



# Women's Manifesto on Climate Change

15 May 2007



**Created and issued by Women's Environmental Network and the National Federation of Women's Institutes. Please contact either organisation for a full list of signatories.**

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## Preamble

Climate change is the single greatest environmental threat to life on earth. It not only impacts on our environment physically and economically, it also affects us socially and culturally.

Women in the UK have a key role in tackling climate change as consumers, educators and 'change agents' in our homes, encouraging the adoption of lower carbon lifestyles and passing on green values to the next generation.<sup>1</sup> We are also far more concerned about environmental issues than men.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, our importance is not matched by our representation. Women are significantly under-represented in environmental decision-making in government, industry and the scientific community.<sup>3</sup> We are also insufficiently empowered in taking action in our own homes to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Globally, women are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change due to our different social roles and status. In the UK and other developed countries, increasing costs for energy, transport, healthcare, and nutrition are likely to affect women, including single mothers, more than men.<sup>4</sup> In developing countries, women are already suffering disproportionately more as a consequence of climate change:

- 70% of the world's poor, who are far more vulnerable to environmental damage, are women<sup>5</sup>

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1 WEN/NFWI Women and Climate Change Survey (2007)

2 Recent public opinion polls including Emap advertising poll (April 2007), Ipsos MORI Climate Change survey (September 2006); and Stockholm Network and Populus "Putting the Environment In Perspective" survey (2005), all show women to be more concerned about the environment than men

3 Janssen in Climate for Change: Data – Facts – Arguments (2005)

4 Hemmati in Gender & Climate Change in the North: Issues, Entry Points and Strategies for the Post-2012 Process (2005)

5 Denton in Masika, Gender, Development and Climate Change, 2002

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- 85% percent of people who die from climate-induced disasters are women.<sup>6</sup>

We therefore welcome the Government's introduction of a Climate Change Bill in the current session of Parliament including a legally binding commitment to cut carbon dioxide emissions by 60% by 2050 and the introduction of an independent body to monitor progress and recommend action.

However, the Climate Change Bill falls short of addressing the current scientific thinking that calls for an 80% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions by 2050 to commit to keeping global warming under the 2 degrees Celsius danger threshold. We are also calling on the Government to introduce carbon budgets with annual milestones, to ensure these targets are met.

We also welcome the Sustainable Communities Bill, which will encourage more local sustainability, including environmental protection, and the Chancellor's pre-Budget and Budget commitments to make all new homes carbon neutral and other homes more energy efficient by 2016.

However, this is not enough. Government action must reflect the views of women as both a powerful positive force in tackling climate change and negatively affected by it.

### **What Women Want**

According to a climate change survey of over 500 women, conducted by WEN and NFWI, what women of the UK want most is:

- **Much more action in tackling climate change;** 97% of women do not think Government and industry are doing enough. Top priorities for action are to invest in more renewable energy (86%), encourage manufacturers to

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<sup>6</sup> Mirza, MMQ (2003), Climate Change and Extreme Weather Events: can developing countries adapt? Climate Policy, vol 3, Issue 3

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design more environmentally friendly products (86%) and to set tougher carbon reduction targets (81%).

- **More help and guidance to reduce our impact on the environment**, especially more green products or carbon labelling of goods (85%), lower prices for environmentally friendly products (85%), and more government grants and incentives to reduce carbon emissions (82%).
- **More women's involvement** in UK government (87%) and international (86%) policy making, to find solutions to climate change.
- **Greater representation of women** in industry boardrooms (79%) and scientific careers (78%) to address climate change issues from a women's perspective, and as MPs (74%).

Our survey also found that 80% of women are **very** concerned about climate change as an important issue and 75% are apprehensive that government action to tackle climate change will not be taken soon enough. Women are also **very** concerned about the effects of climate change on future generations (85%), the poor (81%), and on plant, marine and animal life (81%), the impact of more flooding, drought and extreme weather (81%), water and food shortages (81%) and habitat destruction (80%).

We are already making significant changes in our own lives, particularly in the areas of recycling (98%), minimising the use of plastic bags and excess packaging (87%), and being more energy efficient in our homes (86%). What we want now is for government to take the lead, helping us to take the following practical actions.

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## **1. In our homes:**

- More clear guidance, advice and practical support to enable women to switch to a low-carbon lifestyle
- More government grants and incentives to make green energy choices, including energy conservation, cheaper and more easily available
- More help to prevent waste and consistent and comprehensive recycling facilities in all local authority areas
- Stronger environmental standards for both new builds and refurbishments, to make all housing stock carbon neutral.

## **2. In our travel:**

- Efficient, affordable and safe public transport, which women are more likely to use than men<sup>7</sup>
- Safe and comprehensive cycling and walking options, including car-free school runs for women and children
- Introduction of a tax on aviation fuel and/or other fiscal measures to ensure the true environmental and social costs of air travel are accounted for.

## **3. In the marketplace:**

- Lower prices for environmentally friendly goods
- Clear labelling so consumers know the food miles and carbon footprint of the goods they buy
- Legislation to ban products which are unsustainable or contribute heavily to climate change
- Legislation to encourage product durability and re-use, reduce excess packaging and waste
- Much stronger support for local food production and supply.

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<sup>7</sup> Department for Transport Public Transport Gender Audit Evidence Base (2000)

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## **4. In our use of energy:**

- Investment in renewable energy which matches or exceeds that in non-renewable sources, to make it a viable industry
- More government grants and incentives to reduce carbon emissions through greater energy efficiency and lower energy demand
- More support for microgeneration as an alternative to fossil-fuel based electricity generation
- Greater transparency so that women know where the energy they use is coming from, allowing them to make greener choices.

## **5. For us and our children:**

- More information about the best ways to reduce the environmental impact of the first years of a child's life, for example, support for real nappy promotion schemes
- More education about climate change, its causes and ways to avoid it – for all age groups
- More help, support and encouragement for women to enable them to take climate change action at home and with their family.

## **6. For the future:**

- Equal involvement of women and men in environmental decision-making in industry, government and civil society
- Measures to increase the number of girls and women studying science subjects and working in science related jobs
- Recognition that most women are concerned with the expansion of nuclear power. A survey for WEN found 72% against; other surveys have recorded more than 50% of women against<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> WEN, European Commission and Guardian-ICM polls quoted in WEN's Response to the DTI Energy Review 2006

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- The inclusion of air and sea freight CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the UK's carbon footprint so the true scale of emissions from food and product miles can be measured and action can be taken to reduce them
- Greater promotion to UK residents of holidays in the UK, without flying
- Greater government recognition of the contribution that women are already making in reducing personal and domestic carbon emissions, which account for the majority of the nation's carbon footprint.<sup>9</sup>

### **7. For developing countries:**

- Recognition by the UK Government that climate change is a matter of social justice, affecting the poor in developing countries, and especially women, the most
- More government funding of initiatives which will help women and their families to adapt to climate change, focusing on the need for sufficient food, water and renewable clean energy, cooking fuels, a climate-proof asset base to prevent poverty, protection against climate-induced floods, famine, drought and conflict, and the provision of climate change related education and information
- Support for appropriate climate offsetting schemes which will help to support poor women in mitigating and adapting to the effects of climate change
- More knowledge transfer of low carbon technologies to develop sustainable solutions in both developed and developing countries.
- Respect for indigenous cultures and values and avoidance of exporting western values and consumerism.

### **Stop Climate Chaos**

As member organisations of the Stop Climate Chaos coalition, both WEN and NFWI support demands on the UK Government to:

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<sup>9</sup> Carbon Trust 2006

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- Negotiate internationally for global warming to peak at no more than 2 deg. C above pre-industrial levels. This will mean global greenhouse gas emissions must peak by 2015 and then decline irreversibly thereafter.
- Institute a Carbon Budget to reduce UK greenhouse gas emissions by an average of at least 3% p.a.
- Give all necessary support to developing countries to help them adapt to climate change.

### **Conclusion**

The women of this country have the will to tackle climate change. What we need now is the way - which is currently made difficult by government inaction. With our concern for the environment, we are your single biggest constituency to the cause and an important part of the solution.



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## **BACKGROUND STATISTICS AND REPORTS**

Statistics show that women are more environmentally aware than men, more likely to be doing something about climate change but also more likely to suffer from its effects.

### **Caring and doing more about the environment**

In the UK, women spend more time shopping than men<sup>10</sup> and make the majority of purchases that have a direct impact on climate change, including food, clothing and household goods.<sup>11</sup> As household managers, they are also key to controlling the 30% of UK carbon emissions that are produced in the home.<sup>12</sup>

In a new poll of 3,000 consumers by Emap Advertising,<sup>13</sup> women's greener attitudes were a consistent finding of the research. For example, 84% of women versus 68% of men said they are worried about climate change as an issue facing our society's future. This survey found that women take more environmental action and encourage their male partners and families to do likewise. They are also 12% more likely than men to purchase green products and services and 10% more likely to pay attention to what companies say about their impact on the environment.

According to a recent climate change survey by Ipsos MORI,<sup>14</sup> 43% of UK women, versus 33% of men, say that "everyone" should be tackling climate change, not just government or business. This demonstrates women's greater willingness to make the lifestyle changes which will be necessary if the UK is to meet its carbon reduction targets.

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<sup>10</sup> Office of National Statistics Time Use Survey (2005)

<sup>11</sup> Office of National Statistics Expenditure and Food Survey (2006)

<sup>12</sup> Energy Saving Trust 2007

<sup>13</sup> Emap Advertising, "The Inside...on the Environment" panel (Feb 2007)

<sup>14</sup> Ipsos MORI Climate Change survey, September 2006

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Behaviour change is also essential to sustainability. According to WWF, in the UK we are currently living a three planet lifestyle. We can reduce one planet's worth of resource consumption through government and industry action. The other planet must come through behaviour change.<sup>15</sup> It will be women who will be the key instigators in achieving this.

### **Suffering from the effects of climate change**

In both developed and developing countries, women are being and will be disproportionately hit by the impacts of climate change due to our different social roles and status.

In the UK:

- One million more women live in poverty than men<sup>16</sup>
- 19.2% of single pensioner households and 16.8% of lone parent households are facing energy poverty – the majority of whom are women.<sup>17</sup>

Women experiencing poverty will therefore be under much more stress to buy cheap products, regardless of their environmental cost; financially they will also find it more difficult to afford swingeing environmental taxation. This suggests the need to make environmental products more affordable and to consider the impacts on poor women of environmental taxation.

In Europe:

- 70% of the deaths during the 2003 European heat wave were women.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> WWF Living Planet Report (2006)

<sup>16</sup> Households Below Average Income, Department for Work and Pensions, 2005/06

<sup>17</sup> UN Economic and Social Council, Engendering the Energy and Climate Change Debate (May 2006)

<sup>18</sup> BBC News Online, "French Heat Toll Almost 15,0000." September 25, 2003

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Globally:

- 70% of the world's poor are women<sup>19</sup>; these women are more likely to suffer as a consequence of climate change
- 85% of the people who die in climate-induced natural disasters are women.<sup>20</sup>
- 75% of environmental refugees are women<sup>21</sup>
- Women are also more likely to be the unseen victims of resource wars and violence as a result of climate change.

## **Under-representation of women in climate change decision making**

Women are underrepresented in all positions of power, representing only 17% of FTSE boardroom appointments, 18% of MPs, 24% of MEPs and 19% of scientists and engineers.<sup>22</sup> This is where important decisions are being made on climate change and women's voices are simply not being heard.

In countries with a higher proportion of women in government, more environmental treaties are ratified than in other nations.<sup>23</sup> Greater representation of women as policy makers will therefore help to ensure that climate change is given the highest legislative priority.

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<sup>19</sup> Denton in Masika, Gender, Development and Climate Change, 2002

<sup>20</sup> Mirza, MMQ (2003), Climate Change and Extreme Weather Events: can developing countries adapt? Climate Policy, vol 3, Issue 3.

<sup>21</sup> UN Refugees magazine, vol 1, #126 (2002)

<sup>22</sup> Cranfield School of Management (2004), Women & Equality Unit (2003), European Parliament (2004), Institute of Employment Studies Labour Force Survey (2005)

<sup>23</sup> Norgaard and York, Gender Equality and State Environmentalism, Gender & Society, vol 19, #4 (2005)

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### **The scientific evidence**

Scientific evidence from the IPCC, Stern Report and others, points to the overwhelming need for societies, particularly in developed countries such as the UK, to take urgent action to drastically cut their carbon emissions, reducing them by as much as 80% by 2050. To achieve this, the whole of society needs to be mobilised very quickly. Majority scientific opinion is that global greenhouse gas emissions must decline beyond 2015, which means we have no more than eight years to achieve a turn-around.

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## NFWI/WEN Women and Climate Change Survey

### Summary of Findings

Our survey underscores the main assertion of the Women's Manifesto on Climate Change: that climate change is a women's issue, affecting women differently given our different social role and status. Above all, the survey demonstrates the critical importance of UK women as consumers, educators and 'change agents,' driving the lifestyle changes which will be essential to meet national carbon reduction targets.

It also highlights the deep frustration of UK women, who are very concerned about the potential impact of climate change and are unhappy at the slow progress being made, by government and industry, to tackle it. What women want now is to see the UK Government matching its words with action.

Women in the UK make the majority of purchasing decisions that have a direct impact on climate change. We are also making changes to our lifestyles and setting the example for our families to follow. But we feel under-represented in environmental decision-making and insufficiently empowered to take action ourselves.

Women are also very concerned about the effects of climate change, not just here in the UK but also in developing countries.

### Level and areas of climate change concern

Politicians, business and opinion formers need to be aware of just how seriously women take climate change:

- 80% of women are very concerned about climate change

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- Women are very concerned about the impacts of climate change but especially its effect on future generations (85%), the impact on the poor (81%), declining plant, marine and animal life (81%) and more flooding, drought, and extreme weather (81%), water and food shortages (81%) and habitat destruction (80%)
- In contrast, there is relatively little concern (39%) about the impact of climate change on the economy
- Only 4% of women are confident that a solution will be found to climate change – 75% are “apprehensive” that actions will not be taken soon enough.

### **Behaviour change**

Women are the ones who are most likely to take action to change their lifestyles and encourage their families to do likewise:

- 94% say they have recently begun to make lifestyle changes
- Recycling (98%), refusing plastic bags and excess packaging (87%) and energy efficiency (86%) are the most popular actions now being taken and levels of activity are high in virtually all areas except growing your own food (41%) and switching to green electricity (23%).

Women want to go green but need more help to get there. It needs to be easier for women to take actions themselves:

- 34% of women say it's not that easy to go green, 50% say it's quite easy
- The areas of support which women want the most to reduce their impact on the environment are more green products or carbon labelling of goods (85%), lower prices for environmentally friendly products (85%) and more government grants and incentives (eg for energy efficiency and microgeneration) to reduce carbon emissions (82%).

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## **Women's importance as green consumers and educators**

Women have immense importance as consumers, taking most of the purchasing decisions that have a direct impact on climate change. Women make the majority of decisions in ALL of the areas we examined, including choosing a car and family holidays.

The areas where women are most likely to be wholly or largely responsible for decision-making are:

- Buying food (93%)
- Buying clothing (84%)
- Choosing household goods such as washing machines, dishwashers and other household products (82%).

Women are also the ones who are getting their families to go green in the first place and transmitting green values:

- 94% of women say they are trying to make their children and grandchildren aware of climate change and the actions they can take.

## **Women's priorities for action**

Women are very disappointed in government and industry's lack of response to climate change. They must do better if they want to engage women's support:

- 98% of women are keen to see the UK demonstrating world leadership in tackling climate change
- 97% of women don't think government and industry are doing enough to combat climate change.

Women generally favour incentives rather than penalties when it comes to motivating companies and individuals through environmental legislation:

- 63% favour rewarding good behaviour rather than penalising bad.

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What women want to see in terms of highest priorities for action are:

- More investment in renewables (86%)
- More encouragement of manufacturers to design environmentally friendly products (86%)
- Tougher carbon reduction targets (81%).

Women also support measures, such as tougher carbon trading standards and aviation tax, paid by the airlines rather than passengers, which will make business more responsible for the environmental damage they cause.

Women still feel ill informed about climate change:

- 52% of women say they'd like more environmental education offered by community groups.

### **Lack of women's representation in tackling climate change**

Despite our importance as consumers, educators and change agents, we simply don't have sufficient high level involvement in tackling climate change:

- 80% of women do not think there is enough women's involvement in environmental policy making, taking decisions or finding solutions to climate change.

Women would most like to see greater representation of women in:

- Making UK government policy on climate change (87%)
- Making international policy on climate change (86%).



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## **Survey background**

The survey was posted on both the NFWI and WEN websites during February and March 2007. Both members and non-members were encouraged to respond either online or by downloading and returning the completed questionnaire. Different age and ethnic groups responded to the survey.