and their business partners. Not at the interests of the local people, the advancement of the development in regions, or the conservation of the ecosystems where transactions take place. Projects supported by the Netherlands with an ECI regularly come under scrutiny because of severe environmental and human rights violations (see also box 8). The use of ECIs as an important trade instrument within the Dutch raw materials strategy must therefore be reformed before they are used for the energy transition.

<sup>83</sup> Watari, Nansai, Giurco, Nakajima, Mclellan & Helbig (2020), *Global Metal Use Targets in Line with Climate Goals*.

<sup>84</sup> For the latest state of affairs: *Transitions Mineral Tracker van Business & Human Rights Resource Centre*

<sup>85</sup> Business & Human Rights Resource Centre (2024, p. 5), *Transition Minerals Tracker: 2024 Analysis*.

<sup>86</sup> Swash (28 maart 2024), *'Staggering' rise in women with reproductive health issues near DRC cobalt mines – study*.

<sup>87</sup> OECD (2023), *OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises on Responsible Business Conduct*.

<sup>88</sup> Germanwatch (2022), *An examination of industry standards in the raw materials sector*.

<sup>89</sup> Rijksoverheid (2022), *Grondstoffen voor de grote transitie* [Raw materials for a major transition].

<sup>90</sup> Milieudefensie (n.d.), *Veelgestelde vragen over exportkredietverzekeringen* [Frequently asked questions about export credit insurances].



## Harmful ECI use for the Mozambique Liquefied Natural Gas Project (LNG)

In 2011, one of the largest gas fields in the world was discovered in the province of Cabo Delgado on the north coast of Mozambique. Since then, the fossil fuel industry has invested billions in the development of the infrastructure for future gas extraction. Dutch companies are also involved, through an export credit insurance provided by the Dutch government.

However, the situation in the north of Mozambique is volatile on many fronts. The armed rebel group Al-Shabaab, government forces, and private military companies are engaged in a complex conflict that does not spare the civilian population. The substantial financial interests that have consequently become a factor due to the discovery of gas reserves off the coast of Cabo Delgado have added more fuel to an already incendiary situation.<sup>91</sup> On 24 March 2021, jihadist militants carried out an attack on the city of Palma, located close to the gas field. In that attack, 1,298 people were killed or are still missing, and 209 people were taken hostage.<sup>92</sup>

The so-called 'Palma attacks' are now considered to be one of the largest terrorist attacks in history. Since then, hundreds of thousands of civilians have fled. Women and girls fell victim to sexual violence, not only by Al-Shabaab, but also by the government forces.<sup>93</sup>

Despite warnings from civil society and the Dutch embassy in Mozambique, on 25 March 2021, the Netherlands decided to provide an export credit insurance to the dredging company Van Oord valued at 1 billion euros. By doing so, the Dutch government offered support for the development of the LNG project.<sup>94</sup> Soon after the attack on Palma, TotalEnergies had to suspend the project due to the security situation. TotalEnergies nevertheless wishes to restart the project as soon as possible – with support from the Dutch government. They are currently

reassessing the ECI, but all signs are indicating it will be approved.<sup>95</sup>

"Inexplicable" and "neocolonial rhetoric" is what the Mozambican environmental activist Rawoot calls the decision. "Why does the Netherlands wish to cease gas extraction from its own soil, but continues to extract gas from Africa? Why is it acceptable to still exploit here in our country while we are the ones already paying the price for environmental pollution with cyclones, floods and human rights violations?"<sup>96</sup>

Some background information: The LNG project is what is referred to as a 'carbon bomb' – a project that will emit a vast amount of CO<sub>2</sub>. This is happening in a country with a huge potential for renewable energy.<sup>97</sup>

The support for the LNG project is a serious threat to ecosystems, which will further exacerbate the climate crisis and result in considerable violations of women's rights and human rights in general. It should be clear that by supporting the Mozambican gas project, the Netherlands gives economic interests priority over our commitment to gender equality and our environmental and climate goals. This is a perfect example of policy incoherence.

It should be clear that by supporting the Mozambican gas project, the Netherlands gives economic interests priority over our commitment to gender equality and our environmental and climate goals. This is a perfect example of policy incoherence.

<sup>91</sup> Milieudéfensie (2022), [Fuelling the Crisis in Mozambique. How Export Credit Agencies Contribute to Climate Change and Humanitarian Disaster](#).

<sup>92</sup> According to an independent journalist, Alexander Perry, who investigated the situation in Palma for 5 months between November 2022 and March 2023, the current number of deaths stands at 1,507 civilian deaths and missing persons, 55 of whom are subcontractors. See also Milieudéfensie, Both Ends, Global Justice Association & Dimes Consultancy (2024), [Samenvatting: Aanvaardbaar risico? Hoe de veiligheid in Cabo Delgado werd genegeerd in het belang van BV Nederland](#) [Summary: Acceptable risk? How security in Cabo Delgado was ignored in the interest of the Netherlands PLC].

<sup>93</sup> Amnesty International (2021), Mozambique: "[What I saw is death](#)": War crimes in Mozambique's forgotten cape.

<sup>94</sup> Milieudéfensie, Both Ends, Global Justice Association & Dimes Consultancy (2024), [Samenvatting: Aanvaardbaar risico? Hoe de veiligheid in Cabo Delgado werd genegeerd in het belang van BV Nederland](#) [Summary: Acceptable risk? How security in Cabo Delgado was ignored in the interest of the Netherlands PLC].

<sup>95</sup> Milieudéfensie, Both Ends, Global Justice Association & Dimes Consultancy (2024), [Samenvatting: Aanvaardbaar risico? Hoe de veiligheid in Cabo Delgado werd genegeerd in het belang van BV Nederland](#).

<sup>96</sup> Sarah Haaij (2 augustus 2022), [Gas en geweld in Mozambique](#) [Gas and violence in Mozambique].

<sup>97</sup> RVO (2018), [Final Energy Report Mozambique](#).



# Ingredients for a coherent policy on International Corporate Social Responsibility

- » Develop an effective Dutch implementation act for the European Corporate Sustainability **Due Diligence** Directive (CSDDD) in line with the OECD guidelines.<sup>98</sup>
  - a. require companies to actively involve stakeholders in each of the six steps in which they must register, address, and prevent human rights violations, and climate and environmental damage in their value chain. Barriers to women's participation should be removed.
  - b. oblige companies to make use of **(gender) disaggregated data** for the assessment of risks in the chain;
  - c. ensure that climate transition plans are in line with the '1.5 degrees goal' of the Paris agreement and are actually implemented by companies;
  - d. guarantee effective supervision and enforcement (also on the implementation) of both the climate transition plans and the obligation to exercise due diligence with the involvement of stakeholders. In addition, ensure that the regulatory body has the expertise and capacity to implement a gender transformative approach..
  
- » Within the EU, aim for an ambitious European negotiating mandate for a binding UN convention on 'human rights and business'. Make sure in this regard that there is explicit focus on climate (including the drafting and execution of climate transition plans), biodiversity, gender equality, and access to justice in case of violations.

International companies have an important role and responsibility where it concerns accomplishing climate and biodiversity objectives and the promotion and protection of the position and rights of women and local communities. The judgment issued in the court case of the Dutch Milieudéfensie and fellow claimants against Shell affirmed this.<sup>99</sup> The way in which companies do business can potentially have

both a positive and a negative impact on the goals set by the Netherlands for climate action, biodiversity, and gender equality. So there are a lot of reasons why the Netherlands should take action by developing smart policy and **legislation for the private sector in order to regulate its value chains and to make them sustainable**. In 2024, the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (CSDDD) was adopted in the



Phong, a Vietnamese mother of seven, grows more drought-resistant crops in order to be able to feed her family despite the profound impact of climate change. Photo credit: CARE (August 2023)

European Union; it requires companies to draw up and implement a climate transition plan in addition to due diligence.<sup>100</sup> Like other member states, the Netherlands is currently in the process of drafting the implementation legislation.

Due diligence requires that companies make an effort to identify human rights violations as well as climate and environmental damage within their value chain in order to address and prevent them. It is a company's responsibility to monitor any potential negative impacts from their activities – considering loss of biodiversity, deforestation, soil or ground pollution, forced labour and sexual harassment in the workplace. This comes with a duty to prevent and, where necessary, address and resolve any abuses or wrongdoings.

**Risks and violations in a company's value chain are often connected with gender inequality.**<sup>101</sup> After all, it is mostly women who carry out the worst-paid work at the start of the chain, often under poor working conditions. Water pollution, which is commonly caused by mining companies, as one example, leads to more frequent illness in populations. Fetching water is traditionally a job that still falls to women. Due to the consequences of polluted water sources, women are required to walk further and further to fetch clean water while often also taking care of their ill relatives.<sup>102</sup> Potential risks and abuses can therefore only be identified, prevented, and addressed effectively if an intersectional gender lens is applied to all steps of the due diligence process.

Therefore, it is essential that companies engage any concerned parties in a meaningful way in the entire process of due diligence, as described by the OECD. They can achieve this by working together with local women's rights and environmental organisations, as well as with trade unions and movements that advocate for women's rights, labour rights as well as the right to a clean environment. This should also involve actively consulting and including employees and communities affected by business activities. The Authority for Consumers & Markets [Autoriteit Consument & Markt] (ACM) is the intended regulatory body in the Netherlands. Consequently, this also means that the ACM requires sufficient capacity and expertise to properly fulfil its role.

Within the UN, the responsibility of internationally operating companies is also being addressed. Since 2014, negotiations have been ongoing on an international UN convention for 'human rights and business'. Apart from global due diligence obligations, this convention also covers the protection of and access to the courts for victims human rights violations by companies. However, the EU has not been actively participating in these negotiations and the member states have so far not agreed on a negotiating mandate for this process. Now that there is agreement on due diligence within the EU, the Netherlands can take the initiative in pursuing a negotiating mandate. In this, specific and complementary attention to climate, gender equality, and women's rights is of great importance.

<sup>98</sup> OECD (2019), *OESO Due Diligence Handreiking voor Internationaal Maatschappelijk Verantwoord Ondernemen (IMVO)*. [OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct (RBC)].

<sup>99</sup> NOS (26 mei 2021), *Milieudéfensie wint rechtszaak tegen Shell: CO2-uitstoot moet sneller dalen* [Milieudéfensie wins court case against Shell: CO2 emission must be reduced more quickly].

<sup>100</sup> Since 2021, there has been further commitment from the Dutch government to introduce IMVO legislation at a national level.

<sup>101</sup> Seitz & Obregon Quiroz (8 maart 2021), *Corporate Accountability: What's Gender got to do with it?*

<sup>102</sup> ActionAid International (2022), *Ensuring a gender-responsive and effective Corporate Due Diligence Legislation in 10 steps*.



## Building blocks for a coherent trade policy

- » Ensure transparency and democratic decision-making, as well as equal participation in, and access for women's organisations, and trade-unions, in all stages of negotiations on trade agreements. This goes hand in hand with acknowledging the power disparity between the different countries, companies, and local population groups when they meet one another at the negotiating tables and address these problems.
- » Include existing international guidelines and agreements on gender equality, human rights, labour rights, the environment, climate, or local food security concrete in trade agreements, and apply them in an integrated way. Prioritise women's rights over other trade arrangements in these areas.
- » End the protection of investors and companies through the Investor-State Dispute Settlement system (for an explanation, see below) and other special courts for investors.
- » Carry out a thorough '**sustainability impact assessment**' (SIA) both before and during the negotiations on a trade agreement, paying specific attention to the impact on gender equality and women's rights. Since negotiations on trade agreements frequently continue for years on end, it is imperative to regularly update the SIA. Ensure that the insights from the SIA actually guide the agreements being made.

The current Dutch trade policy is primarily aimed at economic growth (and overconsumption) and predominantly serves the interests of the wealthiest countries, multinational companies as well large landowners in the Global South. The existing trade regulations and free-trade agreements offer international companies the opportunity to repeatedly acquire the cheapest raw materials and labour, in any part of the world. In order to change this, a new coherent trade policy is needed which is concluded in a democratic and transparent way and will continue to be applicable into the future. Instead of prioritising the interests of companies and investors, trade arrangements must give priority to universal human, women's, labour, and environmental rights, as well as to climate agreements.

**It is important to have a clear understanding of the damage caused by European trade treaties and bilateral investment treaties to gender equality, the climate, and biodiversity. Only then is it possible to prevent said damage and actually ensure a positive impact.** An example: At present, it is the local and small-scale farmers and food producers – which, in the Global South, consists largely of women<sup>103</sup> – who are actually forced out of the market as a result of a supply of cheap agricultural products. Because they are granted fewer rights in regard to labour, income, and ownership in many countries, women in particular fall victim to this 'race to the bottom' and exploitation, caused by the demand for the cheapest labour.<sup>104</sup>

**Many existing trade and investment treaties<sup>105</sup> provide companies and investors far-reaching investment protection.** The so-called 'Investor-State Dispute Settlement' provides (foreign) companies and investors the opportunity to initiate proceedings against a state – the so-called 'host country' – and claim damages when government measures supposedly harm their business activities and expected profitability. In particular, the fossil fuel industry makes frequent use of this option. Statistics show that, in the last 60 years, over 55 billion dollars of ISDS claims have been awarded to the fossil fuel industry. This example only concerns claims that were brought under the Dutch bilateral investment treaties (BITs).<sup>106</sup> In reality, however, it is suspected that

this amount is many times higher since many ISDS arbitration cases are not registered or can be initiated under other trade and investment agreements. Because of the vast amounts involved in claims for damages, governments are deterred from implementing stricter environmental and climate measures for fear of expensive legal proceedings and the resulting burden of debt. Moreover, these substantial financial burdens result in host countries having fewer resources available for the public services that are essential for the promotion of gender equality, such as education and healthcare.<sup>107</sup> This is the reason behind our recommendation to withdraw from treaties with ISDS clauses altogether.



A local group of women cultivate oysters and lead climate adaptation on the island of Djirmda in Senegal. Photo credit: Ina Makosi/ActionAid (2021)

<sup>103</sup> FAO (2023), *Women produce up to 80% of food in developing countries*.

<sup>104</sup> Seguino & Grown (2006), *Gender equity and globalization: macroeconomic policy for developing countries*.

<sup>105</sup> Trade agreements are negotiated at a European level. The Netherlands itself enters many bilateral investment treaties (BITs).

<sup>106</sup> Both Ends, SOMO, TNI (2023), *Dutch Bilateral Investment Treaties: 60 years of protecting multinationals*.

<sup>107</sup> Fair, Green & Global Alliance (2023), *Reimagining Trade and Investment through a Feminist Lens*.



# Glossary

<b>Biodiversity</b>	The variety of life in a specific area. The term refers to all sorts of plants, animals, and microorganisms, as well as to the enormous genetic diversity within all those species and between the different ecosystems, from swamps to deserts. <sup>108</sup> Habitat loss over the past centuries and overuse – such as overfishing or overhunting, pollution and climate change – are the major causes of the current decline in biodiversity. <sup>109</sup> The term <b>biodiversity crisis</b> refers to both the loss of biodiversity and the threat it poses to humans and the planet.
<b>(Climate) adaptation</b>	Taking action in preparation of or in adaptation to (predicted) changes in the surroundings caused by climate change, such as extreme precipitation, heat, drought, and rising sea levels. <sup>110</sup>
<b>Climate change</b>	Change in climate which (1) can either be attributed directly or indirectly to human activity which has changed the composition of the atmosphere, and (2) can be observed in excess of natural climate variations in comparable time periods. <sup>111</sup> The term <b>climate crisis</b> refers to climate change as well as to the threat it poses to humans and the planet.
<b>Climate damage</b>	Loss and damage as a consequence of climate change – including both loss of and damage to property, and intangible loss and damage (consider, for example, loss of cultural heritage). Globally it concerns loss and other damage as a result of forest fires, heat waves, floods, storms, and extreme drought. The more warming occurs, the bigger the risk of extreme weather conditions causing such loss and other damage. In the short and long term, it also causes economic loss because of the impact on health, government finances, and agriculture as well as social disruption. <sup>112</sup>
<b>Climate justice</b>	Addressing climate change in a just manner in which the burdens and costs in particular are distributed fairly and any decision-making concerning climate action is done both fairly and inclusively. One of the issues considered is the 'triple inequality (of climate change); that is inequality in the causes, effects, and access to solutions'. <sup>113</sup> Those who have contributed the least to climate change experience the consequences most heavily and whose resources to protect themselves against it are the most limited.
<b>(Climate) mitigation</b>	Combatting or limiting climate change, in particular through the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. <sup>114</sup>
<b>Due diligence</b>	Against the background of responsibility in a value chain, it amounts to businesses being obliged to make every effort to identify, prevent, and fight or discourage the risk of exploitation, human rights violation, and environmental damage in their production chains. <sup>115</sup> The OECD has defined a so-called due diligence process consisting of six actions which businesses should continuously implement to avoid any violations: 1) policy, 2) identification of any adverse impacts, 3) addressing and preventing adverse impacts, 4) tracking, 5) communication, 6) remediation. <sup>116</sup>
<b>Gender-blind</b>	Ignoring or being completely unaware of any possible (power) inequalities on the basis of gender and the dynamics between and amongst people of different genders, often with adverse effects for women and girls.
<b>(Gender) disaggregated data</b>	Data which has been broken down by sex and further intersectional identity features. Without gender-disaggregated data, certain additional risks for women remain invisible.

<sup>108</sup> Wageningen Universiteit (n.d.), [Biodiversiteit](#) [Biodiversity].

<sup>109</sup> Utrecht University (6 december 2022), [Verlies biodiversiteit keren begint met inzicht in oorzaken](#) [Reversing the loss of biodiversity starts with insight into the causes].

<sup>110</sup> Global Center on Adaptation (n.d.), [What is climate adaptation?](#)

<sup>111</sup> UNFCCC (n.d.), [Article 1 – Definitions](#).

<sup>112</sup> Milieudefensie (2023), [Grootaandeelhouders graaien zich rijk ten koste van de planeet en de mensen die er wonen](#) [Major shareholders [enrich themselves] at the expense of the planet and its inhabitants].

<sup>113</sup> AIV [Netherlands Advisory Council on International Affairs] (2023, p. 12), [Klimaatrechtvaardigheid als noodzaak](#) (climate justice as necessity).

<sup>114</sup> Rijksoverheid (n.d.) [Klimaatbeleid](#) [Climate policy].

<sup>115</sup> ActionAid (n.d.), [Feministische taalgids. Language is power](#). [Feminist language guide. Language is power].

<sup>116</sup> OECD (2018), [OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Business Conduct](#).

<b>Gender equality</b>	Considering all people as equal and treating them equally irrespective of sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation in society and under the law. <sup>117</sup>
<b>Gender inequality</b>	The unequal valuation and treatment of people on the basis of sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. Doing so is a form of discrimination and a human rights issue.
<b>Gender lens</b>	Having regard to gender dimensions when analysing a situation or when developing specific responses, approaches, or programmes. Doing so implies, for example, inclusion of certain obstacles met by women, girls, or gender-nonconforming people (as well as men and boys) in analyses and solutions.
<b>Gender-responsive approach</b>	Actively making an effort to discuss, challenge and change gender-related standards and gender stereotypes, unequal power dynamics, and discrimination. This is substantially different from a gender-sensitive approach which does take gender inequality into consideration but does not actively try to lessen it. <sup>118</sup>
<b>Global South</b>	This term refers in general to the regions in Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania which are often (though not all of them) identified by low income and by frequently being politically and/or culturally marginalised. Using the term 'Global South' marks a shift from a focus on 'development' or 'cultural differences' to a stress on geopolitical power relationships. <sup>119</sup> This term is often used instead of 'the West/the non-West', 'developed and developing countries', 'first and third world'. It does not literally refer to the geographical south; for example, Australia is not included in the term. <sup>120</sup>
<b>Indigenous Knowledge</b>	Comprises the expressions, practices, beliefs, insights, and experiences of Indigenous Peoples generated over centuries of profound interaction with a particular territory. <sup>121</sup> Women especially play an important role in the transfer of Indigenous Knowledge to the next generation. For example, consider the use of medicinal plants and the restoration of forests and water sources. <sup>122 123</sup>
<b>Intersectionality</b>	The fact that various forms of inequality (and, consequently, of privilege) overlap and affect one another. There is no point in regarding and taking them on separately.
<b>Marginalised groups</b>	Groups of people who find themselves in a marginalised position and run the risk of becoming a victim of multiple discrimination based on, for example, gender identity, age, or ethnicity. <sup>124</sup> We talk of marginalised groups instead of minority groups because these groups are not always physically a minority and because marginalisation names the system which upholds this inequality. <sup>125</sup>
<b>Meaningful participation</b>	Participation which results in actual inclusion of the interests and commitment of women. It is therefore not a 'must' where women are 'allowed' to participate in decision-making without being listened to.
<b>Policy coherence</b>	When a country ensures that objectives and results in one policy area are not undermined by a different policy of that same government or authority, and also that this other policy, where possible, actually contributes to accomplishment of development objectives. <sup>126</sup>
<b>Sustainability impact assessment (SIA)</b>	An instrument used for studying policies, legislation, programmes, and projects to identify and measure their impact on human rights and the climate. <sup>127</sup>
<b>Women's rights</b>	All basic human rights of women, including sexual and reproductive health as well as any rights as specified, amongst others, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Convention for Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and the Istanbul Convention of the Council of Europe. <sup>128</sup>

<sup>117</sup> College voor de Rechten van de Mens [The Netherlands Institute for Human Rights] (n.d.), [Gendergelijkheid](#) [Gender equality].

<sup>118</sup> CARE USA (January 2019), [Gender Marker Guidance](#).

<sup>119</sup> Dadous & Connell (2012), [The Global South](#).

<sup>120</sup> ActionAid (n.d.), [Feministische taalgids. Language is power](#).

<sup>121</sup> Grey, S. (2014), [Indigenous Knowledge](#).

<sup>122</sup> Both ENDS (8 augustus 2022), [Inheemse kennis en talen in strijd cruciaal in de strijd tegen klimaatverandering](#) [Indigenous Knowledge and languages crucial in the fight against climate change].

<sup>123</sup> IUCN (9 augustus 2022), [Inheemse volkeren en biodiversiteit](#) [Indigenous Peoples and biodiversity].

<sup>124</sup> EIGE (n.d.) [Gemarginaliseerde groep](#) [Marginalised group].

<sup>125</sup> ActionAid (n.d.), [Feministische taalgids. Language is power](#).

<sup>126</sup> OECD (2005). [Policy coherence for development: Promoting institutional good practice](#).

<sup>127</sup> The World Bank (2013), [Human Rights Impact Assessments](#)

<sup>128</sup> WO=MEN (n/d), [Frequently asked questions: vrouwenrechten en gendergelijkheid](#).





## **Fair, sustainable and effective**

Gender equality as the basis  
for climate and biodiversity policies