



## Rosalind Helfand

- UN Women Rio Conventions Advisor
- UN Women Feminist Action for Climate Justice Action Coalition Advisor
- Contributed to publications on Feminist Climate Justice: A Framework for Action and on Gender-responsive Rio Conventions Synergies
- Based in Los Angeles, California
- Previously worked on women's leadership, reproductive justice, and issues like urban lead pollution

# FEMINIST CLIMATE JUSTICE

A Framework for Action



# JUSTICE

## The Climate Change and Gender Context

- The term 'climate justice' has been taken up by civil society to foreground the people and communities who have contributed least to the problem but are suffering its most intense impacts.
- Feminist climate justice shows how the drivers of climate and environmental breakdown are also the structural drivers of gender inequalities.
- Feminism is a mode of analysis, but it is also about progressive action to transform institutions, laws, policies and practices towards greater gender equality.



### FACJ Action Coalition Commitment Maker: **Clean Cooking Alliance**

"A woman prepares a meal over an improved BioLite cookstove in East Africa."

Impact: Reduce women's exposure to household air pollutants while addressing climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation.



### FACJ Action Coalition Commitment Maker: **European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)**

"Shabnam, a female engineering student in Uzbekistan."

Impact: Women trained as a transformative force for a green technologies transition, supporting reductions in GHGs, particulate pollution and environmental impacts.



### FACJ Action Coalition Commitment Maker: **Happy Periods**

"Girls at Kasturba Gandhi School in Lucknow, India use art as a medium to promote sustainable period products."

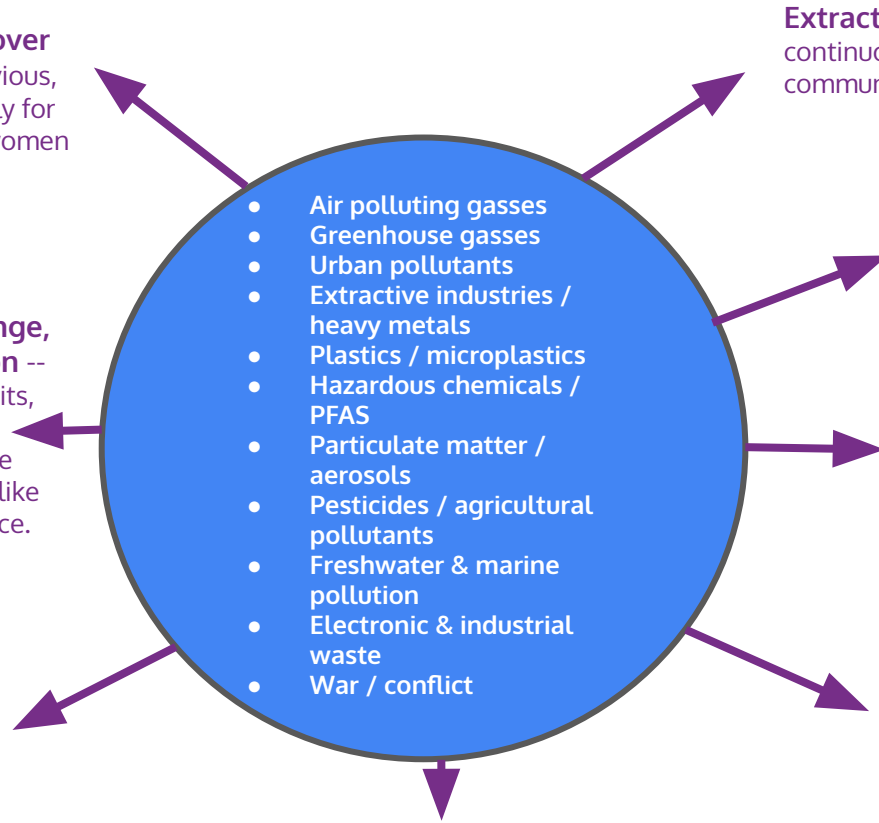
Impact: Grow awareness of and access to sustainable non-toxic menstrual hygiene products while reducing waste and climate emissions generated by these products.

# Where does pollution fit into the justice & gender conversation?

**Pollution impacts may build up over time**, rather than be immediately obvious, for long term consequences, especially for the health and economic security of women and girls.

**Indirect but harmful impacts of pollution cut across climate change, biodiversity and land degradation** -- unstable ecosystems, nutritional deficits, lowered water quality and access, reduced capacity for nature to mitigate pollution impacts, leading to impacts like increased risk of gender-based violence.

**Women and girls often lack equal representation** in decision making spaces at all levels and across sectors, reducing their ability to contribute to sustainable just transitions.



**Extractive industries** release pollutants both continuously and via disasters that impact local communities and marginalized people.

**GHG emissions** increase climate change impacts, such as high heat and drought, and disasters like floods and reduced fish stocks, with harms to women's health, livelihoods and security.

**Indoor pollution** from cooking, household and personal care products, clothing and furnishings with unsafe chemicals and products, including cleaning products, that emit gasses, impact women's health.

**Air, water and soil pollutants:** particulate matter, plastics and microplastics, heavy metals, hazardous chemicals, agricultural pollutants, etc impact marginalized groups more heavily.

**Conflict and war** increase emissions and other pollutants with impacts on women and girls' health and security.



### Redistribution of...

- resources away from extractive, environmentally damaging economic activities towards those that prioritize care for people and planet
- land, employment opportunities and technology to redress gender inequalities and ensure women benefit from green transitions
- public finance to support gender-responsive social protection systems to support women's resilience.

### Recognition of...

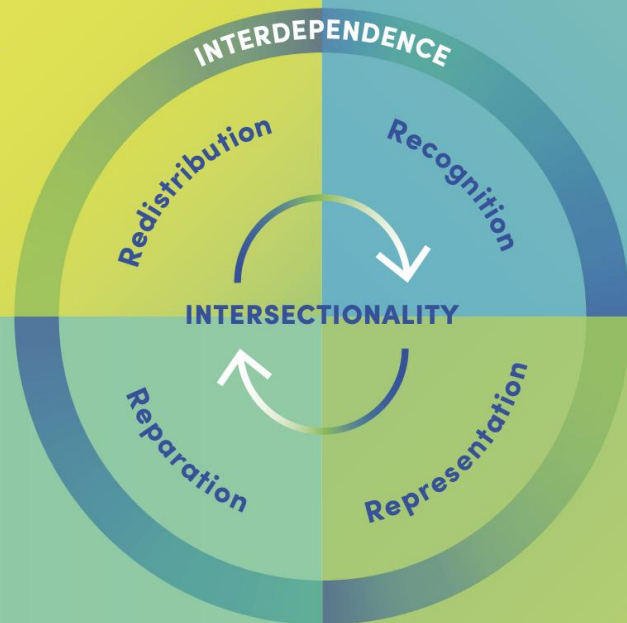
- multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that undermine the resilience of historically marginalized groups to climate impacts
- women's unpaid labour to support social and ecological reproduction
- situated, Indigenous and experiential forms of knowledge to support effective climate action.

### Reparation through...

- recognition of the historical responsibility and continued impact of cumulative emissions
- adequate global climate finance, debt cancellation and regulation of large corporations
- mechanisms to address gendered economic and non-economic loss and damage.

### Representation of...

- women and other marginalized groups in environmental decision-making at all levels
- communities affected by climate change and biodiversity loss in climate policymaking
- women's interests in robust accountability mechanisms to seek redress for environmental injustice.



Dimensions  
and  
principles of  
feminist  
climate  
justice.

## EXAMPLE

### Agroecology: Recognizing women's knowledge for gender equality and climate resilience

Form of food production valuing ecosystem services, fixes carbon and protects biodiversity.

Avoids harmful agrochemicals impacting environment and human health.

Can benefit women farmers by valuing diverse work tasks and knowledge, more sustainable yields and income, and reducing health impacts from toxic chemical pollution.

Reduces top down systems while prioritizing small producers, mutual learning, Indigenous knowledge and local ecosystems.

Relies on challenging gender inequalities in access to resources, land and information.

Recognition of increased labor for women is also important, and decreasing burdens of unpaid or underpaid work, including care work for women. Cooperatives and group approaches have helped to address such pitfalls.



FACJ Action Coalition Commitment Maker:  
**Tejiendo Pensamiento**

"Indigenous women in Colombia engaged in the project Women Weaving in Science. Rio Nambi Nature Reserve."

Impact: Women and girls participate in data gathering and knowledge exchange that enhances sustainable agriculture practices and reduces use of unsustainable and polluting methods that impact biodiversity and land while also harming women and girls' health and contributing to climate change impacts. Leadership and participation in decision making for women and girls is increased, as well.

# Challenges to accountability for feminist climate justice.

In 2022, the average level of democracy reverted to a point not seen since 1986.

In the past decade:

**34** countries have eroded women's rights to open dialogue

**47** countries have seen declines in media freedom

**30** countries have regressed in the conduct of free and fair elections<sup>a</sup>

Women's representation in parliaments is associated with stronger climate change policies,<sup>b</sup> but globally



women hold only 27 per cent of parliamentary seats<sup>c</sup>



and are only 15 per cent of environment ministers<sup>d</sup>

Graphic: Feminist Climate Justice: A Framework for Action. UN Women.

# Connecting Global Multilateral Environmental Agreements



# Gender-responsive synergies across the three Rio Conventions: Implementation mechanisms at the national and subnational levels

- **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** - COP 30, 10-21 November 2025, Brazil
- **UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)** - COP 17 in 2026, Armenia
- **UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)** - COP 17, 17-28 August 2026, Mongolia

## CBD's Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework Targets

- Climate, pollution, decision-making, land degradation, water and gender targets.
- Human rights cross-cutting approach.
- National biodiversity strategies and action plans / promotion of nature-based solutions.



## UNFCCC's NDCs and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)

- Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) can lower GHGs impacts.
- NAPs can reduce sources of emissions that worsen heating and health impacts and reduce resilience.
- Opportunities to promote nature-based solutions.



## UNCCD's Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) Targets

- Gender-responsive LDN projects and programmes can be pollution responsive.
- Gender mainstreaming can improve food security, improve health and reduce poverty, including through nature-based solutions.
- Promote gender-balanced land and natural resource governance.

A synergized, coherent and cooperative approach to implementing the Rio Conventions that accounts for gender targets and integrates the gender action plans, and in partnership with grassroots and civil society organizations, can support gender-responsiveness while addressing and reducing pollution impacts.

# 11 Key Entry Points: Gender-responsive implementation of the Rio Conventions

1. Human rights, gender equality and environmental sustainability

2. Women environmental human rights defenders

3. Women's full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership in public life and decision making

4. Women's land and resource rights and tenure security

5. Environment and women's and girls' unpaid care, domestic and communal work

6. Gender-responsive financial mechanisms to implement the Rio Conventions

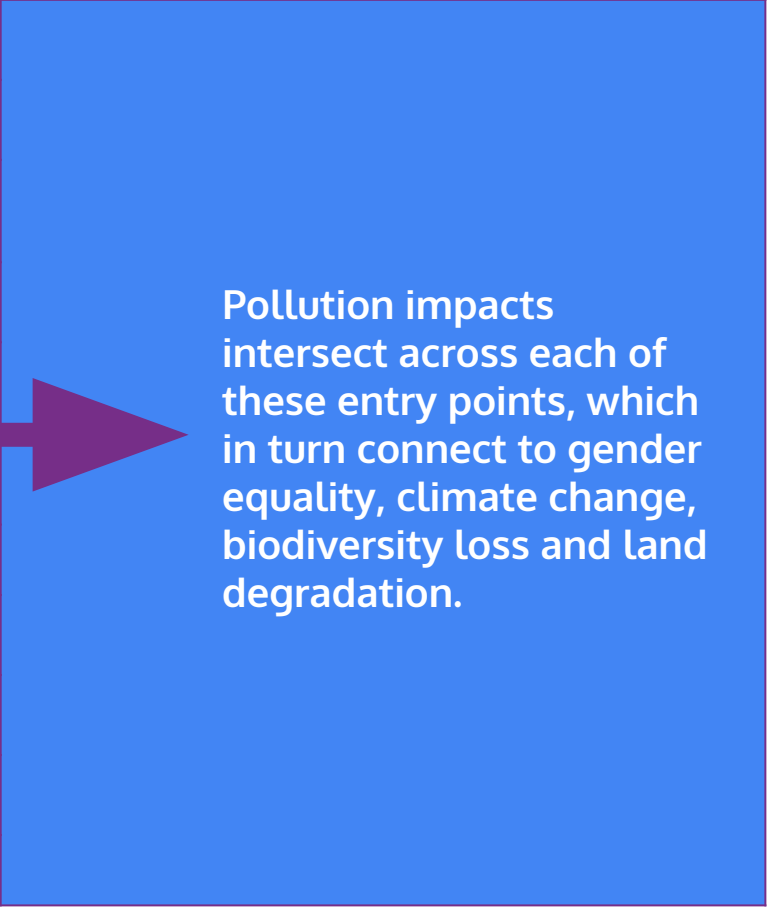
7. Gender-responsive just transitions

8. Gender, health and environment

9. Gender and environment data

10. Gender and climate security

11. Disaster risk reduction



Pollution impacts intersect across each of these entry points, which in turn connect to gender equality, climate change, biodiversity loss and land degradation.

## A Few Other Multilateral Environmental Convening Highlights

- United Nations Ocean Conference 2025 (UNOC 2025), co-hosted by France and Costa Rica, convenes June 9-13, 2025 in Nice, France.
- Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Committee reconvenes for the Second Part of the Fifth Session (INC-5.2) August 5-14, 2025 in Geneva, Switzerland (preceded by regional consultations on August 4).
- IUCN World Conservation Congress convenes October 9-15, 2025 in Abu Dhabi, UAE.
- Minamata Convention on Mercury 6th Conference of Parties convenes November 3-7, 2025 in Geneva, Switzerland.
- Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) 12th Plenary to adopt the Business and Biodiversity Assessment convenes February 2026 in London, United Kingdom.



**UNITED NATIONS OCEAN CONFERENCE**  
NICE, FRANCE 2025

**Intergovernmental Negotiating  
Committee on Plastic Pollution**



**IUCN  
World  
Conservation  
Congress**  
*Abu Dhabi 2025*



**MINAMATA  
CONVENTION  
ON MERCURY**

