

## Policy Agenda

### Generation Equality Fora (GEF)

# Feminist Action for Climate Justice AC

*MenEngage Alliance Joint Recommendations for Action Coalition Leaders*

## Rationale

**The gender dimensions of the climate crisis are well documented.**<sup>1</sup> Through the lens of the long-standing eco-feminist analysis of climate change as rooted in histories of colonial resource extraction and capitalist industrial production, which themselves are **shaped and legitimated by patriarchal logic of domination and exploitation, we understand the critical need to politicize the work to transform patriarchal masculinities towards climate justice.**

**The impacts have been most devastating on the most marginalized.**<sup>2</sup> This intersectional feminist understanding of the climate catastrophe highlights the intersectional nature of the gender inequalities unleashed as a result. Women and girls from affected communities have been in the forefront of struggles defending their rights in the face of threats posed by corporate and State elites.

The degradation of livelihoods and biospheres produced by climate change is also fueling an unprecedented **displacement and movement of people**, both within and between countries and across continents. **As many studies have shown, women, girls and LGBTQIA+ people** face many forms of sexual violence and exploitation at all stages of their journeys as migrants and refugees, from State officials, military personnel and criminal gangs alike.<sup>3</sup>

**Climate change is one of the most urgent global challenges facing the world today.** We are the first generation to know that we are capable of undermining the Earth's delicate ecosystem and most likely the last generation with the ability to do anything about it.<sup>4</sup> Globally, the ten warmest years on record all occurred since 1998. The year 2015 was the hottest year on record globally.<sup>5</sup> The current neoliberal economic system is not only wrecking lives, but destroying the basis of life for future generations.

After an assessment of over 30,000 scientific papers from 80 countries, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently confirmed that "human influence on the climate system is clear and

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<sup>1</sup> Kato-Wallace, Jane. et.al. 2019. "Men, Masculinities & Climate Change: A Discussion Paper." Washington, DC: MenEngage Alliance.

<sup>2</sup> The Mexico City feminist convening noted that the effects of climate change are "particularly acute for those living in small island states and territories, least developed countries, the global South, as well as for indigenous peoples, urban poor, rural and remote communities, Afro-descendant people, people with disabilities, migrant communities, LGBTI people, ethnic minorities, girls, the elderly, communities experiencing descent and work based discrimination, and many others." Anon 2019. p3

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/gender-based-violence-against-women-both-cause-migration-and-risk-along-journey>

<sup>4</sup> Rockström, Johan (July 12, 2015), English version of the Swedish Radio Show "Sommar i P1" <http://sverigesradio.se/sida/avsnitt/595082?programid=2071>

<sup>5</sup> National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). (2014). Global Analysis Annual 2014. <https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/sotc/global/201413>

growing.”<sup>6</sup> **The more human activities disrupt the climate, the greater the risks of severe, pervasive and irreversible impacts for people and our ecosystems.** The IPCC also highlighted that it is within our grasp to limit climate change and its risks in ways that allow for continued economic and human development. However, without radically challenging and transforming existing economic, political, technological and social systems – where the one percent own as much as the other 99 – such efforts will fall short. Indeed, according to the IPCC 2014 report, climate change will amplify existing risks and create new risks for natural and human systems.

Analysis of carbon producing entities, such as oil corporations, finds that 90 percent of historical emissions since the 1750s can be traced to the 90 largest fossil fuel and cement producers, **most still in business today, and all of them dominated by male ownership, leadership and staff.**<sup>7</sup> Proposals for a “green transition” to a post-carbon economy fueled by renewable energy must address the need to confront this **patriarchal logic and the masculinized corporate and industrial power structures it has sustained.**

**By working together, men, women and persons of all genders we can challenge the patriarchal systems that perpetuate climate change to leave behind a more gender just and ecologically sustainable society for future generations.** Such solutions are not the only answer, but an important opportunity to strengthen the call for social, economic and environmental justice for all.

Given the urgency of climate change and its immediate impacts already being felt around the globe, activists are now sounding the call for mass intersectional social movements that challenge dominant economic, political and social systems perpetuating climate change. Such movements would seek to achieve “climate justice” – reconstructions of the ways in which we consume, work, and live our lives. **It is argued that focusing on the deconstruction and transformation of masculinities and other gender identities will strengthen future and existing solutions for climate change adaptation and resilience.**

**Patriarchy is harmful to our climate.** Efforts are needed to advance this perspective by engaging men as human beings who are also vulnerable to disasters brought on by climate change and as actors with agency to enact change alongside women activist allies. The challenge lies in having boys and men engage in this process as a transformative step that leads away from rigid ideas of masculinity too often based on conquest, control and domination.

**Indeed, experts have highlighted the need to better understand how harmful ideals of masculinity that include the need to have power over others – ‘others’ being understood as women, other men, children and nature<sup>8</sup>– perpetuate environmental degradation.** A gender-equitable response to climate change must not only be sensitive to gender differences in roles and needs, but must also address social and economic power imbalances between and among women and men. **However, it must be noted that carrying out a gender sensitive analysis and engagement on climate change and masculinities is not a magical silver bullet.** It is not the key piece to shift action on climate change. A major challenge of climate change is, in fact, that there are no easy single-step solutions. Working with men and women on gender transformative approaches to responding to climate change is, therefore, not presented here as the only

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<sup>6</sup> PCC Synthesis Report (SYR), foreword, page V. IPCC (2014) Climate Change 2014, Synthesis Report (SYR) Written by over 800 scientists from 80 countries, and assessing over 30,000 scientific papers. [http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/SYR\\_AR5\\_FINAL\\_full\\_wcover.pdf](http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar5/syr/SYR_AR5_FINAL_full_wcover.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Heede, Richard. 2014. "Tracing Anthropogenic Carbon Dioxide and Methane Emissions to Fossil Fuel and Cement Producers, 1854–2010." *Climatic Change* 122:229- 41.

<sup>8</sup> Parikh, Jyoti (2007) Gender and Climate Change Framework for Analysis, Policy and Action, IRAdE and UNDP India, [https://www.gdnonline.org/resources/UNDP\\_Gender\\_and\\_Climate\\_Change.pdf](https://www.gdnonline.org/resources/UNDP_Gender_and_Climate_Change.pdf)

answer, but a valuable opportunity to synchronize different voices towards the shared concern of addressing harmful climate change.

## Tactics

- Advocate for the voices of women, girls, LGBTQIA+ and other marginalized groups on the climate change agenda;
- Promoting the inclusion of women in decision-making processes around climate change decisions
- Establish a rationale for understanding boys' and men's multiple roles in climate change by conducting an analysis of masculinities (characteristics associated with what it means to be a man) in patriarchal systems that play a contributing role in perpetuating climate change and by presenting key areas for further exploration. The purpose of such an analysis should be to identify opportunities to work with men and boys as agents of positive change, alongside women, girls, and gender nonconforming people and further strengthen the call for social, economic and environmental justice for all.
- Highlighting, through advocacy and research, the gender gaps in science and technological innovation
- Promoting gender-transformative approaches in agriculture, aquaculture and climate change resilience programs;
- Serving as allies on other issues that gender-informed climate justice activists are advocating for.
- Develop key messages on what patriarchy, gender norms, masculinities and/or engaging men and boys have to do with climate change and strategize how to unite this approach with existing work with men and boys as allies for gender justice;
- Promote allyship and cross-movement building, with the men, masculinities and gender justice field with other economic justice movements that also work on climate justice.