

# WOMEN ACCELERATING CLIMATE ACTION IN EGYPT

UN Women Egypt's programme of work under the  
Egypt/UN Sustainable Development Cooperation  
Framework (2023–2027)





## GOAL:

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.

## CONTEXT:



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 66<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Commission of the Status of Women (2022). These normative frameworks provide a road map which: a) address women and girl's 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*,<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> 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,<sup>3</sup> and increased training and funding opportunities for women living and working in protected areas.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 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 attaining its objectives.

<sup>2</sup> Arab Republic of Egypt, Ministry of Environment. 2022. *Egypt National Climate Change Strategy 2050: Summary*.

<sup>3</sup> Arab Republic of Egypt, National Council for Women. 2017. *National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030*.



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.<sup>4</sup> 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,<sup>5</sup> 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 disparate access to resources and services for building community resilience. Women in rural areas often active in informal and at times unsustainable economic livelihoods, only own 5.2 per cent of agricultural land,<sup>6</sup> have low engagement in political and community decision-making, higher rates of illiteracy and school dropouts, face higher risks of early marriage and harmful practices, and have limited access to health care and family planning services as compared to their urban counterparts.<sup>7</sup> Women in rural areas in particular need enhanced opportunities that shift the narrative from that of individuals who are vulnerable to that of key accelerators of climate action.



<sup>4</sup> National Council for Women. 2022. *Egypt's Global Perspective: Women, Environment and Climate Change*.  
<sup>5</sup> CEDAW Committee. 2021. *Concluding observations on the combined eight to tenth periodic reports of Egypt*.  
<sup>6</sup> FAO 2015. "FAO Gender and Land Rights Database" [www.fao.org/genderlandrights-database/en/](http://www.fao.org/genderlandrights-database/en/).  
<sup>7</sup> CEDAW Committee. 2021. *Concluding observations on the combined eight to tenth period reports of Egypt*.

## STRATEGY:

UN Women ECO's strategies on gender-responsive climate action emphasise increased support in strengthening **national institutions'** knowledge, systems, resources and the application of global normative frameworks and best practices in implementing gender-responsive climate-action policies and programmes. In so doing, the work emphasises women's leadership, economic empowerment, and the links of climate impacts and violence against women and the paid/unpaid care economy. Contributing to this, and in coordination with the UN system, the ECO will work with national stakeholders to strengthen the production, analysis and use of national gender statistics to promote evidence-based climate-related decision-making. The ECO's investments focus also on enhancing the gender-responsive tracking of budget resources under the Integrated National Financing Framework, as well as integrating gender into "green and sustainable" financial vehicles under the GoE's *Sustainable Financing Framework* (2022), and in innovative financing opportunities for women supported by the GoE, Egypt Exchange (EGX), and the Financial Regulatory Authority (FRA).



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)<sup>8</sup>. 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.



<sup>8</sup> 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.

Women are drivers of change in their families, communities and businesses. Through working with **women leaders and gender equality champions**, UN Women will continue to invest in behaviour-change actions at the local and national level to reduce carbon emissions, promote sustainable consumption practices and advance climate-smart actions by individuals and families.

## PARTNERSHIPS:



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.

## BENEFICIARIES AND LOCATION:

The work supports those women most impacted by inequalities: namely, young women, "returning women"<sup>9</sup>, 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.<sup>10</sup>



## COMPARATIVE ADVANTAGE:

UN Women's Global Strategic Plan 2022–2025 aims to better integrate climate mitigation and adaptation into gender equality policy and programming work. UN Women plays a normative and advocacy role in the global climate change agenda, promoting the inclusion of gender equality and women's empowerment in negotiations at the UNFCCC's Conference of Parties, follow up to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, as well as convening high level experts within these and other UN inter-governmental processes to foster momentum for

investing in women as drivers of climate action. These experiences and commitments, coupled with UN Women's three-pronged mandate of normative, coordination and operational support to the UN System and its Member States provide a strong framework to accelerate gender-responsive climate action.

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*.

<sup>9</sup> Women who have left the workforce in order to raise their children and are now seeking to return to formal economic activity.

<sup>10</sup> 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.

