



On April 28, 2022, the consultative meeting on "Climate change with a focus on gender and water management in Central Asia" was held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The event, jointly organised by UN Women and the Tajik government's Committee for Women's and Family Affairs, was part of an initiative by UN Women's Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia to foster the exchange of knowledge, innovations and best practices to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in Central Asia. Its main objective was to highlight women's vulnerability to climate change, and to propose solutions to ensuring their access to resources and reappropriation of them.

All of the five states within Central Asia are under authoritarian regimes: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan. These republics face various pressures and conflicts around sharing and using natural resources – in particular water, which is essential for agriculture. This sector is already affected by climate change, disrupting agricultural cycles and the availability of water resources. Forecasts indicate a drastic deterioration of the situation in the years to come. Women – who play a key role in water and food security – are particularly affected by these disruptions. Male migration, resulting from the lack of security and unemployment, leaves women in rural areas isolated and marginalised when facing the challenges of climate change. Additionally, they face pressures inherited from the Soviet system; patriarchal tradition and authoritarianism, which limit their capacity for adaptation and resilience. Although some states claim to guarantee equal rights, their oppressive system perpetuates the exclusion of women from decision-making in politics, economics and resource management. Despite representing up to 80% of the agricultural workforce, women have limited land ownership. Yet, they possess a wide range of knowledge and skills needed to mitigate the consequences of climate change, improve living conditions and participate in conflict resolution in a context of growing tensions.

This report highlights the role of women as key actors in sustainable development within Central Asian societies despite the multiple discriminations they face. It emphasises the responsibility of states in protecting and respecting women's rights, empowering them, valuing their role, and establishing training and networking opportunities. The different scenarios studied, which focus on the role of civil society, the integration of a gender perspective into climate policies and sustainable development goals, aim to formulate recommendations for governments and international organisations to support the actions of feminist, environmental, and human rights organisations in the region. These actions are essential for adapting to ongoing and future climate change.

The recommendations revolve around six lines of intervention:

1. Protect women's rights and ensure their autonomy.
2. Combat climate change by incorporating a gender perspective.
3. Foster regional dialogue to promote cooperation among all stakeholders.
4. Include women in decision-making spaces.
5. Raise awareness and educate on feminist and climate issues.
6. Strengthen the role of civil society.



Protect women's rights and ensure their autonomy

- Establish a rights-respecting legal framework aimed at preventing gender-based violence and punishing it with effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties, as well as offering protection to survivors of violence.
- Criminalise all forms of gender-based violence, including domestic violence, rape, marital rape, female genital mutilation and sexual harassment in schools, public spaces and online.
- Put in place protection and assistance measures for victims of domestic violence.
- Eliminate legal exceptions, such as judicial and parental consent, authorising the marriage of girls, as well as providing for sanctions for all forms of violence against women. ● Eliminate legal exceptions, such as judicial and parental consent, authorising the marriage of girls, and provide for penalties for all those who encourage the marriage of minors and forced marriage through abduction. by abduction.
- Establish specific policies and ministerial bodies for women, separate from those dedicated to the family, in order to take into account the specific needs and issues of women as a distinct group.
- Ensure that statutory rights take precedence over customary laws, so as to uphold legal commitments to equality for women and girls.
- Abolish customary and/or traditional laws encouraging conciliation and mediation at all stages of the legal divorce process, as well as those that regard it as socially undesirable.
- Guarantee the independence of the judiciary and ensure the enforcement of measures to protect women through dedicated equality commissions.
- Consider sexual and reproductive health services to be essential and accessible to all, including abortion.

Combat climate change by incorporating a gender perspective

- Supporting and working with women's networks and civil society organisations on climate, water and food security. By promoting a gender and climate perspective, these collaborations would enable the development of solutions and initiatives essential to achieving the sustainable development goals in the region.
- Institutionalise women's participation in decision-making processes, putting an end to gender roles and gender stereotypes linked to women's activities.
- Implement parity quotas so that women participate in decision-making bodies in a sustainable and consistent manner.
- Raise awareness, through campaigns aimed at the general public, of the essential role played by women in political and decision-making bodies and in the economy.



Foster regional dialogue to promote cooperation among all stakeholders

- Eliminate discriminatory laws and remaining legal loopholes regarding women's rights at work.
- Guarantee women's land rights in order to combat discriminatory traditions and practices of patrilineal inheritance and unequal division of land.
- Raise awareness among community leaders of the importance of women's role in the management of natural resources in order to strengthen the impact of actions adopted by governments in this area.
- Encourage the management of agricultural property by women by providing them with the legal support and training they need to perform this role.
- Recognise the workload resulting from the feminisation of agriculture and pay women commensurate with their work.
- Integrate feminist and climate issues into the institutional framework by setting up awareness-raising campaigns on gender equality in line with the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW and the Paris agreements.
- Include state committees on gender equality in climate decision-making.
- Encourage equal sharing of domestic and caring responsibilities within the household by reorganising female/male roles on an equal basis.
- Set up microfinance and grant initiatives specifically designed to support women engaged in agrarian work and natural resource management.

Include women in decision-making spaces

- Support the education of girls and women to ensure their contribution to the advent of egalitarian societies and to the actions needed to meet current challenges, including climate change.
- Encourage and support national and local initiatives by international solidarity organisations.
- Developing targeted training courses in renewable energy and natural resource management for young women in Central Asia, and enabling them to meet professionals in these sectors, as well as potential mentors and employers.
- Encourage internships and on-the-job learning experiences so that women can acquire practical and technological knowledge of natural and renewable resources.

Raise awareness and educate on feminist and climate issues

- Ensure free access to social networks and cyberspace throughout the region.
- Guarantee access for girls and women to technologies and training to reduce the digital divide and promote their
- and empower them.
- Providing women with basic financial services and promoting their professional activities and
- integration in areas hitherto dominated by men, in order to guarantee their economic empowerment.



Strengthen the role of civil society

- Ensure the participation of girls and women from Central Asia in existing resource management networks, such as water user associations, in decision-making and management bodies.
- Encourage the creation of regional and local women's resource management networks.
- Set up programmes initiated by local and regional NGOs, and supported where necessary by international organisations, such as JP RWEE, to work towards the empowerment and security of rural safety of rural girls and women in Central Asia.