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Does The International Climate Change Law Protect Vulnerable Women in Developing Countries?

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Women in developing countries are particularly vulnerable to climate change, which affects them more than men. Climate change exacerbates gender inequalities for women and threatens their well-being. Patriarchal norms limit their mobility and survival skills, making them more susceptible to disasters. Although women play a critical role in water management, they are largely excluded from decision-making. To recommend enhancements, this research employs a doctrinal legal method through an interdisciplinary lens, critically examining legal texts, academic literature, and practices. It draws on gender and development studies, medicine, and social development to evaluate how effectively International Law protects women from the impacts of climate change. Key sources include IPCC reports, UNFCCC, the Paris Agreement, subsequent Decisions, and climate finance mechanisms.

Women are often overlooked in climate science and law, leading to weak protection. UNFCCC Decisions promote equal participation but use vague language and lack concrete measures. With 102 countries still denying women land rights and only 0.2% of climate funding reaching them, access to loans remains limited due to the absence of collateral in land. Integrating CEDAW into the Paris Agreement and explicitly addressing 'women' could strengthen protections. An improvement could also be made by changing the term to 'women's right to equal participation and funding', or simply 'half women-half men'. The most meaningful improvements for women may be achieved at the grassroots level, as legal reforms often require time and strong political support.

Keywords: Evaluation, ICCL, improvements, vulnerable women in developing countries, 'women's right for equal participation and funding'**Introduction to Climate Change and Women in Developing Countries**

We are all affected by climate change, whether we want it or not. Mother Earth is angry about the abuse she has tolerated since the onset of significant economic growth and the 'money talks' policy. Climate change has, therefore, led to man-made degradation of both the natural and social environments over the past century (Thomas, 2023). It is estimated that between 2030 and 2050, climate change will result in approximately 250,000 additional deaths due to factors such as malaria (WHO, 2023). Excess heat also causes drought and threatens the food supply, and by 2050, climate change is predicted to threaten millions of people with famine and poverty (Swinnen et al, 2022).

For women in developing countries, climate change is detrimental, as it brings extreme weather events like floods and droughts, disproportionately impacting these women (Osman-Elasha, 2009). Climate change also worsens existing gender inequalities and threatens their livelihoods, health, and safety (UN Women, 2022). Women make up 80% of climate-induced displaced people, but can also be powerful agents of change (Halton, 2018; Pörtner et al., 2022). The link between gender

dynamics and water access is also complex. Despite bearing the brunt of water-related challenges, women are excluded from national policy processes and remain underrepresented in high-ranking positions in the water and irrigation ministry (Aslam, 2024). Yet, it is important to understand both rigid gender binaries and intersectional factors that highlight women's resilience, strength, and wisdom (Alston et al., 2025).

For the above reasons, this study explores the extent to which International Climate Change Law (ICCL) - specifically the UNFCCC (1992) and the Paris Agreement (PA) (UNFCCC, PA, 2015) - safeguards women in developing countries from the impacts of climate change. If current protections are found lacking, the research will suggest ways to strengthen them. As both agreements are legally binding and climate change increasingly exacerbates hardships faced by women - though not solely due to gender inequality - this issue is particularly crucial. Accordingly, the central research question is:

How does International Climate Law protect vulnerable women in developing countries, and how can it be improved if proven insufficient?

The current work raises concerns that the legally binding frameworks within the ICCL may inadequately protect women, with quotas for their participation in decision-making and equal funding provisions also lacking. While some ICCL-related bodies - such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change - have established quotas for developing country representation (IPCC, 2018), comparable mechanisms to ensure women's inclusion are notably absent. In particular, there are no defined targets for achieving 50% female representation within a set timeframe.

These alleged gaps shape the foundation of this study, which focuses on how legal language or UN mechanisms can be used to drive progress. Thus, the third chapter answers how climate change affects women, especially on a grassroots level and what vulnerability means for women in developing countries. The fourth chapter will examine how International Climate Change Law addresses women's specific situation. Finally, the fifth chapter will conclude the shortcomings and suggest modifications. Before proposing recommendations, the research will assess these potential weaknesses:

- Use of binding terms like “shall” vs. less binding terms with “should.”
- Presence of enforceable quotas for women's participation and funding.

Interdisciplinary Materials with Doctrinal Legal Method

This study employs a doctrinal approach, critically analyzing legal texts and academic literature through a qualitative lens. It draws on interdisciplinary fields such as gender and development studies and medicine to provide a broader perspective on women's grassroots-level challenges, recognizing that no single International Law can fully address women's issues. Recent scholars have increasingly adopted comparative and theoretical approaches to strengthen reform proposals (Hutchinson, 2015), which is also the goal of this research.

Utilizing doctrinal legal research, this study critically analyzes legal texts and academic scholarship, focusing primarily on the International Climate Change Law (ICCL) as binding hard law. It will also consider the relevant Conference of the Parties (COP) Decisions (UN Climate Change), along with climate finance mechanisms. Additionally, the IPCC's scientific findings are essential for highlighting the specific challenges faced by women (IPCC). The key legal instruments are the Paris Agreement (PA) and its foundational text, the UNFCCC (United Nations General Assembly, UNGA, 1992).

Women and Developing Nations Absent from the IPCC and Hesitant to Participate

The vulnerabilities in question, along with the potential gaps identified in the legal documents discussed in Chapter *International Climate Change Law for Women's Protection*, form the basis for the recommendations. These recommendations aim to address structural shortcomings and enhance the capacity of the legal framework to ensure more

inclusive and effective protection for women in developing countries.

First and foremost, women and developing countries remain underrepresented in the IPCC, which has struggled to engage developing nations in establishing effective mitigation strategies (Meyer, 2016). This research finds that the underrepresentation further marginalizes women, whose unique perspectives are often overlooked, and identifies such exclusion as a key macro-level shortcoming. The institutional separation between the IPCC and the UNFCCC hampers coordinated climate action. Integrating the IPCC into the UNFCCC's legal framework could enhance both participation and mitigation efforts, as the current structure discourages meaningful involvement from developing nations (Meyer, 2016).

Absence of Female Quotas for Equal Participation at the IPCC

The term 'gender' appears frequently in climate change documents, including the IPCC's Gender Policy and Implementation Plan, which mentions gender 93 times and women 3 times. Point 3.2.3 recommends gender quotas for women and encourages IPCC Contracting Parties to nominate more women for key positions (IPCC, 2020). While this is positive, this research finds that using 'gender' generically may overlook the specific needs of women, as it encompasses all 3 genders.

Undefined and Misunderstood Terms Deter Funding for Women

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 - Gender Equality - underscores the critical need to promote gender equality and empower all women and girls (UN Women, 2022). Despite ongoing efforts, progress remains painfully slow. At the current pace, it could take circa 286 years to reform legal frameworks necessary to secure gender equality in public life (Pörtner et al., 2022; UN Women, 2022). Importantly, this research finds that clear definitions for gender equality (and maybe for women's empowerment, although being so vague) are essential for women, as the absence of gender equity can exclude women from climate grants due to patriarchal structures (Pörtner et al., 2022).

Achieving gender equality is essential for building a climate-resilient future (ScienceDaily, 2025). The lack of understanding of gender sensitivity in climate funding leads to women being overlooked because *sub-national implementers don't grasp gender equality* [sic!]. This research finds that defining and cementing these terms is crucial, as unclear or contradictory interpretations hinder women's access to climate funding. Implementers in developing countries often fail to recognize the importance of gender equality (Atmadja et al., 2020).

Women from Developing Countries Underrepresented in Science and Policy

Women comprise less than 30% of global researchers, and their participation in science and policymaking remains limited. Consequently, fields such as gender studies, feminist

epistemology, and the ethics of care - core areas within the social and human sciences - are predominantly advanced by women scholars (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, 2025; 2019; St. Lera Clair, 2011). However, women's involvement in public participation and policymaking plays a crucial role in advancing the rights and well-being of all people (Konte, 2020). This research finds that women's absence is a key issue, as without participation, women are less invested in climate action.

Vulnerability due to Systematic Societal Inequalities and Female Physiology

Women face systemic disparities rooted both in their biological roles and in societal structures historically designed by and for men. Realities such as pregnancy, menstruation, and the disproportionate burden of childcare contribute to persistent gender disparities, limiting women's opportunities and access to equality (Nussbaum, 2000). Furthermore, the law can rule that a woman cannot have a bank account in her own name, and even driving a car can be prohibited. Women are further prohibited from having paid work outside the home in the Middle East, South Asia, and Latin America (Momsen, 2019).

Women often have fewer fundamental rights due to gender roles (Castañeda Camey et al., 2020). Women lack land rights, even though the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) stipulates equal land rights under Article 14(g), promoting "equal treatment in land and agrarian reform" (CEDAW, 1979). Gender roles, influenced by deep-rooted societal beliefs and religion, impact women negatively. However, women's empowerment may require individual change too, when influenced by social norms and institutions (Konte & Tirivayi, 2020).

Gender norms often restrict mobility and limit access to vital survival skills, like swimming in floods. These inequalities intensify the effects of the climate crisis, with poor women and girls bearing the greatest burden (Crowley, 2011; Thomas, 2023). Accordingly, women are less likely to survive climate change. Furthermore, of the 1.3 billion people living in poverty, up to 70 % are women (UN Women, 2025; Osman-Elasha, 2009). In displacement contexts, for example, gender inequality - compounded by biological and social vulnerabilities - often increases women's risk of exploitation, with human trafficking (Pörtner et al., 2022).

Vulnerability Due to Patriarchal Norms

Climate shocks increase violence against women, with gender roles contributing to gender-based violence. While performing domestic tasks like fetching water and collecting firewood, women are vulnerable to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (Castañeda Camey et al., 2020; Pörtner et al., 2022). Also, climate change-induced malnutrition mainly affects children and pregnant women, with women often receiving the least food, compromising their health (Pörtner et al., 2022; Thomas, 2023). Women also face greater challenges accessing water, as gender roles and patriarchal norms hinder their ability to manage it. In many developing countries, women's

responsibility for fetching water takes time away from earning money or pursuing education (Pörtner et al., 2022; Castañeda Camey et al., 2020; UN Women Watch).

Lack of education increases women's vulnerability to climate change, as illiteracy limits their access to technology in vulnerable communities, hindering mitigation efforts, even though improving education helps women adapt to climate change risks (Daffé & al., 2020; Pörtner et al., 2022). Importantly, educating females benefits the whole family (Emman Kwegyir Aggrey, cited in Jacobs, 1996).

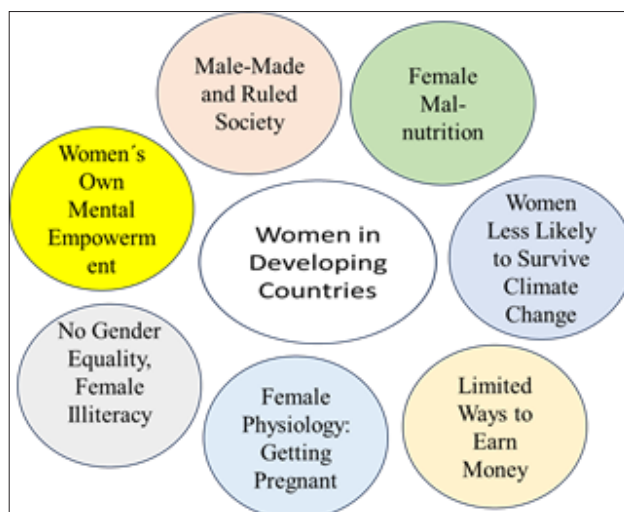


Figure 1: Causes of Vulnerability for Women in Developing Countries

International Climate Change Law for Women's Protection

While this chapter focuses on the ICCL as binding law and 'shall' provisions, this research finds that gender quotas - both for participation and funding - are essential to ensuring women receive equal financial support for climate action and equitable representation in the ICCL and IPCC. The research defines the Paris Agreement (PA) and its predecessor, the UNFCCC, as comprising the ICCL. The UNFCCC was functionalized in 1994, and the PA was adopted in 2015 (Verschuuren, 2022; UNFCCC, 1992, 2015).

The Conference of the Parties (COP) of the UNFCCC and PA is the highest decision-making body, which adopts legal instruments and climate measures. For example, the COP-29 was held in Baku in 2024 (UN Climate Change; UNFCCC, 2024). The Decisions are implemented through various Funds (UN Climate Change). Notably, the PA incorporates human rights and the concept of 'climate justice' into ICCL, while the UNGA's recognition of the right to a healthy environment opens pathways for future climate litigation against big emitters (Sands et al., 2018; Setzer & Benjamin, 2019).

UNFCCC on Women, Adaptation, and Mitigation

Importantly, the UNFCCC does not refer to women, gender, empowerment, or quotas in its Articles or Preamble (UNFCCC, 1992). Although adaptation and mitigation were both core goals, adaptation was long neglected until the IPCC

highlighted its importance in 2007. This earlier reluctance stemmed from fears it would undermine mitigation efforts (Verschuuren, 2022). Early discussions emphasized financing adaptation in developing countries, leading to the creation of Funds that still exist today, such as the Adaptation Fund (AF, established by Decision 10/CP.7), Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF, established by Decision 7/CP.7), Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF, established also by Decision 7/CP.7), and Green Climate Fund (GCF, established by Decision 1/CP.16) (Verschuuren, 2022).

UNFCCC and its Beneficial COP Decisions Aiming at Equal Participation

While the UNFCCC Preamble and Articles do not mention women, gender, empowerment, or any definitions, COP Decisions address these issues positively (UNFCCC, 1992, 2001, 2012, 2019, 2022). The oldest, Decision 36/CP.7 - although in weaker language - aims beneficially to improve women's participation and representation, encouraging Parties to take measures on women's decision-making power (UNFCCC, 2001).

Decision 23/CP.18, adopted in 2012, aimed to promote gender balance and increase women's participation in UNFCCC negotiations. It acknowledges ongoing underrepresentation despite efforts and emphasizes women specifically - rather than the broader concept of gender (UNFCCC, 2012). It stresses the importance of balanced female representation from both developed and developing countries. The Decision also references CEDAW, women's empowerment, and leadership, wanting to take action for gender balance (UNFCCC, 2012).

The positive intent continued in Decision 3/CP.25, which noted the persistent lack of progress in increasing women's participation (UNFCCC, 2019). However, this research finds it problematic that key terms - such as gender and empowerment - remain undefined. The Gender Action Plan (GAP) outlines five priority areas, including women's empowerment, but lacks concrete measures like definitions and gender quotas (UNFCCC, 2019). Similarly, Decision 24/CP.27 also refers to empowerment without providing a definition, but positively to women, not just gender (UNFCCC, 2022).

Paris Agreement on Women, Adaptation, and Mitigation

The Paris Agreement, abbreviated as PA, was established by Decision 1/CP.21 at COP-21 in 2015 (UNFCCC, 2015). It references gender equality, gender responsiveness, and women's empowerment in its Preamble and Articles 7(5) and 11(2). However, like the 1992 UNFCCC, it leaves these terms undefined and employs weak 'should' language (UNFCCC, 1992, 2015). The Preamble links human rights and climate change, referencing women's rights as outlined in CEDAW:

"[A]cknowledging that climate change is a common concern of humankind, Parties *should*, when taking action to address climate change, [...] consider their obligations on *human rights*, [...] as well as *gender equality, empowerment of women* [...]" (added enhancement in italics) (UNFCCC, 2015).

The PA mentions women only once in the 16-page document, while Article 4(4) urges developing countries to enhance their mitigation (UNFCCC, 2015). Including women as key stakeholders can improve the effectiveness of climate policy. Gender-responsive mitigation can engage communities and benefit women and their families (Mitchell, 2017). Concerning adaptation, Article 7(5) requires it to be gender-responsive and inclusive of vulnerable groups (UNFCCC, 2015), presumably including women in developing countries. It also emphasizes using the best available science and, where appropriate, traditional knowledge, such as that of Indigenous peoples (UNFCCC, 2015). Adaptation can also be integrated into environmental policies and range from equal participation in decision-making (macro level) to practical skills like swimming (micro level) (Mitchell, 2017). However, current climate change adaptations do not automatically improve gender equality. Structural inequalities, such as those based on geography, caste, ethnicity, and gendered social norms, exacerbate outcomes for the most vulnerable (Roy et al., 2025).

Paris Agreement and Its Less Beneficial COP Decisions on Women

COP-29 Decisions continue to reference gender equality and women's empowerment without defining the terms, using weak language like 'Parties should', and lacking firm commitments to improving women's position. However, without gender quotas, women's representation remains limited (UNFCCC, 2024). The previous SBI report echoes this research's chapter, Vulnerabilities, noting how discriminatory laws and gender norms often block women from land ownership, restricting access to climate loans without collateral. Globally, 102 countries deny women land rights, and only 23% of women own land. Equal leadership requires legal reforms to build women's climate resilience (UNFCCC, 2022). Importantly, the insufficient progress in women's representation continues (UNFCCC, SBI, 2024/25).

Funding Women-Focused Climate Action

Climate finance has long been a contentious issue in policy and international negotiations, as climate action now exists in its third decade (Driesen & Carlarne, 2022). Under PA Article 9(1), wealthy nations are financially obliged to support developing countries. Substantial financial growth is essential to achieve the PA's adaptation and mitigation targets (Thompson, 2016; Reins & Verschuuren, 2022). The funding gap deepens inequalities for women in developing countries, as 90% of climate philanthropy goes to white-led groups, 80% to male-led NGOs, and only 0.2% supports women and the environment (Selibas, 2022). Yet, well-designed gender-sensitive climate policies can advance multiple sustainable development goals and offer cost-effective development solutions (Chitiga-Mabugu et al., 2023).

A report on Indonesian climate funding estimates global needs as high as USD 1.371 billion. Climate finance can impact gender equity and poverty, so women must be prioritized in aid allocation to ensure finance empowers rather than hinders them (Atmadja et al., 2020). The goal is to focus on financing long-term, gender-transformative change. Yet, integrating

gender into climate funding projects is complicated (Atmadja et al., 2020), identifying the roadblocks:

“[i]ntegrating gender equality concepts and practices into climate finance projects remains a complex and ongoing challenge, requiring adequately tailored approaches and financial and technical resources for each project and its context.” (Daniel, 2021).

Various UNFCCC Funds and Their Limited Focus on Women

The UNFCCC created Funds through legally binding Decisions made at COP sessions. Although the Paris Agreement contains relatively few binding provisions specific to women, targeted funding is still available through UNFCCC mechanisms, albeit on a limited scale (Selibas, 2022). The Funds established before the PA, namely the Adaptation Fund (AF), Green Climate Fund (GCF), Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), and Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) are still operational (UNFCCC, 2001, 2010). The most recent Fund, that is the Fund for Responding Loss and Damage (FRLD), became functional in 2024 (FRLD, 2023, operationalized by Decision 1/CP.28).

This research finds that while obligations concerning women remain non-binding (UNFCCC, 1992, 2015), climate funds can still prioritize women - suggesting that grassroots initiatives can progress without legal mandates. Thus, moving beyond the idea that only UNFCCC Funds drive climate action may be useful; for instance, as Daughters for Earth supports 43 women-led climate solutions (One Earth, 2024).

Adaptation Fund with Female Orientation but Lacking Quotas

The AF, aimed at climate resilience in developing countries, references women but lacks gender quotas - only 3 of 16 Board members are women (UNFCCC, 2001; AF). Though it recognizes the need for gender guidance (AF, Annex 4, 2021), the term ‘gender’ remains vague; women should be named explicitly, with e.g. concrete quotas. A promising move is its definition of women’s empowerment, highlighting control over their lives and deliberate choices through active participation and decision-making (AF, Annex 4, 2021).

Green Climate Fund with Lacking Female Orientation and Quotas

The GCF, created to address UNFCCC gaps, is the largest public climate Fund focusing on mitigation and adaptation with a country-led approach (Driesen & Carlarne, 2022). While it ensures balanced representation of developed and developing countries, it lacks women’s quotas on its 24-member Board. Its Governing Instrument mentions gender but without quotas, targets, or data, which may mask the reality of the situation (GCF, 2011; UNFCCC, 2010).

GEF Managing LDCF and SCCF with Female Orientation but Lacking Quotas

The LDCF and SCCF, created under Decision 7/CP.7 and managed by the GEF, finance climate action in vulnerable

countries (UNFCCC, 2001). They lack explicit references to gender, women, or equality. The GEF Council, which governs the organization, includes nearly equal representation of women, despite the absence of formal gender quotas (GEF). Decision 4/CP.29 also urges GEF to ensure funds are implemented with its Gender Equality Policy, promoting equal opportunities for women and men (UNFCCC, 2024).

FRLD with Female Orientation but Lacking Quotas

The Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD) was established by Decisions 2/CP.27 and 2/CMA.4. It addresses climate impacts beyond mitigation and adaptation, like floods and droughts (UNFCCC, 2023). It mentions women and gender equality but lacks quotas (UNFCCC, 2023; UNFCCC, UNEP). Accordingly, its 26-member Board includes 14 developing countries, with a minority of women (UNFCCC, 2023; FRLD).

Concluded Shortcomings and Vital Recommendations

This research shows that women remain underused as a resource but hold great potential for societal benefit. Progress starts by addressing their vulnerability in clear terms and quotas. Without specific language and targets, female goals risk being overlooked globally and locally. Thus, the UN plays a vital role in shaping language, which can drive real change for women in climate policy. While many studies highlight women’s vulnerability to climate change, current climate policies offer little support in developing countries. As leadership and priorities shift at UNFCCC processes, so does climate language, seen in the differing references to women in UNFCCC Decisions and the PA (UNFCCC, 1992, 2015).

Listed Shortcomings for Women in Developing Countries

Importantly, the UN estimates that gender equality may take 286 years in these patriarchal contexts (UN Women, 2022). This is unfortunate, as women are both highly vulnerable to climate change and vital agents of change, especially in developing countries (Castañeda Camey et al., 2020; Pörtner et al., 2022). Although laws like CEDAW require gender equality and land rights for women (CEDAW, 1979), this is often overlooked under climate policy. As a result, female equality is not a clear priority for UNFCCC parties or ICCL. Key macro-level gaps begin with the most critical: missing quotas for participation and funding (see Figure 1).

1. Women lack quotas for equal participation and funding (UNFCCC, 1992 - 2025; Meyer, 2016; Selibas, 2022), or the use of a term like ‘half women-half men’
 - Only 0.2% of funding goes to women (Selibas, 2022).
 - ICCL bodies lack female quotas (UNFCCC generally; IPCC, 2020)
2. Women’s low participation in the ICCL and IPCC (UN & UNESCO, 2019).
3. Vague wording, unclear ‘gender equality’, and rare mention of women (e.g. Atmadja, 2020)
4. Women lack human and land rights (Castañeda Camey et al., 2020).
 - Women’s absent land rights restrict access to climate loans (UNFCCC, 2021).

- Women have fewer rights in patriarchal developing nations (e.g. UNFCCC, 2021).



Figure 2: Main large-scale barriers for women worldwide

Other gaps include using the term 'women's empowerment' and gender equality, as they are often ineffective. This research proposes replacing them with 'half women-half men' to stress female equality. Accordingly, women are addressed with non-committal 'should' language, or women's provisions are frankly absent (UNFCCC Articles, 1992; PA, 2015). The lack of Fund's Decisions or the implementation of UNFCCC Decisions for women is also absent (UNFCCC, e.g. 2001, 2010, 2012, 2019, 2023).

Main Recommendation: 'Women's Right to Equal Participation and Funding'

Figure 3 outlines five key legal recommendations. Clear and cemented definitions of gender equality and women's human rights are needed, while the vague term 'women's empowerment' should be removed. Enforcing UNFCCC Decisions (2001, 2012, 2019) would also help establish gender quotas and equal representation (half women-half men). Integrating CEDAW with the ICCL would additionally secure women's land rights (CEDAW, 1979). Replacing 'should' with 'shall' in ICCL language would further strengthen women's position. Lastly, so-called 'gender-equal' funding is insufficient, as it fails to address women directly.

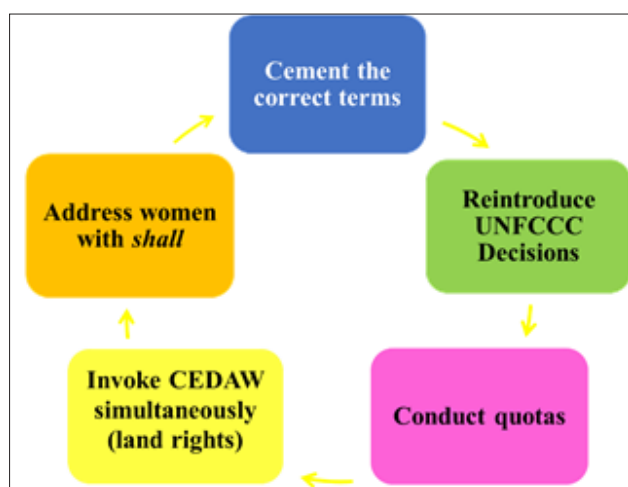


Figure 3: Five legal recommendations for women

Yet, the key recommendation is to adopt more explicit and measurable terminology in climate discourse, such as 'women's right to equal participation and funding' or simply 'half women-half men'. These terms would replace vague or inconsistently applied language like 'women's empowerment' and 'gender-equal funding', promoting clarity, accountability, and true parity. Consistent use of such terms would help close gaps in definitions, representation, and resource allocation.

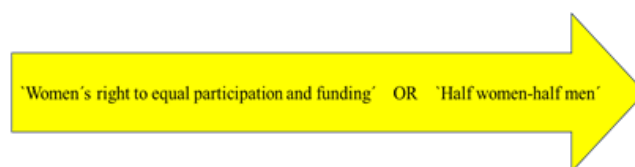


Figure 4: The terms that could bypass all 5 legal suggestions in Figure 3

Although no climate Funds are specifically earmarked for women, they are not explicitly excluded either (UNFCCC, 2001, 2010, 2023). Funding grassroots level climate action might be one of the best ways the existing Funds can assist women. Introducing more targeted support for women could be achieved without requiring legal reform. Broadening the scope beyond UNFCCC mechanisms may be a strategic move, as it could unlock alternative funding streams without the bureaucratic constraints associated with UNFCCC channels (see One Earth). Given estimates that achieving global gender equality may take up to 286 years (UN Women), focusing on women within climate change could offer a more immediate opportunity. This approach could effectively sidestep rigid International Climate Change Law frameworks by emphasizing women-centred climate action.

Final Conclusion

This study finds that the binding provisions within the framework of International Climate Change Law fall short in safeguarding the rights and interests of women in developing countries. Notably, there is a lack of enforceable quotas ensuring equal participation in decision-making processes and equitable access to climate finance. The frequent reliance on non-binding language, such as using 'should', further weakens state obligations and undermines accountability (UNFCCC). Reframing such provisions in terms of 'women's right to equal participation and funding' could serve as a normative shift to improve gender outcomes. In the absence of such legal reforms, alternative mechanisms must be explored.

The marginalization of women in this context reflects a broader pattern at the intersection of gender and climate change. Despite progressive commitments articulated in various UNFCCC Decisions, women remain significantly underfunded - receiving only 0.2% of global climate finance, and underrepresented in both ICCL-related and scientific bodies. While gender quotas are encouraged by institutions such as the IPCC and the UNFCCC, they remain non-binding and unenforced, limiting their effectiveness. Nevertheless, grassroots funding channels for women, established even without specific legal mandates, demonstrate that progress is possible within the current legal architecture.

To foster meaningful change, grants - rather than loans - should be prioritized for women-led initiatives. However, given the scale and complexity of the challenges, a phased, pragmatic approach may be more viable than attempting to address all structural issues simultaneously. Incremental yet targeted improvements may offer the most immediate and tangible benefits for women in developing countries.

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