



# Submission from the Mary Robison Foundation – Climate Justice

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Submission with views on matters to be addressed at the in-session workshop on a Gender Action Plan (Decision 21/CP.22)

## **21/CP.22**

**28. Invites Parties, members of constituted bodies, United Nations organizations, observers and other stakeholders to consult through meetings, prior to the forty-sixth sessions of the subsidiary bodies (May 2017), in order to provide inputs to the formulation of the gender action plan referred to in paragraph 27 above;**

A Listening and Learning Climate Justice Dialogue that brought together grassroots women and climate negotiators was convened in Bonn on the 9<sup>th</sup> May 2017 and produced the following key messages of relevance to the in-session workshop on a Gender Action Plan.

### **On grassroots women’s participation in climate decision making:**

- Participation, in particular the effective participation of women, is a principle that needs to be observed in all climate decision making.
- Participation needs to be funded, if not, it remains an empty principle which can actually create a burden on women through demands on their time and resources. A lack of resources means that grassroots women are often excluded from climate decision making at the local, national and international level.
- Legislation, international frameworks and policies that mandate consultation and participation are an effective and sustainable way of ensuring grassroots women’s participation in climate decision making.
- At the local level, champions, enablers and facilitators (men and women) of women’s participation and the integration of local knowledge in gender responsive climate action should be supported.

- Institutions are needed at the national level to uphold the rights of grassroots women and to enable grassroots women to recognise and realise their right to participate.
- There is a need to build the capacity of grassroots women to access information, understand climate policy and science and to access resources for participation in order for them to contribute effectively.
- Gender balance is an underlying principle of effective participation.
- Voice matters – grassroots women’s voices need to be heard when decisions are being developed and taken. At the international level, for example under the UNFCCC, listening and learning events and learning circles can help women’s voices to be heard.
- Grassroots women should be included in national delegations to contribute their experience (as opposed to acting as negotiators). Listening and learning events under the UNFCCC could provide a forum to enable grassroots women to participate in climate decision making.
- Language is a barrier to participation – impenetrable policy language and the absence of the availability of climate policy documents in local languages is a barrier to engaging grassroots men and women and indigenous people in climate action.
- When enabling grassroots women’s participation, it is important to be able to sustain support for their engagement – if not, trust is eroded and agency is disempowered.
- A step by step approach to enabling grassroots women’s participation in climate decision making at the international level can enable different actors to learn how best to work together over time.

**On ensuring that local and traditional knowledge is valued in the formulation of climate policy:**

- Communication is key. There is a gap between the traditional knowledge held by local communities and the expertise of policy makers. There is also a gap between climate change knowledge at the global level and knowledge of climate impacts at the grassroots level. At the local level, there is a gap between men and women’s knowledge. It is important to build bridges, fill gaps and engage communities from the earliest stages of climate policy design and action.
- It is important to link scientific and grassroots knowledge to achieve holistic solutions to climate change. International climate experts have an overview of climate impacts at the global, regional and national levels but not the local; while communities have knowledge of weather and climate at the local level, but not the regional or international levels. Together these perspective provide a complementary and complete picture.
- Recognize that communities are not homogenous. Disaggregate the community into men, women, youth and the elderly, those with agency and without, in order to ensure that a fully representative group (and not just the elite) is consulted.

- Government representatives need to visit local communities to build trust, share knowledge and learn about their experiences. It is not enough that local communities are occasionally invited to attend consultations in capitals. Visits to local communities create important learning opportunities for policy makers and build trust with local communities.
- A reciprocal step is needed where grassroots men and women participate in international meetings and get to see how their government represents them at the international level. Ideally, grassroots people would also visit areas outside the capital if they attend a conference in another country. The objective is to share and exchange knowledge with other communities and build capacity to influence policy.
- Learning circles that bring together grassroots representatives (especially women) with policy makers in a respectful dialogue are needed at local and national level to enable the exchange of information. These fora can also enable grassroots women's participation and the integration of traditional and indigenous knowledge at the international level, including under the UNFCCC.
- Trust and consent are important principles for the exchange of information and knowledge between grassroots women and climate decision makers. This is a two-way process; grassroots women trusting their participation and knowledge is valued; and governments trusting communities (especially women's) traditional and local knowledge to inform climate action.
- Grassroots women and communities need to be empowered to know their rights in order to be able to assert these rights and participate effectively.
- Building the capacity of grassroots representatives to engage with policy makers and vice versa, can enable the integration of traditional knowledge in climate decision making. Identify organisations and individual actors that can bridge grassroots communities and policy makers to facilitate the exchange of information and knowledge.