

Empower Women, Impact Climate

The Women Delegates Fund



Women
Delegates
Fund 



The Women Delegates Fund (WDF) was established in 2009 with support from the Government of Finland. The WDF is a project of the Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA), implemented by the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) in partnership with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). For more information on the WDF, please contact Bridget Burns, bridget@wedo.org

For these and more stories about all the women participating in the Women Delegates Fund, please visit our website at www.wedo.org. For more information on the Global Gender and Climate Alliance, please visit www.gender-climate.org.

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For 2011, the WDF is proud to support the following women to the UNFCCC:

Emelda Adam, Tanzania
Sieane Laurine Abdul-Baki, Liberia
Nurzat Abdyrasulova, Kyrgyz Republic
Ferdousi Begum, Bangladesh
Patience Dampthey, Ghana
Nguyen Thi Kim Hao, Vietnam
Meena Khanal, Nepal
Christiana Louwa, Kenya
Joe Marie Judie Roy, Haiti
Adi Ulamila Vakalalabure, Cook Islands

In addition to these women, over the past three years the WDF is proud to have funded women delegates to the UNFCCC from the following countries: Bahamas; Burundi; Democratic Republic of Congo; Ecuador; Gabon; Indonesia; Ivory Coast; Lesotho; Malaysia; Panama; Rwanda; Solomon Islands; St. Lucia.



MINISTRY FOR FOREIGN
AFFAIRS OF FINLAND



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Women Delegates Fund participants at the UNFCCC meeting in Bonn, Germany in June, 2011

If climate change plans and policies are going to be effective, women have to be at the negotiating table. The Women Delegates Fund supports the participation and leadership of women at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) negotiations.

Climate change is the most urgent challenge of the 21st century, and the experiences and perspectives of women are integral to solutions. Yet gender inequalities continue to challenge women's full participation, particularly in power and decision-making spheres.

At the UNFCCC, where negotiations will determine global climate policy, women account for 35% of all national Party delegates. As Heads of Delegations, women account for 12% to 15%.¹

While some governments are receptive to

promoting a gendered approach in climate change decision-making and plans, the delegations themselves are not gender balanced. Chairs of UNFCCC processes acknowledge that there are few women delegates in a position to take on leadership roles within the negotiations.

Recognizing a need to support the participation and leadership of women in the negotiations, particularly from countries most affected by climate change, in 2009, WEDO and the GGCA partnered with the Government of Finland to launch the Women Delegates Fund (WDF).

(Continued on back cover)

Delegate Profile

Patience Damptey

GHANA



Patience Damptey has been in public service for almost all of her life. With a background in chemistry, environmental science, and gender policy planning, Patience began her career in 1973 as a high school teacher. Thirty-eight years and multiple government and ministry positions later, Patience is officially retired, but can still be seen walking the halls of the UNFCCC as one of the top negotiators for Ghana and the Africa Group. Back home, she works tirelessly for the coalition she co-founded, Gender Action on Climate Change for Equality and Sustainability (GACCES); a coalition of individuals and organizations from all regions of Ghana who are committed to the promotion of women's rights and gender equality in climate change responses.

Climate change has put a stress on livelihood activities in Ghana. In rural areas, extreme weather events and erratic rainfall patterns have left little crop certainty, forcing people to take on other livelihood activities to support themselves and their families. Women and children often must travel long distances to collect food and water, precious time that interferes with their education.


Patience has long understood the disastrous effects of climate change on livelihoods in her country. Through her work with the Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology, Patience has been involved in climate change negotiations for the past thirteen years, attending her first meeting at COP4 in 1998. She was always very focused on the human face of climate impacts, and particularly, the impact on women. When the Women Delegates Fund was launched in 2009, then-retired Patience was one of the first to be recommended to receive support. Her consistent participation and strong leadership resulted in her being nominated the coordinator on adaptation for the entire Africa

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Group at COP15 and, just this year, being named to the Consultative Group of Experts (CGE) to the UNFCCC. For Patience, the WDF has been instrumental in helping her achieve her goals. “The WDF has really given me confidence. I am able to better articulate the inputs that I want to see within adaptation and the rest of the negotiating text.”

Patience's participation in the WDF reaches further than the UNFCCC. In her work with GACCES, Patience brings knowledge and resources provided through the WDF to the national level to raise awareness and help cultivate a clear understanding of the causes and impacts of climate change.

Negotiating at the UNFCCC can be both challenging and frustrating. Disappointment in Copenhagen affected Patience's mental and physical strength to return to the table. However, in spite of this, Patience believes that these are battles worth fighting. “The motivation for me is that after the sleepless nights and deadlocked talks we have shown we are able to get a result. Even just getting something like the Adaptation Committee is fulfilling to me. The sleepless nights haven't come to nothing, we were able to get something for the people who are suffering and for the developing communities.”

Patience remains driven by a passion to integrate and maintain gender in UNFCCC text and strives to see an increase in women's participation in climate change decision-making at the conferences. Away from work, Patience spends her time gardening, playing tennis, and lately, anticipating the upcoming births of her grandchildren. 

Delegate Profile

Ulamila Wragg

COOK ISLANDS



The Pacific Islands confront climate change in a way most of us can't begin to imagine. Sea level rise threatens not only the Pacific Islands' resources—saltwater intrusion threatens freshwater and fertile soils for food production—but also endangers these countries' very existence with the loss of several hectares of land each year. As UNFCCC Delegate and Cook Island-native Ulamila Wragg says, "Climate change cuts across every aspect of our society. The impacts are not indirect; they are directly affecting the livelihoods of our people, from education to government spending to our daily living."

A journalist, Ulamila has covered climate change and its impacts on the environment, economy, and livelihoods of the people of the Pacific at length for many years. It was in this capacity that she attended her first UNFCCC meeting—COP14 in Poznan; she was one of five Pacific journalists chosen to cover the important event. While there, she participated in a joint side event of the Global Gender and Climate Alliance, highlighting the linkages between gender and climate change. With a history of work on women's rights, Ulamila's experience at COP14 helped to fuse her passion for work on women and on the environment and ultimately changed the course of her personal and professional life. Inspired by the event and overcome with urgency to raise awareness on gender and climate change in the Pacific, Ulamila used her media background to write articles on the issue and helped found the Pacific Gender Climate Coalition (PGCC). "These days," says Ulamila, "I spend ninety-five percent of my time working voluntarily on gender and climate change issues in the Pacific, and spend the other five-percent on media work, which puts food on the table."

"It's like sitting with my sisters and discussing our children going to school and how we can help each other. It's given me a better understanding of the outside world."

Since 2009, Ulamila has also been a member of the Cook Islands National Delegation at the UNFCCC, funded by the Women Delegates Fund, serving as their Media Officer. The WDF has provided Ulamila with a crucial entrypoint to speak up on issues of gender and climate change in the lesser-known Pacific Islands. "Through the WDF," she says, "I've been able to bring in the specific scenarios of the Pacific to the UNFCCC. I've been on speaking tours and worked on other areas of public awareness raising, but the WDF gave the Pacific women and the Pacific people another voice [on gender issues], a consistent voice in the negotiations."

The WDF has also provided Ulamila with an international network of women who have come to feel like family. "We [the women delegates] can sit as negotiators and know nothing about the other people there. But, with the WDF, it's like a family, a family where we share; I'm sitting and discussing with my colleagues from Africa, Asia, Europe, the Caribbean," says Ulamila. "It's like sitting with my sisters and discussing our children going to school and how we can help each other. It's given me a better understanding of the outside world."

A mother of four, Ulamila regrets that, in a world altered by climate change, her children are unable to experience the biodiversity of the Islands the way that she and previous generations of family did while they were young. Despite the current struggles and challenges ahead, Ulamila is confident in the perseverance of the Pacific. "We've been living here for years; our culture is so rich and our women are so knowledgeable. How can anyone undervalue us?"

Delegate Profile

Meena Khanal

NEPAL



Very unique—a woman in the predominantly male Nepalese government—Meena Khanal of Kathmandu, Nepal always dreamed that she would work for her country, traveling the world and serving those in need of aid. Passionate about protecting the natural environment and helping the people of Nepal, Meena’s career took her from working at the Ministry of Tourism to her position today, the Joint Secretary, of the Ministry of Environment and its Gender Focal Point.

Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world. More than eighty percent of its total area falls in the rural sector, and women’s daily activities in these areas—like water, food, and fuel collection—depend on natural resources that are at risk due to changes in precipitation and temperature patterns, variations which cause flood, drought, and ecosystem degradation. Women generally lack access to the opportunities and resources that are available to men: they have less access to an education, less social and political status, and make less pay for the same work. All of these factors make Nepalese women particularly vulnerable to climate change.


Meena’s journey has been revelatory with regard to gender, both in the personal barriers she faces and the lens through which she views her work. “At COP13, it seemed that the prevailing belief was that in terms of climate change, gender didn’t matter,” says Meena. Having received a post-graduate diploma in Women’s Studies, Meena set out to research the linkages between gender and climate change, particularly in the context of Nepal.

Meena felt compelled to be part of the UNFCCC process and ensure there was a women representative on the

delegation. In 2009, this was made possible through the support of the Women Delegates Fund. However, getting to the meetings was only the first step. Meena still found it challenging to find her place in the negotiations and meaningfully engage in the process; “At the beginning, it was often difficult to have a voice in the outcomes.” Feeling like she had a support network and access to capacity building was integral to Meena’s success at the meetings. Says Meena, “Having the support of other women delegates as well as the capacity building I gained in the WDF program has enhanced my confidence to be able to participate fully in the UNFCCC process.”

In 2010, Meena’s strengthened confidence led her to propose and deliver an intervention for gender considerations in the subsidiary body negotiations of the Least Developed Countries Expert Group (LEG), which were accepted into the final text. She was also recently appointed the National Project Director of the Pilot Program for Climate Resilience. “I feel empowered and

satisfied that I’m being heard. If it were not for the support of the WDF, I don’t believe I would have this opportunity.”

A mother of two who loves to cook, do needlework and spend time with her family, Meena continues to plug away at the environmental issues plaguing the women of Nepal. She feels that climate change issues and international affairs are still male-dominated fields—microcosms of a male-dominated world—and she hopes that women will continue flourish through the WDF. 

“Having the support of other women delegates as well as the capacity building I gained in the WDF program has enhanced my confidence to be able to participate fully in the UNFCCC process.”

Delegate Profile

Joe Marie Judie Roy

HAITI



For Haiti, the impacts of climate change are an everyday reality which has resulted in the devastating loss of life, environmental degradation, and political instability. Extreme weather events, tropical storms, and hurricanes have caused severe flooding year after year, affecting the lives of millions.

Like many Haitians, Joe Marie 'Judie' Roy knows better than most the challenges faced in a country devastated by natural disaster. The catastrophic 2010 earthquake took the lives of thousands of individuals and uprooted the everyday lives of millions more. The physical and mental shock of such an event shook the small country to its core and, as Judie says, "almost broke my spirit completely." "We lost so much," says Judie, "our people, our infrastructure, and some of our strongest advocates." Judie is referring particularly to leading women's rights activists who were lost in the earthquake. In the face of such loss, Judie's conviction to serve her country and its people has emboldened. "Since the earthquake my goals have become more urgent. I am determined to keep working to raise awareness of the impacts of climate change on all human beings, especially women."


Throughout her life, Judie was always very focused on politics and current affairs. She wanted to understand the political and economic situation of Haiti and the kind of development model which could work for her country. With a PhD in Political Economy and a passion for improving people's livelihoods, Judie worked with grassroots organizations and community leaders to understand their needs and challenges. She was particularly focused on empowering women and promoting their leadership.

Her work and ideas gained recognition and led her towards a life in politics. In 2006, she became one of the first women to run for President of Haiti. "I

knew I could not win because I didn't have enough resources for the campaign," says Judie, "but I felt I had to run." Although she lost the election, Judie began working for the Ministry of Environment. Her primary mandate was to mainstream gender into their policy and programs.

This work led Judie to the UNFCCC process. She felt it was essential that there be a woman on the Haitian delegation and that women's voices be represented. However, she was told there was not enough funding. In 2009, the launch of the Women Delegates Fund provided Judie with the opportunity she had been looking for and since then, she has attended several meetings to speak on behalf of women and her country. In 2011, she was nominated to the Technology Executive Committee as the representative of Least Developed Countries (LDCs); she is one of only two women on the committee.

For Judie, feeling part of a network of women delegates has been essential to her work at the UNFCCC. "In the WDF, the women delegates feel like they are working together regardless of what country they live in. It can be challenging to feel that we have made success in these negotiations—especially when you go home to women and families who have lost everything to natural disasters. But this network of women delegates supports my work and has influenced my effectiveness here."

Being part of this process has supported her voice and the voice of others to be heard. "People in my country now look to me to provide solutions in times of need." She is committed to working at the UNFCCC to make sure that least developed countries like Haiti gain a stronger voice in the negotiations. 

"In the WDF, the women delegates feel like they are working together regardless of what country they live in."




“Our leadership reaches more than just here... we can go back home and translate what is happening at this level to those on the ground who are being directly impacted by climate change. We can serve as role models at all levels for the importance of women’s leadership and participation.”

—Sieane Abdul Baki, Liberia



(Introduction, continued)

The goal of the WDF is to increase the participation of women delegates at the UNFCCC by providing travel support to women from the Global South, particularly those who have both climate change and women’s empowerment expertise. Since 2009, the WDF has evolved from a travel fund into a comprehensive leadership program, responding to the specific needs of sponsored delegates and building on their individual capacities.

A key strength of the WDF is the support network and capacity building it provides to its participants. The fund is about much more than simply bringing women to the table. It is about building leadership by enhancing their knowledge and skills with training in negotiations, media, and communications. Participants are provided with expert presentations and research materials on the different topics and aspects of climate change negotiations, such as adaptation and climate finance, as well as information on opportunities for influencing national level implementation. Consistency of participation in these meetings and an emphasis on networking and peer support are essential to bridging the gap in women’s leadership in the UNFCCC process. 

Impact of the WDF

Initiatives and networking led by WDF delegates contributed to groundbreaking gender-responsive text from Cancun (8 references)

New gender considerations in three major UNFCCC programs since Cancun

Female delegate representation at 34%—the highest ever

More than 20 women delegates, previously unable to attend UNFCCC meetings, participated effectively

Reached over 2000 climate negotiators and decision-makers through various events