



# **EQUALITY IN THE CLIMATE CRISIS**

**- HOW FINLAND CAN PROMOTE GENDER  
EQUALITY IN INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE POLICY**

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# FOREWORD



## TACKLING THE CLIMATE CRISIS REQUIRES WORKING TOWARDS EQUALITY

The climate crisis will have the deepest impact on those in the most vulnerable positions, such as girls around the world, and will set back gains already made through work for equality. That is why the climate crisis is an issue of equality.

We want to highlight the effects the climate crisis will have on equality. Plan International strives for a world that advances children's rights and equality. That is why we focus on improving the rights and status of vulnerable girls in developing countries.

We have commissioned this report from the experts at Tyrsky Consulting to investigate the measures Finland is taking to promote equality as part of international climate policy. The results are promising. Although systematic work for equality is not yet a core part of international climate policy, Finland has played an important role in pioneering the inclusion of equality perspectives.

The findings in this report affirm our view that many of the factors at play in exacerbating the climate crisis, but also mitigating it, are gendered. Gender is at the core of the climate crisis because the people most vulnerable to its effects are the girls living in developing countries. Forced migration, poverty and regional conflicts threaten the safety of girls and women. Boys and men, in turn, are at the risk of becoming entangled in armed conflicts.

It is equally important to take the gender perspective into account when coming up with solutions for the climate crisis. Girls need access to high quality education in order to learn skills required to combat climate change and adapt to it. Men and boys, in turn, should be engaged and considered more in the discussion around equality as well as the climate.

Finland has taken initiative in foregrounding equality as part of climate policy. This is a great opportunity, as a strong foundation will allow our international work for equality to be even more influential and ambitious.

An equal society will be more efficient at tackling climate change: when different people are able to participate in climate work, climate change can be mitigated faster and more permanently. If we want to one day stop global warming, we need to work towards equality.

Finland could be the first nation to successfully solve equality issues in conjunction with climate issues. Hopefully this report by Plan International and Tyrsky will kick-start the discussion around tightening the link between equality and climate policy. We need countries like Finland to ensure the international climate policy system also promotes gender equality through its climate work.

Equality cannot be achieved without resolving the climate crisis – and the climate crisis cannot be resolved without working for equality.

**Ossi Heinänen**

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ossi Heinänen', written over a light blue horizontal line.

National Director of Plan International Finland



# SUMMARY

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**F**inland influences international climate policy in many ways. For example, we participate in climate negotiations and initiatives, grant international climate funding and practice climate diplomacy.

Gender equality cuts across international climate policy from many angles. The connection comes up in the context of, for example, international agreements, development cooperation, the climate movement, and armed conflicts.

For a long time, gender equality received little attention in international climate agreements and negotiations. The perspective has gained prominence after the turn of the millennium and has become an established part of the discourse. However, equality has thus far been mostly examined from the perspective of women and the representation of women in particular.

Finland has advocated for equality in international climate policy especially by supporting the inclusion of equality perspectives in climate agreements and the participation and education of women negotiators from the Global South. The themes of equality and the climate also come up as part of development cooperation. However, the work has been project-oriented, at times poorly resourced and somewhat disorganised.

Sweden, Canada, and Mexico are examples of countries that have emphasised gender equality in their general foreign policy and international climate policy. However, the work in these countries has also been criticised for shortcomings such as lack of concreteness and limited approach.

## THIS REPORT PROPOSES A NUMBER OF POTENTIAL MEASURES FOR PROMOTING EQUALITY AS PART OF FINLAND'S INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE POLICY. THEY HAVE BEEN GROUPED INTO THREE CATEGORIES:

### 1. STRENGTHENING THE FOUNDATION

- achieving carbon neutrality
- making equality one of the central goals of international climate policy
- collecting data and setting indicators for work for equality
- increasing equality awareness in climate work
- appointing a person responsible for equality in international climate policy
- expanding perspectives into equality

### 2. INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS

- continuing to support women negotiators from the Global South
- building expertise in the long term
- supporting the work for equality carried out by the UNFCCC secretariat
- promoting equality in international cooperation

### 3. INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

- emphasising synergies in funding
- connecting equality and climate work
- financing the international civil society
- launching an initiative on behalf of persecuted climate activists



## 1. INTRODUCTION

**T**he climate is an issue of equality. This is reflected in the fact that the effects of global warming and the measures taken to prevent it impact different groups of people in different ways. If we allow the climate crisis to advance as projected, it will significantly hinder work for equality – and threaten to set back equality from its current state.

On the other hand, equality is a climate issue. The responsibility for producing emissions is unevenly distributed across different demographics. By ensuring that different types of people have the opportunity to participate in decision-making and the implementation of climate measures, we will be able to make quicker and more efficient progress in climate work.

This report commissioned by Plan International Finland focuses on investigating equality in Finland's international climate policy. It supplements the organisation's previous publications *Climate change threatens girls' rights* (Plan International Finland 2020) and *Tasa-arvon edistäminen ulkopoliitikassa* (Promoting equality in foreign policy, Vastapuu 2020).

"Finland's international climate policy" refers to all our nation's policies that influence mitigation and adaptation of climate change outside our borders. However, this report focuses more specifically on Finnish climate and foreign policy that has connections to international climate work.

This report opens with brief overviews of international climate policy (chapter 2) and gender equality (chapter 3). Chapter 4 explores how international climate agreements and negotiations have addressed equality. The following chapter describes equality in Finland's international climate policy thus far. Chapter 6 examines equality in the international climate policies of three reference countries. Chapter 7 draws conclusions and chapter 8 summarises the recommended action based on the report.

The authors would like to thank Plan International Finland for the commission and the support received during the project. We would also like to give our warmest thanks to all experts who gave us their time for interesting discussions. Naturally, the authors are solely responsible for the content of the report as well as any mistakes.

## 2. INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE POLICY

International climate policy consists of several areas. This report approaches the subject primarily through the following themes (for Finland's various methods of globally influencing the climate crisis, see Tynkkynen et al. 2021).

**CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS.** During climate negotiations, countries agree on international climate agreements and their implementation, the most significant ones being the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (1992) and the Paris Agreement (2015). Negotiations take place primarily during UN's annual climate conferences (Conference of Parties, COP) and the preceding intersessional meetings of the subsidiary bodies SBI and SBSTA. Finland takes part in the climate negotiations as a member of the European Union.

**INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE INITIATIVES.** Outside the official negotiations, climate work is carried out through various international initiatives. The interested countries and other parties join forces in the initiatives to work on areas that have been deemed as important. Finland has participated in several different initiatives and has initiated some of them, for example the Coalition of Finance Ministers for Climate Action (for further information, see Tynkkynen 2016).

**INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE FINANCE.** Wealthy countries have committed to financing climate work in poorer countries. The funding is directed through channels such as international climate funds and the World Bank system. Finland has provided finance for, for example, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund (GCF).

**FLEXIBILITY MECHANISMS.** Countries may purchase emission allowances and fund climate initiatives abroad through international flexibility mechanisms. Companies, citizens, and other actors may also voluntarily compensate for their emissions through various services. Finland has committed to reaching carbon neutrality through domestic action without resorting to flexibility mechanisms.

**DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION.** A large part of development cooperation is connected to the reduction of emissions or adapting to climate change. Finland supports climate projects bilaterally as well as through the EU and UN. The climate is also reflected in the work of Finnfund, which provides funding to companies operating in the Global South.

**CLIMATE DIPLOMACY.** The climate is included in foreign relations as part of foreign policy and diplomacy. In the United Nations, the climate has been discussed in General Assemblies, numerous sub-organisations and, on occasion, in the United Nations Security Council. In bilateral relationships, the topic of the climate comes up in summit meetings. In addition to the foreign policy practiced under the leadership of the president and prime minister, the climate is also touched upon in the international relationships between sectoral ministers.

**NATIONAL CLIMATE POLICY.** National climate work can have an international ripple effect. For example, increasing the use of biofuel to reduce emissions from traffic in Finland can directly or indirectly lead to deforestation in the tropics. Likewise, developing and implementing new technology in our country can make it easier to adopt these solutions elsewhere.











NOTHING ABOUT HER  
WITHOUT HER



I'M HELPING  
GIRLS  
GET EQUAL

#I'M SHAPING  
MY WORLD  
PLAN INTERNATIONAL



### 3. GENDER EQUALITY

**G**ender equality as a concept can be approached from many perspectives. This report includes intersectionality as part of the discussion on gender equality, meaning it takes overlapping issues and differences into account. Below are some examples of the ways equality can be and has been approached in the context of international climate policy.

**EQUALITY IN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS.** Themes of equality are often introduced to the conversation through international processes and agreements. The most notable of these are the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) (1979) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995). The obligation to promote gender equality is also part of the founding agreement of the European Union, and it is included in several EU directives and regulations. It is also number five on the UN's list of sustainable development goals.

**THE STATUS OF GIRLS AND WOMEN IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH.** The status, daily life and health of girls and women are generally considered to be particularly vulnerable to the effects of global warming (see, e.g. Plan International Finland 2020). One commonly cited example is the role of girls and women in fetching water; water shortages will mean water will have to be fetched from further away, which increases the workload and may lead to girls not being able to attend school.

**REPRESENTATION IN DECISION-MAKING.** One prominent question of equality with regard to climate negotiations is the sufficient representation of women. Another question is whether the target groups of internationally funded climate projects, particularly women, are able to make their voices heard. (EIGE 2012.) The need for representation is often linked to the fact that the consequences of climate change will have a particular impact on the status of women and girls in developing countries and that women and girls often play a key role in adapting to global warming (Plan International Finland 2020).

**CLIMATE ACTIVISM. CLIMATE ACTIVISM IS A GENDERED FIELD.**

Young people, particularly young women, are often on the front lines of activism (Concord 2020). On average, women are also more concerned about the climate crisis than men and more open to making lifestyle adjustments because of it. (EIGE 2012, 73). Anti-feminist actors and actors skeptical towards global warming may target activists with gendered harassment and threats of violence. One aspect of equality in climate policy is guaranteeing a safe discussion forum and the opportunity to participate in democracy for everybody.

**INTERSECTIONALITY.** Intersectionality and overlapping differences are receiving more attention in international climate policy. In addition to gender, the perspectives discussed include age, socioeconomic status, role in family and society, livelihood, regional differences, and the status of indigenous peoples. Many reports highlight that the most vulnerable groups do not have the financial means to adapt to global warming by, for example, moving to another region. (EIGE 2012, Concord 2020.) For example, belonging to a sexual or gender minority can make adaptation difficult if the person's relationship status or familial relationships are not acknowledged when moving abroad or if their position in the work life is insecure. (Stockholm Environment Institute 2021.) Acknowledging intersectional perspectives in climate projects is seen as important, but concrete ways of doing so are still under development.

**EQUALITY BETWEEN ALL GENDERS?** The concept of equality has focused on the status of girls and women in international negotiations and concrete climate measures alike. Discussion of boys and men, gender diversity, transgender or non-binary individuals and different types of gender expression remains marginal. One question to explore in the future is what expanding the concept of equality to cover perspectives other than those focusing on women and girls could mean in the context of international climate policy.

For example, a Swedish report highlights the fact that boys and men are at a greater risk of becoming involved in armed conflicts as global warming deteriorates living conditions, particularly in the Global South (Concord 2020). On the other hand, men are over-represented as employees and managers in sectors such as heavy industry, where the structural changes necessitated by climate action require adaptation and major adjustments. Because of this, men and boys in particular should be better engaged in equality and climate discourse.

**GENDER IN CONFLICTS RELATED TO THE CLIMATE CRISIS.** Global warming is expected cause an increase in forced migration, poverty and regional conflict, which in turn will lead to increased violence and threats of violence. (Concord 2020.) This violence targets and impacts different genders in different ways. Because of this, the perspective of equality needs to be taken into account in sudden crisis management as well as in long-term conflict management. For example, violence against women on refugee camps has been shown to increase if it is not specifically intervened in. Armed conflict, on the other hand, involves men and boys in particular.

## 4. EQUALITY IN INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE AGREEMENTS

### 4.1 GENDER EQUALITY IN CLIMATE AGREEMENTS AND NEGOTIATIONS

The importance of equality in international climate agreements has grown over time. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC 1992), which forms the basis for international climate policy, and the supplementary Kyoto Protocol (UNFCCC 1997) make no direct references to equality, human rights, or non-discrimination. However, the 2001 United Nations Climate Conference set a goal for improving women's participation in the subsidiary bodies of the climate agreement (UNFCCC 2001).

The 2010 Cancún Agreements, which laid the groundwork for the negotiations concerning the Paris Agreement, recognised the importance of gender equality and efficient participation by women in mitigating climate change. The document also includes numerous other references to the gender perspective. (UNFCCC 2010)

In the 2014 United Nations Climate Change Conference, which preceded the Paris Conference, the countries approved the Lima work programme on gender. With this decision, the nations strive to promote an equal gender composition and better gender consideration when developing and implementing climate policy and to achieve gender awareness in all important action taken under the climate agreement. (UNFCCC 2014)

The work programme set a goal of increasing the share of women in national delegations and subsidiary bodies of the agreement. The nations were encouraged to improve the education of their negotiators and to increase awareness of the link between equality and climate change. Another goal was to improve the ability of women negotiators to efficiently participate in the negotiations. (UNFCCC 2014)

A more detailed action plan for the work programme was approved in the 2017 United Nations Climate Change Conference. It set promoting the full, equal, and meaningful participation of women and mainstreaming the equality perspective as its goals. This applies to all subsidiary bodies of the climate agreement, the signatory countries, areas of climate policy and phases of decision-making. (UNFCCC 2017)

The introduction to the 2015 Paris Agreement states that the nations should, when taking action to address climate change, protect and consider gender equality and the empowerment of women (UNFCCC 2015). In the 2019 United Nations Climate Change Conference, the nations approved a five-year enhanced Lima work programme on gender and its gender action plan, which lists five areas of focus for the work (UNFCCC 2019a):

1. capacity-building, knowledge management and communication
2. gender balance, participation, and women's leadership
3. coherence
4. gender-responsive implementation and means of implementation
5. monitoring and reporting

Work for equality has also established itself on a structural level. The UNFCCC secretariat includes experts who are specialised in equality, and the secretariat's homepage features a separate portal for the topic. On the other hand, the work is still partially dependent on the initiative of individual countries and volunteer funding. For example, in addition to Finland, the Netherlands and Iceland have funded the participation and training of women negotiators through the Women's Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO 2021).

So far, the work has focused on the representation of women in the processes and subsidiary bodies of the climate agreement. The results have been fairly minor, as the share of women has even grown smaller at times (UNFCCC 2018a). In 2020, the share of women in the subsidiary bodies of the climate agreement varied between 10 and 56 per cent (UNFCCC 2020).

According to the most recent data, 40 per cent of the national delegates and 27 of the chairpersons or vice-chairpersons were women. However, the numbers vary greatly by age group and country. The majority of delegates under 26 were women, while their share of delegates over 65 was less than one quarter. (UNFCCC 2020) The share of women has been significantly greater in the delegations of European countries than African and Asian countries (WEDO 2021).

One potential way of guaranteeing equal representation would be gender quotas. However, limiting the right of sovereign nations to appoint their representatives in international politics would be difficult. The quotas might prove particularly challenging for small and poor countries in the Global South who have limited options for choosing delegates.







Several common challenges for implementing gender equality have been identified (UNFCCC 2018a). These include, for example:

- a deficit in gender equality expertise
- having to compete for attention with other cross-cutting issues
- limited funding and other resources
- deficiencies in monitoring and reporting
- the work for equality focusing on women (UNFCCC 2018b)

A report by UN Women (2021) lists seven recommendations for raising women's voices in intergovernmental forums:

1. explicit policies and mandated targets
2. tracking and reporting
3. training and capacity building
4. financial support
5. advocacy and networking
6. communications strategies
7. initiatives addressing sexual misconduct

## 4.2 INTERSECTIONALITY IN INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE POLICY

In addition to gender equality, international climate agreements have also considered other differences and the inequalities arising from them. However, intersectional perspectives have thus far been limited to a mention and a list of possible grounds for vulnerability, and they do not appear to have an impact on proposed action or indicators.

The Cancun Agreements (UNFCCC 2010) include a rather brief list of possible grounds for vulnerability, with mentions of age, disability, gender equality, women's participation, and indigenous peoples. The same document later acknowledges vulnerable groups in developing countries, particularly women and children.

The Lima work programme (UNFCCC 2014) mentions the importance of participation and receiving information in efficiently mitigating climate change and adapting to it. Because of this, it is important to engage all concerned parties in implementing the measures, including children, young and elderly people, women, people with disabilities, indigenous peoples and local communities and organisations.

The preamble to the Paris Agreement (2015) lists groups that need to be considered when taking action to mitigate climate change. These include, for example, indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, people with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations. It also mentions gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity.

The decision on the Enhanced Lima work programme on gender and its gender action plan (UNFCCC 2019a) specifically mentions men for the first time, stating that climate change may impact women and men differently due to historical and current gender inequalities as well as multidimensional factors. The effects may be more prominent in developing nations as well as among local communities and indigenous peoples.

The Informal Summary Report on the Gender Dialogue (UNFCCC 2018b) suggests that gender could be taken into account in a more comprehensive and consistent manner when planning adaptive climate change measures. Details on how the gender perspective is applied should also be highlighted here and the definition of the term "gender" in this context should be clarified. At the same time, it should be noted that the gender perspective is not just the perspective of women, but a concept related to the relationship between men and women – women can be seen as agents of change. Informal discussions on the implementation of the Lima Work Programme (2019b) have strived to use non-binary, inclusive language.

As the 2020s approach, intersectional perspectives in the discourse around equality have grown clearer and more diverse. This development is also reflected in international climate policy. Agreements and negotiations have begun to include the concept of intersectional discrimination as well as a more comprehensive understanding of the overlapping vulnerabilities that can influence the circumstances people find themselves in. However, we are a long way from gender perspectives, not to mention different intersections, being defined as part of concrete measures clearly enough and in sufficient detail.







## 5. EQUALITY IN FINLAND'S INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE POLICY

**F**inland's international climate policy is steered by Finland's Action Plan for Climate Smart Foreign Policy, which was published in spring of 2021. The action plan is updated as needed and one of its overarching themes is human rights, gender equality and non-discrimination. According to the plan, measures for promoting equality in climate policy include ensuring that the effects of climate action on human rights are evaluated, highlighting the linkage between climate change and equality on multilateral forums, supporting the status and influence of environmental activists and educating officials on the linkage between the climate and human rights.

In 2008–16 Finland implemented a separate equality project for the new international climate agreement together with Global Gender and Climate Alliance. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs was responsible for the project and around EUR 1.2 million was spent on it per year. Supporting the work of women negotiators in the Global South was at the heart of the project. Finland financed the women delegates' participation in the UN climate conferences and intersessional meetings, a total of eight to ten women per meeting. Over the years, approximately 300 women participated in the training financed by the project. The project also supported the networking of women negotiators.

After the conclusion of the project, an appointed Gender Focal Point from the Ministry of the Environment has monitored equality in international climate policy. However, the Gender Focal Point performs their task alongside their other work, which makes it more difficult to properly focus on it. In the 2010s, Finland has also funded the IUCN Climate Change Gender Action Plan, in which 21 countries participated (IUCN 2021).

According to interviews with office holders at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Finland is committed to promoting equality in foreign policy and as part of it in international climate policy. The interviewees also considered Finland to be one of the most ambitious countries to advocate for equality at an international level. For example, Finland was a very vocal advocate of incorporating equality in the Paris Agreement. However, the fact that the European Union is no longer united in equality-related issues due to push back from countries such as Poland and Hungary poses a major challenge.

Equality actors have criticised foreign policy discourse in general for being intertwined with the concept of a nation state. (Jauhola & Lyytikäinen 2020, 152.) This makes tackling global and complex phenomena such as climate change challenging, as national interests and borders between nation states interfere with addressing the issues through foreign policy.

Of the international equality-related agreements that Finland is obligated by, the gendered impacts of climate change are mentioned in recommendation 37 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which states that the rights of girls and women must be taken into consideration when adapting to climate change according to international obligations (see CEDAW 2018). Climate policy is also part of Finland's international advocacy work on the UN Agenda 2030. It is also reflected in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action which Finland reports on every five years. At the most concrete level, however, equality as part of Finland's international climate policy is highlighted specifically in the context of development cooperation.

## 5.1 EQUALITY AND CLIMATE POLICY IN FINLAND'S DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Finland's development policy is steered by UN's Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the Guideline for the Cross-Cutting Objectives in the Finnish Development Policy and Cooperation (Ulkoministeriö 2021). The four cross-cutting objectives listed by the Guideline are gender equality, non-discrimination, climate resilience and low emission development. The goal of the Guideline is to mainstream these themes in development policy and development cooperation and to target measures according to them. In order to monitor the realisation of this goal, the Guideline stipulates that data be disaggregated based on age, disability and gender. However, as the Guideline is still very new, these factors will not be monitored until upcoming projects.

The Report on Development Policy across Parliamentary Terms (Valtioneuvosto 2021) also highlights both climate work and the rights of girls and women as the main goals of development policy for which Finland allocates developmental funding and expert work. The Report recognises that gender-related perspectives are central to climate issues and that climate change increases inequality. The Report states that improving the rights and status of women and girls will be taken into consideration in all cooperation.

Due to a lack of funding, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs does not currently have bilateral climate projects. This is why Finland finances major climate funds, such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and Global Environment Facility (GEF). Both have guidelines regarding equality (GCF 2019, GEF 2017a, GEF 2017b). For example, the GCF requires any parties applying for funding to also submit an evaluation of the target region's equality situation and an assessment of which gender-related matters are relevant to the project and what kinds of influencing opportunities it offers to men and women. In addition, the GCF requests a gender participation plan at the beginning stages of project planning. As a member of boards and voting groups, Finland has strived to promote gender consideration in funds and projects. However, the opportunities for influencing are fewer than they would be in bilateral projects where the parties are able to set their own goals.

Interviews with office holders at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs showed that there is an increased will to work on issues of climate and equality, but limited resources make it difficult. Intersectionality is also a much-discussed topic within the Ministry and the members hope the Guideline for the Cross-Cutting Objectives in the Finnish Development Policy and Cooperation will encourage examination of the intersection between gender, age, and disability in particular. Improving the status and rights of people with disabilities is one of the focus areas of humanitarian aid. There has also been discussion around how the Ministry for Foreign Affairs could promote work around the theme of people with disabilities and the climate.

Development cooperation holds little political weight as a sector of Finnish foreign policy. Focusing on it also leads to equality being discussed primarily within the framework of adapting to global warming, leaving other sectors of foreign policy on the sidelines. For example, trade policy has significant equality and climate-related effects that are hardly ever discussed in this context.

## 5.2 INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE POLICY IN FINNISH WORK FOR EQUALITY

Climate policy is still a fairly new theme among Finnish women's rights and equality actors. Information on how equality-related goals should be promoted in foreign policy and international climate policy in particular is not readily available, and no organisation has an action programme concerning international climate policy.

The linkage between international climate policy and equality perspectives in the field of equality is most visible in the context of sustainable development. For example, the last section of Finland's report on Beijing+25 (NJKL 2019) discusses sustainable development and the climate. According to the report, the gendered effects of climate and energy policy should be evaluated and research data regarding gender should be generated as a basis for decision-making. Finland should also actively promote the inclusion of the gender perspective in the EU's climate policy and the UN's operations. (NJKL 2019.)

In spring of 2021, the government led by Sanna Marin launched an assessment of the gender impact of the Climate and Energy Strategy. If successful, the assessment could reveal important needs for data as well as proposals for action. It is too early to predict how the strategy and its assessment will impact how the perspective of equality is promoted in international climate policy, but it is a process worth keeping an eye on.

Combining international climate policy and the equality perspective is complicated by the fact that the Finnish understanding of equality and policies around it are traditionally focused around the economy, work, and ability to consume. The ideal is equal opportunities for well-being, which are defined through economic equality. Equality and well-being ought to also be monitored with indicators related to sustainable development and the carbon footprint, which would require changes to the indicators of the national economy and well-being (Moore 2014, Hickel 2019).

Systematic climate policy and initiatives related to international climate policy in particular are missing from the Finnish field of equality, much like Finland's international climate policy is missing a consistent equality policy. The main problems include a lack of information, scarce monitoring and reporting, poor climate knowledge, insufficient resources, and the difficulty of combining two comprehensive, cross-cutting themes.



THERE'S  
NO PLANET  
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## 6. EQUALITY IN THE INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE POLICIES OF OTHER COUNTRIES

**T**his chapter provides a brief overview of the international climate policies of three countries from the perspective of equality. The countries were selected on the basis of having an explicitly stated focus on equality in their international climate policy.

The focus is not necessarily reflected in the general state of equality in the country. Emphasising equality in international policy may be a way of raising a country's profile, even if its implementation on the home front is lacking. However, the examples may provide good practices or measures for Finland to emulate. It is also good to acknowledge issues that have been recognised in other countries in Finland as well.

### 6.1. SWEDEN

In 2015 Sweden decided its foreign policy would be feminist. In practice this means the country promotes equality in all international cooperation. This stance is also reflected in Sweden's international climate policy. (Naturvårdsverket 2019.)

However, equality does not become a focal point of international climate policy on its own. Sweden has paid attention to this in administrative cooperation and in civil society operations (Concord 2020). One concern that has been raised is that because climate and equality policy are considered intersecting themes, the discussions around these themes do not necessarily connect properly. (Naturvårdsverket 2019.)

Swedish reports highlight concrete measures that allow Sweden to mainstream equality and gender perspectives as part of its climate policy both at a national and interna-

tional level. However, the practical effects of these reports and proposed measures are unclear because their implementation has not yet been monitored and reported on.

Equality plays a central role in Sweden's foreign policy, which has promoted its incorporation into international climate policy as well. In addition, the Swedish government and foreign policy actors have committed to feminism as a central, cross-cutting principle. However, climate policy has been criticised for paying lip service to equality without taking sufficient concrete action (Concord 2020).

Sweden strives to promote equality as part of international climate policy through measures related to representation, the free speech of climate activists, a fair transition towards carbon neutrality and necessary changes to economic indicators. There is also a desire to consider the status of girls and women in areas where the living conditions are directly impacted by climate change as well as to acknowledge the gendered effects of conflicts caused by climate change (Concord 2020).

It is important to distinguish between two concepts. "Hot violence", such as direct and armed conflicts, poses a greater threat to boys and men. "Slow violence", such as droughts or the degradation of arable land brought on by the climate change, usually has a greater impact on the lives of girls and women (Concord 2020).

### 6.2 CANADA

Over the past few years, Canada has placed more emphasis on equality and feminism in its foreign policy. In 2017, Canada published the Feminist International Assistance Policy FIAP (Government of Canada 2020) and Canada's National Action Plan on Women, Peace



and Security (Government of Canada 2017a). Canada has also composed a Trade Diversification Strategy (Government of Canada 2021a), incorporated regulations related to gender equality into some of their fair-trade agreements (Government of Canada 2021b) and published a defense policy that takes certain feminist perspectives into account (Government of Canada 2017b). In addition to drawing up these documents, Canada appointed its first Ambassador for Women, Peace and Security in 2019 (Prime Minister of Canada 2019).

However, the alignments, goals and commitments of Canada's feminist foreign policy have not been compiled into one comprehensive strategy. The next steps of the feminist foreign policy are currently being planned, and Canada's first actual feminist foreign policy is expected to be published in 2021. Various organisations have called for perspectives of equality and climate to be even more prominently incorporated into the feminist foreign policy (Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group 2021).

Of the current strategies, the FIAP includes the climate crisis on its agenda most clearly. Examples of the FIAP's areas of focus include supporting gender equality, empowering girls and women and reducing poverty. One of the Assistance Policy's six action areas is environment and climate action, with a focus on both mitigation and adaptation. Examples of its goals include supporting women's participation in decision-making and their leadership in climate-related issues and ensuring that the government's climate change related planning, policy and financing takes the challenges facing girls and women into account. Canada also strives to support employment and business opportunities for women in the renewable energy sector.

However, the Assistance Policy has been criticised for, among other things, its approach and the language used. According to critics, the FIAP's outdated assumptions about gender roles and structures as well as its narrow application of feminism leave the policy on shaky ground (Cadesky 2020). The policy has also been criticised for insufficient application of an intersectional approach (Morton et al. 2020) and its goal of "empowering women" (Cadesky 2020). Women's empowerment in and of itself does not have much of an impact on the structures that cause discrimination and inequality (Cadesky 2020). Many have also noted that Canada should increase its international climate funding in order to promote the government and FIAP's goals around feminism and equality (Oxfam Canada 2021, Canadian Coalition on Climate Change and Development 2020, WEDO 2020a & Feminist Foreign Policy Working Group 2021).

### 6.3 MEXICO

In January 2020, Mexico became the first country in Latin America to publish a feminist foreign policy, which focuses on human rights in particular and includes a gender perspective on all sectors. In addition to improving the rights of women, the policy aims to promote the rights of

sexual and gender minorities as well as improve sexual and reproductive health and rights. The policy will be implemented over 2020–24 based on five basic principles (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores 2020, Thompson 2020, Delgado 2020):

1. promoting gender equality and a feminist agenda in all foreign policy operations
2. parity within the Foreign Ministry at all personnel levels
3. a Foreign Ministry free of violence that is safe for all
4. making equality and feminist policymaking as well as the work performed by women visible
5. practicing intersectional feminism: taking other overlapping social, financial, and environmental rights into account in addition to women's rights

Various measures have been defined for each of these principles, such as publishing the Manual of Foreign Policy Principles, supporting the HeForShe programme and holding workshops with key actors. The project is being coordinated by the Undersecretary for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights and monitored and evaluated by the office of the Director General of Human Rights and Democracy. (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores 2020)

With regard to challenges of security, Mexico's feminist foreign policy takes into account the fact that climate change impacts girls and women differently. Climate change may, in conjunction with its secondary effects such as forced migration, lead to an increased number of crimes targeted at women. (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores 2020) Girls and women are also more likely to die in natural disasters and are more likely to be forced to leave their home region due to environmental factors (Delgado 2020).

Even before publishing its feminist foreign policy, Mexico has been leading equality related efforts in the international community. For example, Mexico worked towards the Gender Action Plan, which was approved at the COP 25 climate negotiations in Madrid in 2019 (Women & Gender Constituency 2019). The country also strives to improve concrete action that takes the gender agenda into account as part of the Lima work programme. (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores 2020)

Criticism of Mexico's feminist foreign policy is not so much targeted at the foreign policy itself, but primarily at how it conflicts with the actual state of equality in Mexico. For example, violence towards women is very common, in part because Mexico is a very patriarchal country that punishes the perpetrators lightly. (Deslandes 2020) Additional criticism has been drawn by the fact that despite the good intentions at its core, the feminist foreign policy stands in contrast to the government's general policy, which is regarded as undermining the rights and well-being of girls and women (Philipsen 2020).



## 7. CONCLUSIONS

**THE CLIMATE IS AN EQUALITY ISSUE AND EQUALITY IS A CLIMATE ISSUE.** That is why the perspective of equality should be intertwined with climate work and the climate perspective, in turn, should be included in work for equality. This applies to but is not limited to foreign and international policy.

**INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE POLICY AND EQUALITY ARE LARGE AREAS AND COORDINATING THEM IS NOT ALWAYS SIMPLE.** International climate policy includes, for example, climate negotiations, international climate funding, climate diplomacy and the ripple effects of national climate policy. Equality in international climate policy can be approached through, for example, international agreements, representation, the climate movement, and conflicts. Coordinating two large areas requires an understanding of both as well as cooperation between different actors. At this moment, this kind of cooperation does not exist in practice in Finland, and no resources have been allocated to it.

**EQUALITY HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED PART OF INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE AGREEMENTS.** The first climate agreements did not yet directly recognise the importance of equality. The issue gained prominence in the early 2000s, and over the 2010s it has gradually become an important and established part of the scene. However, equality is still conceptualised rather narrowly in certain areas.

**IN FINLAND'S INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE POLICY, THE PERSPECTIVE OF EQUALITY HAS FOCUSED ON DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AND CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS.** Finland has, for example, financed the participation and education of women negotiators and strived to introduce equality into the EU's climate policy and the operations of international climate funds. However, it is not clear if Finland will be able to find allies in like-minded countries on a larger scale.

**THERE ARE GAPS IN THE KNOWLEDGE BASE.** There is still very little gender-aware research and most of it is conducted from the perspective of the Global South. International climate policy is therefore lacking in research data that could be used as a basis for proposals for concrete action and indicators (see, e.g. UNDP 2019b). More information is required on, for example, what kind of climate action could be effective in trade policy and what kind of gendered effects climate action can have.

**THE REFERENCE COUNTRIES FACE SIMILAR CHALLENGES.** Sweden, Canada and Mexico have all made equality part of their foreign policy, but they also have goals specifically for equality in climate policy. Despite this, the reference countries have not been particularly successful in applying this work in practice outside development cooperation, and the implementation of intersectionality has been poor.

**GENDERED STRUCTURES NEED MORE IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS.** Both climate activism and climate change denial are gendered. The anti-gender movement, which opposes equality, and actors that downplay the climate crisis are linked. Climate action impacts female and male dominated fields differently. Gendered structures have long been highlighted as part of development cooperation, but the analysis needs to be extended to international climate policy on a larger scale.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERSECTIONALITY IS GROWING, BUT SLOWLY AND FROM A LOW LEVEL.** International climate policy has begun to recognise that gender is not always the primary source of inequality. Intersectional perspectives are essential when trying to identify climate action with actual effects on inequality. For example, Finland's foreign policy emphasises the status of people with disabilities.



## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

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### 8.1 STRENGTHENING THE FOUNDATION

- **Carbon neutrality must be achieved.** Finland must achieve its goal of carbon neutrality by 2035 and steer other countries in the same direction also for equality-related reasons.
- **Make equality one of the central goals of international climate policy.** A fitting place for this goal would be Finland's Action Plan for Climate Smart Foreign Policy, which needs to be reinforced and developed further.
- **Collect data and set indicators for equality.** Data on equality needs to be systematically collected as part of international climate policy, and indicators must be set for tracking purposes.
- **Increase equality awareness in climate work.** Climate policy should be regularly assessed from an equality perspective, and education and communications should aim to close the attitude gap between genders.
- **Appoint a person responsible for equality in international climate policy.** One person in the Ministry needs to be able to focus full-time on equality in international climate and other environmental policy.
- **Expand the perspective on equality.** Additional work is required to more comprehensively link equality with the different areas of climate policy, engage men in work for equality, expand the binary view of gender and promote intersectionality.

### 8.2 INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE NEGOTIATIONS

- **Continue supporting women negotiators.** Finland should continue supporting the training, participation and networking of women negotiators in the Global South and direct funding to least developed countries, small island nations and women who belong to minorities
- **Build expertise in the long term.** Finland could provide long-term mentoring to women negotiators in the Global South through international initiatives (such as Climate Negotiators' Mentoring Initiative and Senior Women's Leadership Network) and by offering placements in Finnish ministries.
- **Support the UNFCCC secretariat.** Finland could provide funding for the work for equality carried out by the UNFCCC secretariat and appoint Finnish experts in the secretariat.
- **Promote equality in international cooperation.** Finland should bring together likeminded countries to promote equality in international climate policy, primarily within the current framework but also through a new initiative if necessary.

### 8.3 INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

- **Emphasise synergy in funding.** Investing in family planning and education for girls is beneficial from the perspectives of climate, development and equality alike.
- **Promote linking work for equality and climate work in the Global South.** Poor countries need expert help and financial support in order to include work for equality in climate reports and plans (see ECBI 2020a & b, CARE 2020, WEDO 2020b and UNDP 2019a) and climate equality plans (Climate Change Gender Action Plan, ccGAP – see IUCN 2021).
- **Provide funding to the international civil society.** Supporting organisations who work for equality in climate policy is valuable both at an international level (for example the Women's Environment and Development Organisation) as well as at a national level in the Global South.
- **Defend persecuted climate activists.** Finland could team up with human rights organisations to launch an international initiative to protect climate activists from persecution and harassment (see Tynkkynen et al. 2021) with an emphasis on girls, women and other marginalised groups.

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### Plan International

We promote the realisation of children's rights and equality across the world. We recognise the strengths in all children. However, poverty, violence, marginalisation and discrimination prevent children from thriving. Girls are most strongly impacted, which is why we focus on improving the lives of girls. We are an independent children's rights organisation. Together with children, young people, our supporters and our partners we strive to eliminate the root causes for the issues faced by girls and the most vulnerable children. We support the realisation of children's rights from birth to adulthood and give children a chance to prepare for crises and teach them ways to cope with them. We promote change in everyday practices as well as policy at the local, national and international levels by utilising our networks, experience and knowledge. We have been establishing working partnerships for over 80 years and operate in almost 80 countries.

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