

Press Release

23 February 2010

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WOMEN CONSTITUTE 80 PER CENT OF CLIMATE-CHANGE REFUGEES: UP TO 20 MILLION¹

Copenhagen negotiators 'gender-blind'

A staggering 20 million of the 26 million people currently estimated to be displaced by climate change are female, according to an extensive report launched by the Women's Environmental Network (WEN) on **2 March** at the **House of Commons**.

The report, ***Gender and the Climate Change Agenda***, finds that because of ongoing gender inequality, different social roles, and simple biology, women are far more likely to die in natural disasters than men, suffer from increased workload, and be subject to abuse, including sexual violence, in resource conflicts exacerbated by climate change. The report also includes data gathered at the 2009 Copenhagen Conference highlighting the lack of a gender dimension even in the most recent international climate-change negotiations.

"Women are already disproportionately affected by climate change in many parts of the world," said Bernadette Vallely, founder and chair of WEN. "If no action is taken, climate change will exacerbate gender inequality, making it far less likely that the Millennium Development Goals will be met. The core value missing from Copenhagen was the failure to prioritise the most poor and vulnerable, statistically mainly women."

In the UK, 19 per cent more women than men live in poverty, making them especially vulnerable to rising food prices and projected increases in climate change-related health problems. In addition, women contribute less to climate change than men, and have been identified as particularly adaptive and innovative in developing countries hit by climate change, the report finds.

For this reason, correcting Copenhagen's mistakes creates a powerful opportunity, Vallely said. "By giving women a greater voice in climate-change decision-making, and taking strong action on gender equality, not only could disastrous climate change be avoided but progress made towards a more equitable society."

The report ***Gender and the Climate Change Agenda*** will be launched on:

Date: 2 March 2010

Time: 6 - 8 pm

Venue: Grand Committee Room of the House of Commons

RSVP: Kate Metcalf, WEN's Climate Change Project Coordinator
on 020 7481 9004 or at climatechange@wen.org.uk.

Panel discussion chaired by Sandra Gidley MP. Confirmed speakers include Nicky Gavron (former Deputy Mayor of London), Natalie Bennett (Green Party spokesperson on women), Eugenie Harvey (Director, 10:10 Campaign), Maria Adebawale (Director, Capacity Global), Bernadette Vallely (WEN chair), Tamsin Omond (Climate Rush), and Peter Ainsworth MP.

WEN is calling on the UK Government to take into account the gendered impacts of climate change; reduce the disproportionate number of women living in poverty; and improve the representation of women in political and business spheres.

Additional Information

WEN is a national charity that works to achieve environmental justice through feminist principles. For more information, visit www.wen.org.uk

Global Humanitarian Forum estimates that 26 million of the 350 million currently displaced worldwide have been forced to move due to climate change.¹ It has been estimated that women constitute up to 80% of global refugee and displaced populations, and typically in emergencies, 70-80% of those needing assistance are women and children.² Based on these figures, it can be calculated that up to 20 million climate refugees are women.

[1] Global Humanitarian Forum (2009) *Human Impact Report. Anatomy of a silent crisis*. Geneva: Global Humanitarian Forum

[2] Aguilar, L. (2004) *Climate change and disaster mitigation. Gender makes the difference*. Gland: IUCN
