

Women's Earth & Climate Action Network
Women's Earth and Climate Caucus: Fact Sheet
Osprey Orielle Lake, June 2014

The *Women's Earth & Climate Action Network* (WECAN) is a project of the *Women's Earth and Climate Caucus* (WECC), a California non-profit founded in 2008. Please see www.wecaninternational.org

Women are at the nexus of a thriving and just global future: they are disproportionately impacted by environmental and economic problems and yet demonstratively central to the most important solutions. We highlight women worldwide as innovators and agents of change in mitigating and adapting to climate change and environmental degradation.

While women are key to some of the world's most pressing issues, there is a severe gap between their daily lives and access to hands-on training, educational information, resources, and to policy and decision-making bodies in order to develop and implement these solutions. WECAN works to help close this gap locally and globally by offering a variety of forums, training programs, advocacy delegations, action campaigns, and online interactive platforms to discuss community needs, mobilize action, share ideas and resources and provide a uniquely holistic, flexible and supportive approach to a complex global crisis.

VISION

The vision of WECAN is to align, engage and mobilize women worldwide to take action as powerful stakeholders in climate change policy decisions, on-the-ground sustainability trainings, climate justice action and implementation of sustainability solutions, serving as an international hub and facilitator for collaborations, education and advocacy campaigns and build a far-reaching and potent global women's climate action movement.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Four Guiding Principles underscore the vision and mission of WECAN International's dedication to a rights-based approach to climate justice and climate change solutions:

- Rights of Women
- Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- Rights of Nature
- Rights of Future Generations.

WECAN's work is rooted in these rights, which necessitate respecting human rights and nature's rights. They also are the bedrock for creating a new cultural narrative and commitment based upon nurture, restore and replenish vs. the current narrative and paradigm which results in depletion, degradation and destruction of the Earth's natural systems, which all species, including humanity, depend upon for food, water, shelter, survival and quality of life.

WHY WECAN?

Given the lack of speed and insufficient ambition of international climate agreements, and the fact that agreements, which have been made to date, fall far short of the urgency now upon us with rapidly

advancing climate changes, WECAN is a response to that urgency by women leaders and their international networks. Nature is telling us we have pushed natural systems to the brink – with extreme weather events, flooding, droughts, fires, failed crops, accelerated loss of species, and climate refugees. Women are the most adversely effected by climate change and environmental degradation, yet they are also central to solutions. Women stakeholders are ½ of the world’s population, producing 65-85% of household food in developing countries, and hold 80% of the purchasing power in North America and the Global North.

Additionally, women’s participation in decision-making has important implications for climate change specifically. A study of 130 countries found that countries with higher female parliamentary representation are more prone to ratify international environmental treaties. Moreover, United Nations studies show that whether we look at the developed or the developing world, when women are empowered through education and jobs, economies improve, populations stabilize and community health improves. These conditions are essential for environmental and sustainability solutions to take hold.

It became evident that by working together women could have a resounding influence on getting climate policies in place and solutions implemented through collaboration of voice and actions. Women advocating at the UN climate negotiations; working in grassroots organizations; Indigenous and green-businesswomen leaders; and women in many sectors and diverse cultures are working in common cause for solutions, but often have no platform to be connected to each other or at the level that will be most effective. WECAN provides a pathway and a platform ‘hub’ for collaboration within an integrated, holistic framework that unites actions and voices for amplified results. This alliance of collaboration engages in strategic planning, advocacy, partnerships, trainings, solutions development, consumer choice, forest, ocean and soils protection and restoration campaigns, as well as taking direct action in the political, economic and social arenas.

Some of the Direct Actions include:

Women of the Land Speak

In February 2013, WECC organized a delegation of women leaders to advocate opposition to and alternatives for the XL Keystone Pipeline in Washington D.C. These leaders included First Nations women from Alberta, Canada along with women farmers from Texas. In addition to participating in the largest climate action in USA history, a WECC meeting was organized with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) so these leaders could present their cases against the pipeline to the EPA and advocate for swift action. Due to this effort, in addition to advocacy work by many other environmental groups, the EPA issued a [strong critique](#) of the U.S. State Department’s evaluation and defense of the Keystone XL Pipeline. The [EPA’s report](#) has helped stall advancements of the Keystone decision. We continue our efforts on this issue.

Day of Action for Climate Justice in Collaboration with One Billion Rising

Eve Ensler, founder of the 1 Billion Women Rising campaign, invited WECAN to lead one of the segments of the worldwide Rising Action on February 14, 2014. WECAN organized over a dozen actions internationally for Women and Climate Justice and documented women-led solutions, testimonies and successes in the field of environmental/climate justice throughout the world. The Day of Action was also dedicated to the signing of WECAN’s Declaration, “*Women of the World*

Call for Urgent Action on Climate Change & Sustainability Solutions”
<http://wecaninternational.org/declaration> Events took place from Morocco to Ecuador from the Maldives to Congo.

Former President Nasheed from the Maldives attended one of the actions and signed the WECAN Declaration along with the Environmental Minister from the Maldives who said he will take our demands to the UN.

Actions included:

- Women farmers highlighting the importance of local organic farms to food sovereignty and food security
- Women demonstrating how they and their families are being affected by the tar sands and pipelines developments in Canada
- Highlighting solar projects in Africa
- Calling on communities to plant certain trees and flowers that absorb large amounts of CO2
- Congolese women calling for protection of the forests of Congo
- Indigenous women mobilizing in Ecuador to protect the Amazon from fossil fuel leasing and development
- Women in Arab countries calling for women and climate change education
- Making the link between violence against women and climate change

Additionally, WECAN held a direct action at the last UN Climate Negotiations in Warsaw inside the convention center where women leaders demanded that governments approach the negotiations from a climate justice perspective and read the WECAN Climate Declaration out loud.

Women4Forests Campaign (Fossil Fuel/Mining/Mega Dams Resistance Program)

The Women4Forests Campaign is a worldwide program creating an international constituency of women to rise up in advocacy for the protection of forests. There are three regions of focus: the Amazon rainforest, the Canadian boreal forest and the Congo rainforest. WECAN is engaged with Indigenous partners on the ground protecting the biodiversity of the forests and resisting threats from fossil fuel leasing and development, mining and mega dams, thereby protecting as much of the web of life as possible for local communities and for future generations. WECAN is developing an international constituency and media visibility for the women who live in these territories and who are protecting the forests, the lungs of our planet, for all of humanity. Additionally, many of these forests are threatened by oil extraction plans, therefore protecting them has the additional benefit of avoiding dirty emissions from fossil fuels by keeping them in the ground.

As part of our Women for Forest Program, WECAN funded Gloria Ushigua, President of the Association of Sápara Women of Ecuador “Ashiñwaka”, whose culture is a UNESCO Cultural Patrimony to come to the United States to attend the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York (May 12-23) so they could present their case before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in Washington, DC.

At the UN the Sápara addressed the threats that their nationality is facing and reached out for international support for their cause. The Sápara have the unique honor of being the only nationality in Ecuador recognized as a UNESCO Cultural Patrimony, which makes a visit to the UN particularly strategic.

The Sápara presented their case to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) asking for precautionary measures for the Sápara who have been persecuted by the Ecuadorian government for protesting the government's decision to auction off their territory as part of the 11th Oil Round. Chinese conglomerate Andes Petroleum has submitted bids on blocks 79 and 83 in the Ecuadorian Amazon, which encompass 100% of Sápara territory. The Ecuadorian government has yet to respond to the offer, which the government solicited through the 11th Oil Round.

Sápara territory borders the Intangible Zone of Yasuní National Park, an area where the Correa government has proposed to drill. The Sápara advocated for their neighbors living in voluntary isolation and the campaign to protect Yasuní-ITT. The Sápara have long organized to protect their territory, which is over 300,000 hectares of the some of the most biodiverse and best-conserved rainforest in the world. They have released declarations, participated in press conferences, and were crucial in the March of the Women in October when 100 Amazonian women marched 300 miles to denounce the government's plans to auction off their ancestral homes. WECAN helped fund and do media outreach for the October Women's March and the exhibit of the protestors. Please see: felipejacome.com/visual-testimonies/the-last-amazonas The photos document the struggle of the indigenous women who are defending the Ecuadorian Amazon from oil exploitation through a series of images combining portraiture with their written testimonies and artistic expressions. The words written on the images are self-reflections of the women's lives, of their culture, history, traditions, and their reasons for fighting oil extraction in their ancestral lands.