Gender Data Must Strengthen UNFCCC's Gender Action Plan at COP29 and Beyond

At COP29, Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change will complete a final review of the Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender and its Gender Action Plan, which will expire in 2024. First adopted just ten years ago, the Lima Work Programme and its subsequent Gender Action Plan—or GAP—have represented a significant step forward in global climate policy, working to ensure that UNFCCC processes and decisions formally include gender considerations for the first time. As with any internationally negotiated policy text, however, the current GAP is imperfect, and lacks robust integration of an essential tool for advancing gender-responsive climate action: gender data.

Gender data helps governments identify and respond to the disparate effects of climate change by:

- Illuminating the unique and often disproportionate impacts of climate change on women, girls, and gender-diverse people;

- Documenting their contributions to climate change initiatives; and

- Highlighting solutions for strengthening gender-responsive adaptation, mitigation, and resilience initiatives.

Gender data is a critical accountability tool for evidence-based decision-making. It can inform the design and evaluation of more effective gender-responsive policies and programs, from national commitments like Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) to global policy frameworks. However, efforts to collect and use gender data to inform these commitments have been slow, and high-quality, regularly collected, and internationally comparable gender data remains widely unavailable for many environment and climate change issues worldwide.

While the current GAP addresses gender data in a handful of activities, it lacks corresponding targets or indicators for any of its suggested outputs, and ultimately fails to incorporate data in a meaningful way throughout the framework. This approach leaves stakeholders with little direction on priority areas for increased gender data collection and analysis, fails to hold governments accountable for using gender data to inform national climate action plans and policies, and ultimately prevents the Secretariat, Parties, and other relevant stakeholders from being able to monitor implementation effectively.

As the existing Lima Work Programme draws to a close, Parties can rectify these gaps and build on past progress by integrating gender data throughout a newly negotiated framework. Parties can also use renewal as an opportunity to encourage gender-environment data collection and use at the national level, working to drive more effective gender-responsive climate action both multilaterally and domestically.

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Following a summer of negotiations, Parties appear poised to adopt a renewed Lima Work Programme this month, though the immediate availability of a corresponding Gender Action Plan is far less certain. Whether the full text is in place by COP or Parties continue to negotiate into next year, in order to enable more effective monitoring and evaluation, hold stakeholders accountable, and ultimately make the GAP more actionable, a new negotiated GAP should:

- **Ensure that gender data is firmly anchored throughout the GAP framework:** Any future iteration of the GAP must be strengthened by establishing a more robust and specific gender-responsive indicator framework. Gender data should be treated as a pillar of the GAP itself, with a new section—in addition to responsibilities, timeline, deliverables/outputs, and level of implementation—that outlines clear targets and indicators for each activity under the GAP. Having well-defined indicators in place will make the GAP more ambitious and enable more effective monitoring of its implementation. This can be accomplished with a few straightforward additions to the existing action plan, building on what already exists to better integrate gender data throughout the framework.

- **Include explicit references and links to other UNFCCC processes and mechanisms:** While the Enhanced Lima Work Programme and GAP took an essential step toward advancing gender-responsive and human rights-based climate policy and action, the current monitoring framework is siloed from other UNFCCC procedures and milestones. A future GAP must explicitly reference other UNFCCC mechanisms within its activities to better mainstream gender and gender data across relevant frameworks.

- **Identify priority areas for action to increase gender data collection at the national level:** The current GAP offers Parties little direction on priority areas for increased gender data collection. A future GAP can include additional guidance for Parties and an expanded set of priority areas to focus on—within NAPs, NDCs, etc.—as relevant to their national context. As a starting point, Data2X's recent mapping exercise identifies critical gender data gaps and priorities for building the evidence base on the environment and climate change.

- **Promote an intersectional approach to gender data disaggregation and analysis:** Some women, girls, and gender-diverse people are more vulnerable and affected by climate change than others because of poverty, disability, or other factors. This is why, wherever possible, a future GAP should encourage Parties to adopt an intersectional approach to gender data collection and analysis—for example, by disaggregating data by multiple dimensions to capture differences based on income, age, race, ethnicity, location (urban/rural), indigenous status, migration status, disability, and other relevant characteristics.

- **Ensure inclusive practices for gender data collection:** To ensure that a new GAP is as effective, equitable, and inclusive as possible, women, girls, and gender-diverse people must be directly involved in decision-making about the specific measures and indicators included in a new GAP framework. Data collection processes for every indicator should also be participatory and gender inclusive under each GAP activity. Further, a future GAP should move away from data collection and analysis focused exclusively on a male/female binary to include gender-diverse people.

- **Make use of non-conventional data sources:** A new GAP can promote the use of non-conventional sources for the collection of gender data, including big data, geospatial information, citizen-generated data, and feminist participatory action research. These data sources hold enormous potential to help close gender data gaps, but are not recognized or leveraged in the current GAP framework.

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