

# WOMEN & THE ENVIRONMENT: a key challenge for sustainable development

## STUDY SUMMARY



STUDY BY THE



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While global warming have undeniable effects on the environment, the social stakes related to it are not taken into account as much as they should in international climate negotiations nor in sustainable development programs. This is especially true with women's rights and their role in the fight against climate change.

Yet, women are particularly affected by climate disturbances and the environment degradation since climate change tends to increase both poverty and discrimination which they already suffer from, and because they are under-represented in the decision-making spaces, especially those related to environmental issues.

Worst affected by climate change, women also own specific expertise as well as alternative and innovative solutions to protect the environment, but their contribution to this fight is not fully appreciated.

The RAJA-Danièle Marcovici Foundation invites you to discover the links between gender inequalities and the effects of climate change, as well as some concrete solutions to better integrate women in environmental protection initiatives, in order to truly achieve sustainable development.



## Women: the first victims of climate change and the deterioration of the environment

If women are worst affected by climate change and environmental problems, this is due to the fact that they are part of the world's poorest populations and also to the discriminations they suffer in all areas of life, which reinforce their vulnerability.

### Poverty, a source of vulnerability for women

The world's poorest communities are hardest hit by the resulting consequences of climate change: extreme climatic events, decrease of arable lands, natural resources depletion...

Since women account for **70% of the world population living on less than 1 dollar a day**, they are more exposed.

### Discriminations towards women reinforce their vulnerability

**Responsible for 2/3 of domestic chores**, such as water and firewood collecting, women also account for between 60% and 80% of food production in developing nations. Thus, they are in direct connection with their environment and are therefore the first affected by the climate change effects such as desertification, floods or

the depletion of natural resources, which increase their workload.

Inequalities in access to education and professional training, natural resources or health care: **women suffer discrimination in all areas of life**, which make them more vulnerable to climatic threats and limit their resilience and adaptation capacity to the drastic changes of their environment.

Hence, in the event of a natural disaster, **the mortality rate is 14 times higher for women** because they are not a priority target for prevention and warning measures.



*“ It is also vital that our political decision-makers understand the valuable contribution women make to innovation in the environmental sector. ”*

*Henri Rouillé d'Orfeuil,  
Agronomist, Member of the Executive Committee  
of the RAJA-Danièle Marcovici Foundation*

## Women: key players in the face of climate challenges

Despite the many inequalities, women play an essential part in the implementation of useful and concrete solutions for protecting the environment and adapting to climate change.

Not only do they possess unique, specific expertise in many fields, they are also the first to develop innovative and sustainable strategies for preserving natural resources and protecting the biodiversity.

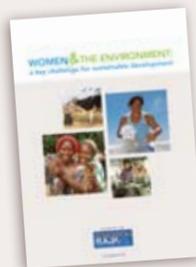
However, the contributions to the environment preservation made by women remain insufficiently known and under-appreciated, not least because they are under-represented on the consultation and decision-making bodies. Indeed, only 21.9% of the world's members of parliament are women.

Yet, women's full participation in decision-making spaces, above all those related to environmental issues, is essential to:

- Better comprehend women's role and needs, and integrate them into the design of programs regarding the environment protection and the fight against climate change,
- Support, enhance and spread the initiatives carried out by women,
- And therefore to reinforce the efficiency of sustainable development policies, for the benefit of society at large.

*“ Women's contribution to the environment protection is essential. That is why we are committed to highlighting the key role played by women in counteracting the effects of climate change, but also to fighting for a more prominent role for women in environmental protection initiatives. ”*

*Danièle Kapel-Marcovici,  
President of the RAJA-Danièle Marcovici Foundation*



For further details, please read the full study **“Women and the environment: a key challenge for sustainable development”** available on [www.femmes-et-environnement.com](http://www.femmes-et-environnement.com)



## Combining women empowerment with sustainable development

In order to fight climate change effectively, it is crucial that development actors incorporate a double approach combining environmental challenges with women empowerment and gender equality.

### This approach should:

- Acknowledge the key role of women in the fight against climate change
- Act against the under-representation of women in decision-making spaces and promote their participation in the design of economic, social and environmental policies
- Reduce inequalities putting women empowerment at the heart of sustainable development

In order to integrate women empowerment at every level, five key criteria must be taken into consideration when designing, monitoring and assessing sustainable development projects:

- 1 **Recognising and promoting the environmental expertise and contributions of women**, in order to facilitate the development and spreading of the solutions they implement.
- 2 **Participation at all levels of environmental and public decision-making**, in order to better comprehend women's specific needs and therefore to boost the programs and policies impact.
- 3 **Equal rights**, particularly the right to education, information and sexual and reproductive health services to improve women's decision-making power and autonomy, as well as their resilience in the face of climate change.
- 4 **Access to and control of economic resources and means of production** such as land, technologies, credits which increase women's autonomy and adaptation capacity to environmental degradation.
- 5 **The division of labour and equal sharing of tasks between men and women** to reduce the excessive workload placed on women, which has even increased because of the climate change effects.



*“ It is of vital importance that we systematically take into account women's needs in the projects related to the environment protection and the fight against climate change. ”*

*Mathilde Bois Dubuc,  
Delegate  
of the RAJA-Danièle Marcovici Foundation*



Find out more about innovative and efficient non-profits initiatives which combine women empowerment with the environment protection in the full study

### “Women and the environment: a key challenge for sustainable development”

available on:

[www.femmes-et-environnement.com](http://www.femmes-et-environnement.com)



### ABOUT THE RAJA-DANIÈLE MARCOVICI FOUNDATION

For almost 10 years, the RAJA-Danièle Marcovici Foundation has been working to secure greater freedom and better living conditions for women all over the world by supporting non-profit projects in three main domains: education and social work, professional training and integration, advocacy against violence towards women and defence of their rights. Since its creation in 2006, the Foundation has co-financed 303 projects in 44 countries and supported 207 non-profit organisations, reaching over 50,000 women and distributing almost €3.5 million.



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