POLICY BRIEF

NOVEMBER, 2026

Cultivating Climate and Gender Justice with Men and Boys

MenEngage Alliance
working with men and boys for gender equality

MenEngage Alliance
Climate & Environmental Justice
WORKING GROUP

WECF
WOMEN ENGAGE FOR A COMMON FUTURE

POLICY REPORT

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Executive

SUMMARY

- The gendered nature of the climate crisis remains under-recognised within policymaking. When it is, it is usually framed as something that happens to women. **Far less attention goes to its root causes in men and patriarchal ideas about masculinity**.
- Historically and currently, **men dominate the institutions, from governments to big business, that have allowed global heating to cross 1.5°C as of 2026**, despite alternative forms of energy production and governance being available. For instance, only 19% of oil and gas executives and 15% of environment ministers are women.
- Women and First Peoples are **underrepresented and systemically locked out of institutions and political decision-making roles** concerning the planet. For example, women made up just 38% of the party delegates at COP30.
- The harms of the climate crisis fall hardest on women, girls, LGBTIQ+ people, communities in the Global Majority, and First Peoples, who **have been naming this crisis and its solutions for decades** while those in power chose not to listen.
- In order to get to the roots of the climate crisis, we must therefore **address the patriarchal, capitalist, colonialist social structures** which have created it.

- Individual men tend to express **lower levels of concern** about climate change than women.
- There is evidence that, on average, **men's carbon emissions** are higher than women's, due to factors such as eating more meat and driving more as proof of being masculine.
- Men are more likely to work in **extractive industries**, from fossil fuels to militaries.
- An **intersectional lens** is vital however, as some men bear more responsibility than others, particularly those who are in the Minority World, white, wealthy, and in positions of power.
- **These patterns are by no means inevitable.** Ecofeminists reject the notion that men are 'inherently' more destructive towards nature.

- Ecofeminists have drawn attention to how patriarchal Western capitalist societies have constructed humans as **separate from and superior to nature and other animals**, associating masculinity with humanity and culture and femininity with nature.
- These ways of thinking are used to **justify both 'man's' entitlement to exploit nature and *social* hierarchies**, with women and people of colour constructed as emotional and embodied and (white) men portrayed as rational and dispassionate.
- In this context, men attempt to prove their masculinity by **exerting dominance over nature** and things associated with it; from driving fast cars and hunting, to objectifying women.
- However, these expectations-such as suppressing one's emotions-are **deeply harmful for men and boys themselves**, as well as for the people and the ecology around them.
- Furthermore, the climate crisis is causing **devastation to the lives of people of all genders**, including men and boys. Men struggle to deal with the trauma of disasters in uniquely gendered ways, and one way they may respond is through increased violence.

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TEN KEY POLICY

Recommendations

FOR GENDER JUST CLIMATE ACTION

These recommendations are addressed primarily to states, as the main duty-bearers under international human rights law, including in their roles as Parties to the UNFCCC and as donors.

1. **States** must take urgent action to phase out fossil fuels and extractive industries as the foundations of national and global economies, and uphold the right of all people to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, as well as the rights of nature.
2. **States and employers**, working with trade unions and affected communities, must deliver a gender-transformative just transition to green economies. This means providing quality alternative jobs and training for people working in and reliant upon extractive industries, including informal and unpaid workers; prioritising local circular economies; and investing in low-carbon social infrastructure such as care and education.
3. **States, donors and international financial institutions** should rapidly invest in climate adaptation infrastructure (which will save resources in the long term) and disaster preparedness and response, with gender and other social inequalities addressed at every stage of implementation, so that protection reaches everyone and not only those with more resources.
4. **States and multilateral bodies** must guarantee the rights of women and girls in all their diversity, gender-diverse people, First Peoples, local communities, youth and disabled people to participate in environmental decision-making at every level, from local to international, as rights-holders and decision-makers with real influence over outcomes. This includes ensuring at least equal representation of women; upholding First Peoples' right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent for any project affecting their lands, territories and resources, in line with UNDRIP; and guaranteeing access to information, participation and justice in environmental matters, as set out in the Aarhus Convention and the Escazú Agreement.
5. **States** must end the criminalisation and repression of environmental defenders and activists and protect them from violence, including gender-based violence. **Corporations** must respect defenders' rights throughout their operations. Both should draw on defenders' experience and expertise to shape responses to the climate crisis from the grassroots up.
6. **States** should redirect budgets from war and militarisation towards gender just climate finance and compensation for loss and damage, and cooperate internationally to reach shared agreements to this end.
7. **States and donors** should fund and support gender-transformative prevention work in education, workplaces and communities, including work with men and boys that is accountable to feminist movements. This work should address the gendered root causes of violence and abuse and poor health and wellbeing, including in the context of environmental breakdown, and make the links with care and connection with nature.
8. **States** should promote caring and connected ways of being for men and boys, for example encouraging active fatherhood through parental leave policies. **Men in positions of power** have a particular responsibility to speak out for climate and gender justice.
9. **States and regulators** must strengthen regulation of industries that spread and profit from harmful gender norms, such as social media platforms and weapons manufacturers, and introduce progressive environmental taxation based on the polluter-pays principle to help fund gender just climate finance.
10. **States, donors and philanthropic funders** must provide flexible, long-term core funding to feminist civil society organisations so they can carry out their vital work, including gender-based violence prevention and support during disasters, and support their leadership in environmental policy dialogues.

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