



ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY IN NATIONAL CLIMATE PLANS: PROGRESS AND HIGHER AMBITIONS



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THE CLIMATE-GENDER EQUALITY NEXUS



Massive economic and social benefits can come from climate action. Some of the most important benefits entail advances towards gender equality and women's empowerment and leadership. Both climate mitigation and adaptation measures can be crafted to accelerate social inclusion and gender equality and from there, progress across the Sustainable Development Goals.

In broad strokes, climate change affects everyone. But it is far from gender neutral. Structural inequalities linked to gender perpetuate and intensify the negative impacts of climate change. The UN Secretary-General recently noted: "Gender inequality coupled with climate and environment crises is the greatest sustainable development challenge of the present time."¹

Women who are poor and marginalized in low-paying jobs, for instance, have fewer resources to cope with drought, flooding and other consequences of climate shifts.² Women are more vulnerable to food insecurity, with the global gender gap growing from 6-10 percent from 2019-2020. Energy

¹ United Nations Economic and Social Council. 2022. Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes: Report of the Secretary-General. E/CN.6/2022/3. Commission on the Status of Women, Sixty-sixth session, 14-25 March.

² Ibid.

poverty forces people to turn to polluting fuels for cooking and heating, which in turn kills 3.8 million people a year through indoor air pollution, mostly women and girls.³

Women also play many critical roles in solutions to climate change. They are at the vanguard of global climate advocacy and lead local adaptation and mitigation efforts. They determine much of household energy use and, often, demand for renewable energy in homes and communities. As almost half the agricultural workforce and two thirds of small livestock managers, they can steer efforts to improve agricultural productivity while mitigating climate and environmental impacts from food production.

Solving the climate crisis, a just transition, achieving the SDGs – none of these are possible without gender equality. Gender discrimination still means women still cannot express their full potential as leaders and changemakers, however. They head only 15 percent of environmental ministries and make up less than a quarter of parliamentarians, although recent global climate talks have approached gender parity among members of national delegations.⁴ In general, women have been ignored in mainstream climate policy or viewed mainly through a lens of vulnerability. Ensuring that women and other marginalized groups participate in decision-making not only upholds a fundamental human right but can frame more responsive and effective climate policies. It recognizes that women are powerful agents of change and sources of solutions.



3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

The 2015 **Paris Agreement** on climate change formally endorsed gender equality as integral to the economic and social transformation required to meet the climate challenge.

In 2019, the twenty-fifth session of the Conference of Parties under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP25) called for more ambition in linking gender and climate aims. It adopted the enhanced five-year Lima work programme on gender and an accompanying Gender Action Plan.

Priority areas include:

- Capacity-building;
- Gender balance;
- Coherence with other international agreements including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;
- Gender-responsive implementation, and
- Monitoring and reporting.

Implementing the plan requires many steps, such as making climate finance work for gender equality, tapping the valuable knowledge of indigenous women, and better engaging women's groups and gender advocates.

Through UNDP's Climate Promise, many countries are now ramping up efforts to accelerate progress on these issues.



KEEPING A PROMISE



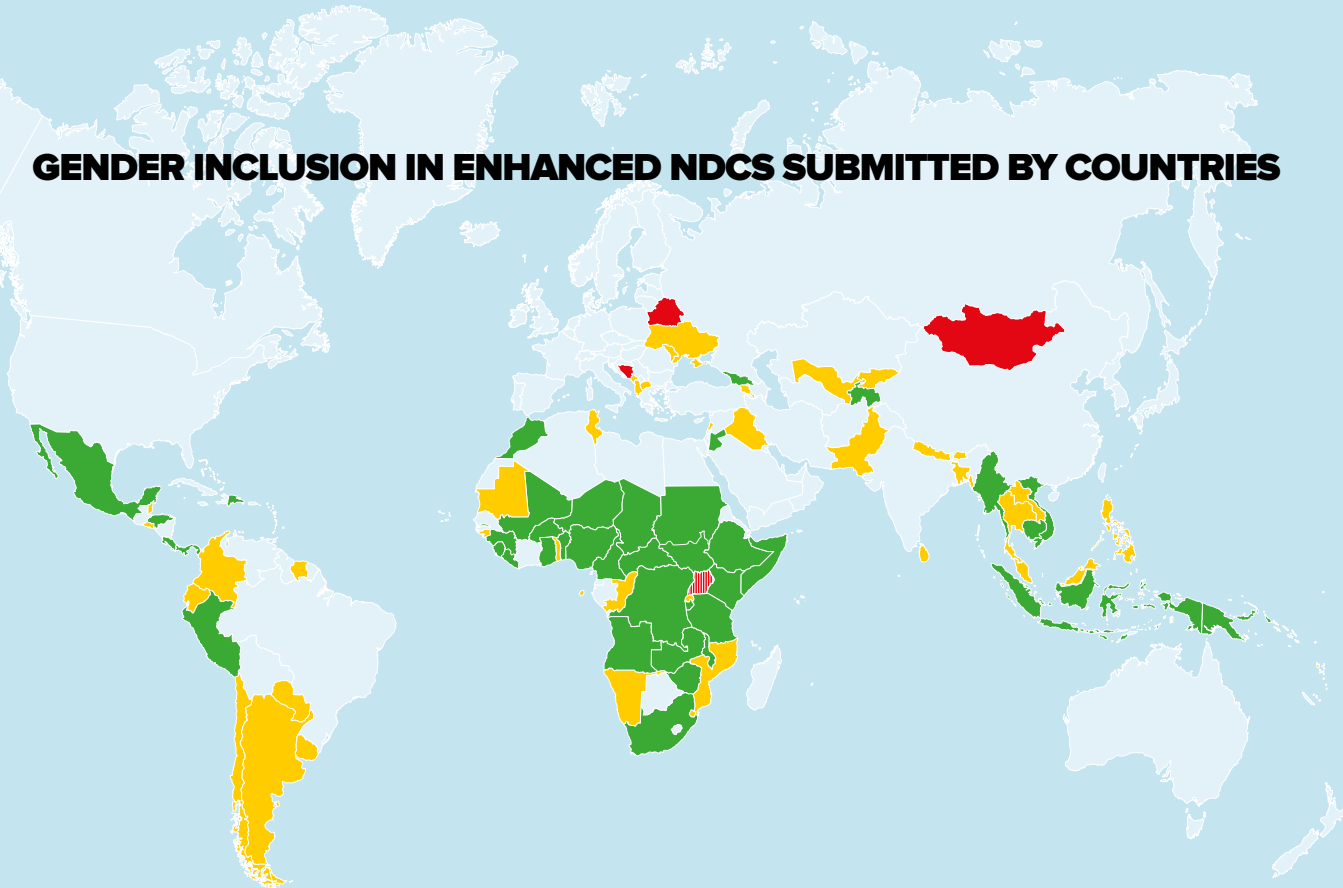
All Parties to the Convention must prepare national climate action plans known as Nationally Determined Contributions or NDCs. These cut across mitigation and adaptation efforts, involve multiple actors and sectors of the economy, and in general offer unique opportunities to integrate gender in climate action at scale. UNDP's **Climate Promise** is the world's largest offer of support for countries to raise their climate ambitions through the NDCs. The initiative supports 120 countries to be bolder in reducing emissions, increasing climate resilience with no one left behind and protecting nature.

Every five years, NDCs are revised – a chance for countries to understand where they are and what they need to do next, ideally at a higher level of ambition. Only 45 countries integrated gender dimensions in the initial round of NDCs from 2015, while in a 2019 UNDP survey, featured in **“The Heat is On”** report, 68 countries said they intended to incorporate gender as part of the NDC revision process. Ultimately, of the 94 Climate Promise countries that submitted enhanced NDCs in 2020-21, 90 integrated gender dimensions.⁵ Furthermore, 39 percent of the NDC revisions involved multistakeholder consultations that included gender perspectives, compared to only 2 percent in 2015.

Plans demonstrate both greater attention to gender equality and higher aspirations for action, with strong potential to contribute both to national goals and the Lima programme and Gender Action Plan.

⁵ United Nations Development Programme. 2021. NDC Global Outlook Report 2021: The State of Climate Ambition. <https://climatepromise.undp.org/state-of-climate-ambition>

GENDER INCLUSION IN ENHANCED NDCs SUBMITTED BY COUNTRIES



■ Gender inclusion (1st and 2nd NDC)

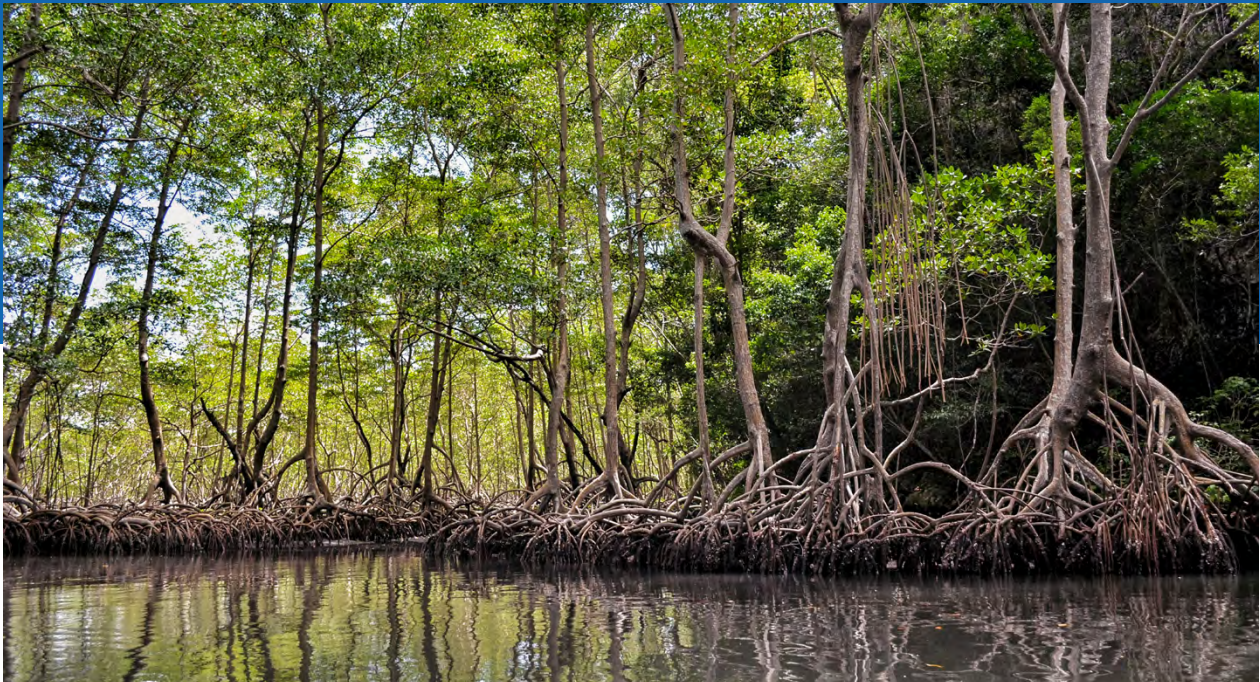
■ Gender inclusion (2nd NDC)

■ No gender mentioned

Albania	■	Guinea	■	Papua New Guinea	■
Angola	■	Guinea-Bissau	■	Paraguay	■
Antigua and Barbuda	■	Honduras	■	Peru	■
Argentina	■	Indonesia	■	Philippines	■
Armenia	■	Iraq	■	Rwanda	■
Bangladesh	■	Jordan	■	Samoa	■
Belarus	■	Kenya	■	Sao Tome and Principe	■
Belize	■	Kyrgyz Republic	■	Seychelles	■
Benin	■	Lao PDR	■	Sierra Leone	■
Bhutan	■	Lebanon	■	Somalia	■
Bosnia and Herzegovina	■	Liberia	■	South Africa	■
Burkina Faso	■	Malawi	■	South Sudan	■
Burundi	■	Malaysia	■	Sri Lanka	■
Cabo Verde	■	Maldives	■	Sudan	■
Cambodia	■	Mali	■	Suriname	■
Cameroon	■	Mauritania	■	Tajikistan	■
Central African Republic	■	Mauritius	■	Tanzania (United Rep. of)	■
Chad	■	Mexico	■	Thailand	■
Chile	■	Moldova (Rep. of)	■	The Gambia	■
Colombia	■	Mongolia	■	Togo	■
Comoros	■	Montenegro	■	Tonga	■
Congo (Democratic Republic)	■	Morocco	■	Tunisia	■
Congo (Republic)	■	Mozambique	■	Uganda*	■
Costa Rica	■	Myanmar	■	Ukraine	■
Dominican Republic	■	Namibia	■	Uruguay	■
Ecuador	■	Nauru	■	Uzbekistan	■
El Salvador	■	Nepal	■	Vanuatu	■
Eswatini (Swaziland)	■	Niger	■	Vietnam	■
Ethiopia	■	Nigeria	■	Zambia	■
Georgia	■	North Macedonia (Rep. of)	■	Zimbabwe	■
Ghana	■	Pakistan	■		
Grenada	■	Panama	■		

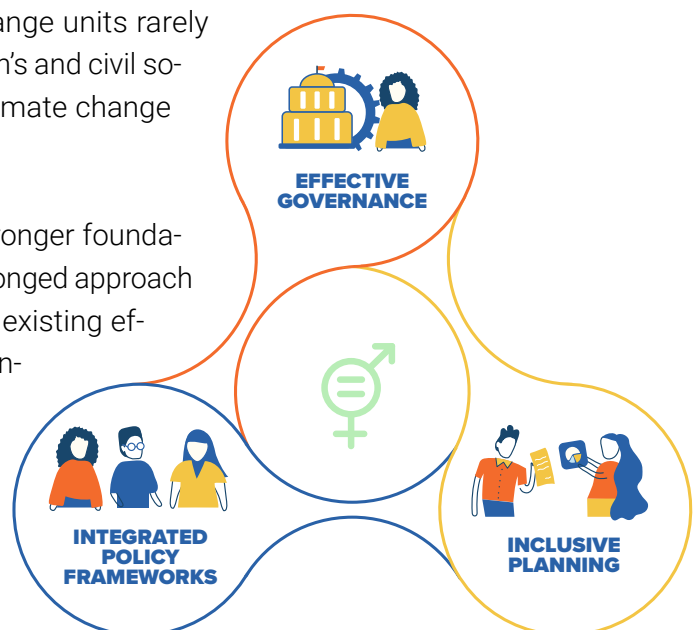
* Interim updated submission

MAKING PLANS THAT ACCELERATE CHANGE



In the first round of NDCs, starting in 2015, countries faced challenges in integrating gender. Common gaps included the lack of gender-disaggregated information and data, which limited understanding of how climate impacts vary between women and men. Environmental ministries and national climate change units rarely engaged with gender institutions, and women’s and civil society organizations had little presence in climate change policy processes.

To address these issues and establish a stronger foundation for progress, UNDP developed a three-pronged approach central to the Climate Promise. It builds on existing efforts to pursue more systematic gender-mainstreaming within the five-year cycle of NDC revisions, entailing effective governance, inclusive planning and integrated policy frameworks. Changes in the NDCs from 2015 to 2020-2021 are evident in each of these areas.



EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE



Towards effective governance for gender mainstreaming, UNDP supports strong coordination mechanisms to link climate and gender equality actors and strengthen institutional capacity. It emphasizes integrating gender-climate connections in policies and decisions in both sectors, and regular exchanges with non-State actors, particularly grass-roots women's groups.

Signs of change Institutions and leadership



24% of NDCs consider national gender institutions⁶ integral to climate change governance structures, up from just **2%** in 2015.



27% of NDCs recognize the full, genuine and equal participation of women in climate decision-making compared to **2%** in 2015.



24 countries recognize women as agents of change in accelerating progress on climate commitments, up from **7** in 2015.



21 countries spotlighted the contributions of women's groups or civil society organizations compared to just **1** in 2015.

⁶ These may also be described as national women's machineries.

INCLUSIVE PLANNING

Inclusive planning builds on consultations with multiple stakeholders and political buy-in, along with gender analyses to identify capacity gaps and planning priorities. UNDP encourages the use of specific indicators to keep progress on gender on track. It advocates incorporating gender in decisions to steer a just transition so that it builds in women’s empowerment and choices for livelihoods, and economies become more sustainable and equitable.

The enhanced NDCs have made much greater commitments particularly to women’s access to training, resources and tools for climate action, at both the decision-making and grass-roots levels. Women in leadership positions can use new skills as effective advocates for integrating gender equality in climate policies and actions and in mobilizing change in their communities.



Signs of change

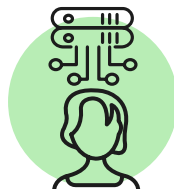
Guiding a gender-just transition



37 countries held broad consultations to define core climate and gender considerations in their NDCs, compared to **2** in 2015.



53 countries committed to promoting women’s empowerment, up from just **7** in 2015.



35% of NDCs stipulated technology transfer for women, compared to **1%** in 2015.



Financing gender-responsive climate action



21 countries referred to gender in climate finance strategies compared to **1** in 2015.

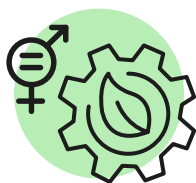


20 countries highlighted the importance of women's access to finance for climate action. No NDCs recognized this in the first round of the plans.



15 countries agreed to apply gender-responsive budgeting in climate action.

Improving capacities, tools and monitoring



30 countries intend to strengthen institutional capacities to link gender and climate change; just **4** made this commitment in 2015.



42 countries target programmes to increase women's access to resources, training and skills, up from **1** in 2015.



Before 2021, no country had agreed to collect and monitor data on gender in climate action. **26 countries** have now affirmed they will collect gender-disaggregated data; **21 countries** indicated that climate monitoring, reporting and verification systems will factor in gender dimensions.

INTEGRATED POLICY

UNDP supports countries to better articulate gender in existing climate policy instruments, building on a clear understanding of gender impacts and objectives. It helps ensure that multiple policies work coherently together to close gender gaps, not widen them.

Signs of change

Connecting gender and climate policies



27 countries recognized national gender equality policies in their NDCs; **19 countries** have an explicit policy linking gender and climate.



51% of NDCs described mainstreaming gender into climate change programmes and instruments compared to only **6%** in 2015.

Adaptation and mitigation



78% of NDCs refer to women or gender under adaptation and **57%** under mitigation, compared to **32%** and **15%**, respectively, in the first NDCs.



25 NDCs define mitigation actions referring to women or gender; **50** refer to women or gender in adaptation actions, up from **2** and **12**, respectively.

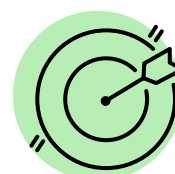
USING MEASUREMENT TO KEEP AMBITION ON TRACK



The new visibility of gender in the NDCs is promising. It demonstrates how the NDC revision process can catalyse gender-responsive climate policies. But clear intentions must be followed by concrete actions and measurement to keep progress on track. Here, a few countries are leading the way, having set both ambitious goals to advance gender equality and adopting new indicators to track identified problems as well as potential solutions.



8 countries have recognized that men and women make different contributions to emissions reductions AND proposed targets or indicators to encourage these.



11 countries have noted different contributions to resilience AND agreed on targets or indicators to support these.



22 countries have affirmed that men and women face different vulnerabilities AND stipulated targets or indicators to measure and respond to these.



9 countries have included climate targets that help reduce gender inequalities or amplify women's empowerment AND adopted indicators to track change.

PROGRESS BY SECTOR



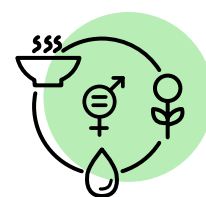
Many NDCs have made important advances in recognizing gender dimensions not just as a general principle but in terms of explicit references across different sectors. Countries are increasingly acknowledging women’s influential roles in energy, agriculture and waste management, for instance. Gender analyses of different sectors have included their positions across value chains and employment types, particular vulnerabilities, gender-responsive targets or measures and the importance of women in decision-making and leadership, among other factors.



73% of NDCs now refer to women or gender in specific sectors, up from **17%** in 2015.

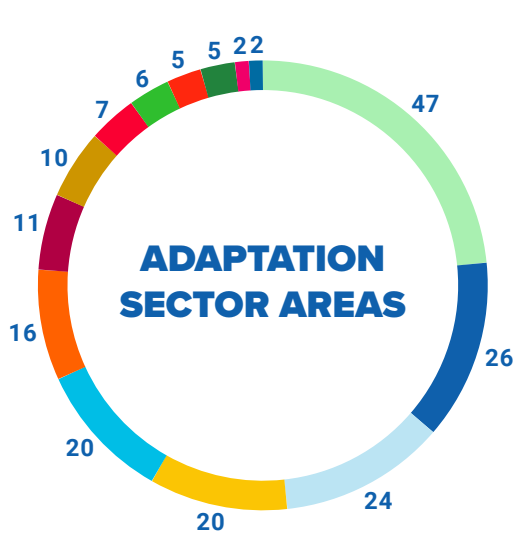


43 NDCs include gender references in mitigation measures in specific sectors: **27** countries on energy, **20** on LULUCF⁷ and **19** on agriculture. Just **6** NDCs had such references in 2015.

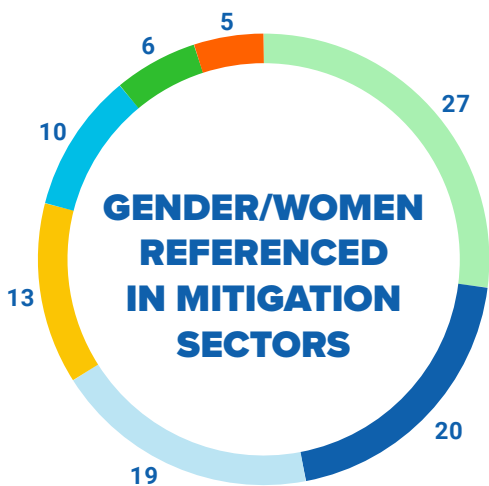


64 NDCs have gender references in adaptation efforts for specific sectors: **47** on food security and agriculture, **26** on health and **24** on freshwater resources. Only **10** NDCs made such references in 2015.

⁷ Land use, land-use change and forestry.



- Food Security (Agriculture, Fisheries, Livestock/Pastoralism)
- Human Health
- Freshwater Resources
- DRM (DRR, EWS)
- Energy
- Terrestrial Ecosystems (both Terrestrial and Wetland- biodiversity and forests)
- Coastal Areas (includes low-lying areas)
- Infrastructure
- Tourism
- Transport
- Gender
- Human habitat (urban, cities, settlements, housing)
- Ocean Ecosystems
- Education



- Energy
- LULUCF (includes forests, wetlands, settlements)
- Agriculture
- Waste
- Transport
- Other (cross-cutting)
- IPPU



FROM PLEDGES TO IMPACTS



NDCs represent a critical first step in climate action, the moment when countries define a national path to transform economies and societies, nail down their pledges to action and signal political support for sustainable development.

One key lesson from preparing and revising the NDCs has been that those building on more inclusive processes, involving a full spectrum of people and interests, are often more ambitious.⁸ A fundamental aspect is women's equal participation and leadership, since gender equality will determine the chances for achieving a sustainable, green and just future for all.

At the same time, NDCs are just the beginning of a journey. Pledges must move rapidly into actions that deliver real results in reducing emissions, securing a just and green transition, and ensuring people, infrastructure and services can adapt to fallout from climate change.

Another central takeaway is that NDCs have made strides on commitments to integrate gender equality into climate finance. But past experience has shown that a substantial bottleneck to acting on gender and climate pledges occurs in budgeting and implementing planned activities. Although an improvement, only 15 countries have agreed to apply gender-responsive budgeting tools that help keep gender-climate links visible and funded. Plans for gender-disaggregated data and gender-responsive targets have similarly improved but remain insufficient.

⁸ United Nations Development Programme. 2021. NDC Global Outlook Report 2021: The State of Climate Ambition. <https://climatepromise.undp.org/state-of-climate-ambition>



These gaps indicate the essential work ahead in mobilizing resources and applying integrated planning and implementation frameworks that fully connect gender equality with climate action and sustainable development. Fiscal policies, for instance, will need to consider how climate change investments can reduce vulnerabilities and inequalities, including through investment in gender-responsive social protection. Creating economic opportunities for women can help meet the goals of both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement, while making entire economies more productive and resilient, and upholding national commitments to human rights. Green energy for women in rural areas can lower emissions and pollutants, reduce pressure on natural resources, and open more opportunities for education and employment, including through reducing unpaid care work in homes.

The case for steering climate finance towards gender equality is clear but needs to be more widely known and understood. Inequalities impose development costs on whole societies, more so as people struggle to contend with climate change. Sustainably addressing gender-differentiated needs will require the full spectrum and orchestration of private, public and multilateral capital.

In the next few pivotal years, the second phase of the Climate Promise will champion a global call for moving from pledges to impacts. It will scale up support and rally more partnerships so that countries making bold commitments to gender in their NDCs have the means to act and achieve their goals.

One primary drive will be to help countries strengthen inclusive and gender-responsive governance, policy and financing mechanisms, as these can propel progress across the components of NDCs. Continued engagement with civil society and women's organizations and leaders, who have been involved in the NDCs as never before, will help keep a laser-like focus on ambition and action.

Done together, these efforts to advance gender equality and respond to climate change will deliver faster progress towards a green and gender-equal world.





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