WOMEN ACCELERATING CLIMATE ACTION IN EGYPT

UN Women Egypt’s programme of work under the Egypt/UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2023–2027)
Under the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (2023-2027), the UN Women Egypt Country Office (ECO) contributes to accelerating Egypt’s climate action by increasing the access of a diverse range of women to decent employment in agriculture, renewable energy, and science, technology, engineering and math (STEM)-related sectors. Working within these sectors, increasing women’s access to employment is achieved through reskilling and upskilling programmes; advancing women entrepreneur’s competitiveness in value chains and markets; improving opportunities for capacity-development and investment; supporting women’s unpaid care in the home so as to be economically active; and increasing women’s leadership.

In support of the above work, UN Women also partners with national and international partners on increasing Egyptian women’s leadership in global, regional, national decision-making on the environment; enhancing measurement of the impact of climate change on women and men through gender statistics, and how investments are mitigating this trend; and increasing public awareness of climate change and raising women’s voices on sustainable, climate-friendly practices.

Implementation of gender equality and climate action commitments are gradually advancing under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Gender Action Plan and Lima Programme of Work (2014), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030), the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)’s General Recommendation 37 (2018), and the recommendations of the 66th Session of the UN Commission of the Status of Women (2022). These normative frameworks provide a road map which: a) address women and girls’ unique vulnerabilities to climate change from a rights-based and gender equality perspective; b) drive women’s leadership in national, regional and global decision-making on climate action; and c) accelerate climate action at all levels through women’s enhanced role in the transition to a post-carbon society, as well as in mitigation, adaptation and disaster risk reduction (DRR) actions.

Egypt’s COP27 presidency has provided an opportunity to advance gender equality and women’s empowerment in climate and environmental action – specifically within national and regional climate change policies and programmes to achieve the SDGs in Egypt and in the Africa and Arab States.

Under Egypt’s Vision 2030, the Government of Egypt (GoE)’s National Climate Change Strategy 2050 (NCCS) mainstreams gender issues, highlighting not only the unequal impact of climate change on women, but recognises rural women’s role in managing food, water and household energy and how increasing water scarcity is likely to increase women’s unequal vulnerability. Importantly, the NCCS links women’s burden of domestic and care work to climate change, noting that these roles and responsibilities are a barrier to women’s economic empowerment and resilience. The NCCS and the GoE’s National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030 highlight the need to strengthen women’s ability to cope and respond to climate change, environmental risks and unsustainable consumption patterns, with the latter establishing priorities in the areas of protection, provision of innovative technology, access to financing, increased engagement in green, blue and STEM industries, and increased training and funding opportunities for women living and working in protected areas.

---

1 Egypt’s Vision 2030 outlines its socioeconomic development vision under the SDGs and beyond. Vision 2030 positions the quality of life of all Egyptian citizens as a priority, protecting the rights of future generations, with inclusive growth being central to achieving its objectives.


During its COP27 presidency, the GoE released its 2022 Women’s Global Perspective: Women, Environment and Climate Change, which reflects the key principles of international and national frameworks on climate action. This global vision identifies ways of creating new opportunities for women within the just transition processes, including access to renewable energy technologies, decent work for women in the green economy and dedicated support for women entrepreneurs, as well as women in protected areas and in environmentally friendly industries. During COP27, and with UN Women as its global partner, Egypt launched the African Women’s Climate-Adaptive Priorities (AWCAP) Initiative which seeks, through regional collaboration, to strengthen women’s voice, engagement and opportunities in green sectors. Building on the momentum of COP27, it is important to leverage these commitments and support sustainable, large-scale investments to address both the unique vulnerabilities women face amid climate change, and their crucial role as change-agents to ensure effective and inclusive mitigation and adaptation.

According to the CEDAW Committee, Egypt is taking important gender-responsive climate action, but not at a sufficient scale. National interventions have focused on building women’s awareness of climate impacts, training on eco-friendly business/industry models and in-kind loans and grants to build food security and resilience, particularly in Upper Egypt. Challenges remain in addressing the structural barriers and social norms that contribute to gender-based inequalities including women’s limited participation and leadership in climate and environmental decision-making, limiting perceptions of ‘women’s work’ in green, blue and STEM sectors, women’s unsupported role in the unpaid care economy, and women’s disproportionate access to resources and services for building community resilience. Women in rural areas often face higher risks of early marriage and harmful practices, and have limited community decision-making, higher rates of illiteracy and school dropouts, own 5.2 per cent of agricultural land, have low engagement in political and national frameworks on climate action. This global vision identifies ways of creating new opportunities for women within the just transition processes, including access to renewable energy technologies, decent work for women in the green economy and dedicated support for women entrepreneurs, as well as women in protected areas and in environmentally friendly industries.

The ECO is building partnerships with the private sector, specifically companies in STEM and the blue and green economy, supporting the application of the Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEPs)\(^5\). Emphasis here includes women’s recruitment, retention, advancement, leadership in the workplace, alongside supporting family friendly policies and women’s unpaid care work in the home, as well as preventing sexual harassment. Under the WEPs, the ECO supports women entrepreneurs’ access to competitive value chains in the Green, Blue and STEM-related sectors. Strategies used also draw from the UN Women Regional WEPs tools promoting standard setting within the workplace. In 2023, UN Women in partnership with UN agencies and multilateral development banks (MDBs), will also seek to significantly deepen private sector investment in gender-responsive climate mitigation and adaptation action.

---


\(^5\) CEDAW Committee. 2021. Concluding observations on the combined eighth to tenth periodic reports of Egypt.


\(^7\) CEDAW Committee. 2021. Concluding observations on the combined eighth to tenth periodic reports of Egypt.

\(^8\) The WEPs are a set of Principles offering guidance to business on how to promote gender equality in the workplace, market-place and community. Established by UN Global Compact and UN Women, the WEPs are informed by international labour and human rights standards and grounded in the recognition that businesses have a stake in, and a responsibility for, gender equality and women’s empowerment. https://www.weps.org/
UN Women is supporting women’s leadership, employment and business opportunities in key sectors as part of Egypt’s overall investments in ensuring a just transition within the water, renewable energy food and STEM sectors. Strategies include the skilling and reskilling of women for recruitment, retention and advancement in the sectors; and strengthening the capacity of women-owned businesses to ‘green’ their business models thereby reducing their risks related to climate and environmental changes and advancing environmentally sustainable business practices. In deepening support to women farmers, UN Women will provide accessible knowledge to increase their profitable investments in climate-resilient agriculture, access to climate-smart technologies and access to markets to diversify and move up the value chain.

The work supports those women most impacted by inequalities: namely, young women, “returning women”, women in rural areas and women living with disabilities. Leadership and behaviour change actions are nation-wide in scope, with programmatic interventions with women in the communities under the National Project for the Development of Egyptian Families, the Haya Karima Presidential initiative, in protected regions and those vulnerable to the risks of climate change such as the Nile Delta, coastal cities and parts of Upper Egypt and the Sinai.10

COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE:

The ECO remains Egypt’s only development partner to provide normative expertise and coordination support on gender equality and women’s empowerment, alongside strategic programmatic investments which have consistently focused on strengthened institutional monitoring and response capacities, advancing women’s leadership, employability, entrepreneurship, financial inclusion, and on ending all forms of violence against women and girls, including harmful practices. This programme of work aims to leverage Egypt’s COP27 presidency term, as well as its African Women’s Climate-Adaptive Priorities.

The ECO works with the National Council for Women, Ministries of Environment, Finance, Higher Education and TVET institutions, International Cooperation, Planning, Social Solidarity, Trade and Industry, local governorates, the private sector, civil society and community-based organizations. The ECO is deepening its environmental and climate action programme partnerships with UN agencies and other development partners to promote gender integration and mainstreaming in key climate action areas. South-South partnerships will also be supported through the AWCAP and through an emerging regional programme under the UN Women Arab States Regional Office.

PARTNERSHIPS:

1 Women who have left the workforce in order to raise their children and are now seeking to return to formal economic activity.

10 Egypt’s First Updated Nationally Determined Contributions, June 2022. According to the IPCC, by 2050 the Nile Delta region is one of three extremely vulnerable hotspots and mega-deltas affected by climate change.

11 Women Accelerating Climate Action in Egypt