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“Gender issues, for us countries from the South, is not a ‘fashion’ or being politically correct. For us - women and men from the south - closing the gender gaps, being gender-responsive, is a matter of life and death.” This was the statement given by Lorena Aguilar, a negotiator from Costa Rica, after the [Gender Action Plan](#) was finalized at COP23.

Women are disproportionately impacted by the negative impacts of climate change. Drought, flooding, and other disasters, all of which will become more frequent and extreme because of climate change, can [impact women differently than men](#). Women may not be notified of warning signals or evacuation warnings for floods or storms, they may not know how to swim, they might need to save their children before themselves, they may not have their own money to recover from losing everything, they may be subject to violence in times of chaos. Women are often tasked with getting water for their households, therefore spending more time and calories on water procurement than men. In times of drought, they may have to go even farther to get water, and they may be malnourished or dehydrated. Further, [women produce more than half of the world’s food](#), however they often do not have land rights, access to technology, or the economic means of their male counterparts. For these reasons and more, it is crucial that policies are crafted in a way which properly responds to the needs of women who are carrying the burden of climate change.

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) created a [Gender Action Plan](#), or GAP, at the 23rd Conference of the Parties (COP23) in November 2017 in Bonn, Germany. The GAP is the product of a long-time push for taking action toward gender-responsive climate policy. In 2001, at COP7 in Marrakech, the countries endorsed the idea of increasing participation from women in the negotiation processes ([36/CP.7](#)). [Negotiators have always been predominantly men](#), with women usually representing one quarter to one third of the negotiators. In Doha at COP18, in 2012 the parties wrote a [decision](#) titled “*Promoting gender balance and improving the participation of women in the UNFCCC negotiations and in the representation of Parties in bodies established pursuant to the Convention or the Kyoto protocol.*” At COP20 in Lima, they created the two-year Lima work program on gender (LWPG) ([18/CP.20](#)).

The [Paris Agreement](#), the product of COP21, is the first agreement to acknowledge the specific needs of women and the need for gender equality. In the preamble of the agreement, it reads that the parties acknowledge a need to address “gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity,” (PA, Pg. 2). At COP22 in Marrakech, the LWPG ended and the Parties wrote a [decision](#) (21/CP.22) which continued the LWPG and called for the creation of a GAP. At the meeting of the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) in May of 2017, they held a [workshop](#) to lay the foundation of the GAP. This brings us to COP23 in Bonn.

The Parties did write and pass the promised [GAP](#). This decision is important in that it aims to involve more women in the UNFCCC decision-making processes and to address how women are more vulnerable to climate change. The GAP has five priority areas:

1. capacity-building, knowledge sharing and communication
2. gender balance, participation and women's leadership
3. coherence within the UNFCCC and other UN agencies
4. gender-responsive implementation and means of implementation
5. monitoring and reporting

This decision promises to empower women to have leadership positions in the UNFCCC as negotiators and in their local communities. Workshops will be held to improve how gender-responsive policies are, and promotion of traveling funds promises to enable women from particularly poor and vulnerable locations to attend COP. The GAP attempts to make concerted efforts to empower and engage grassroots, indigenous, agricultural, poor, and other particularly vulnerable women, such as women from small island states, through provision of education and training programs. It also calls for sex-disaggregated data so that policy-makers understand how women are impacted in specific ways. It will require decision-makers to include gender in how policy is written and it will ask nations to report on the gender makeup of their negotiating teams.

The GAP provides two deadlines in order to ensure that Parties are acting according to the GAP's policies. By COP24, in 2018, the secretariat will have prepared a synthesis report for the SBI regarding how to implement the GAP. In 2019, the parties shall review the implementation of the GAP. For now, it is difficult to say how successful this policy is or will be and much will rest on implementation. Nevertheless, this is certainly an exciting step in the direction of making gender-responsive climate policies the norm.