

# **WORLD: Women and climate change: the challenges women face to be considered as key actors**

By Priti Darooka

The Land Portal (04.12.2019) – <https://bit.ly/2Rz5bcL> – I want to thank IRAW Asia Pacific for organising a two day strategic dialogue on Women Human Rights and Climate Justice. Some of the points shared here are points discussed at this dialogue in Bangkok in November 2019.

I also want to thank contributions by Feminist Land Platform members, especially Farida Akhter of Bangladesh.

The Feminist Land Platform echoes and endorses the relevant issues raised by the author Priti Darooka, who is a founder member of the Platform. The paper was presented during the International Land Coalition Africa meeting in Abidjan, on the 23rd November 2019.

## ***Climate change impacts women differently***

Climate change impacts everyone. However, the impact of climate change is experienced differently based on one's socio-economic position. It is important to realize that women

and men are impacted differently, not only as users of energy, water etc. but also as workers and contributors.

Women are the food producers of the world. (According to FAO women produce more than 50% of global food). Natural calamities such as droughts, floods, hurricane, cyclones, earthquake, landslides etc. due to climate change particularly impact women producers, indigenous women, rural women, women from marginalised groups, whose lives and livelihoods rely on natural resources such as land, water and forest. Millions of women who are in agriculture, the informal economy or are self-employed are exposed to toxic chemicals, extractives, and development projects adopted by countries. They are in the bottom most tier of the supply chain, taking up hazardous occupations with precarious working conditions. Therefore, climate crisis impacts women most critically.

### ***From vulnerable group to active actors***

In climate debates, women are profiled as victims or vulnerable groups—severely impacted. However, these platforms generally don't recognise women as active climate actors with knowledge and agency. Women's unequal participation in decision-making processes, including land and natural resource management, and in paid labour market continues to prevent them from being part of climate related planning, policy making and implementation. The question to raise is whether the role of women or the concerns and priorities of women in their multiple realities are taken into account in the climate solutions, in just transition to green economy or green Jobs. Women are often affected by the change and have a more active role to play.

The capitalist and neoliberal model takes nature for granted. It unfortunately believes that nature is a bottomless pit and will continue to sustain this excessive consumption with exploitative patterns of production forever. The same model also renders women's work invisible, especially the unpaid care work and unpaid work in subsistence forms of livelihood. In market economy if you consume what you produce you have not produced at all. Production only has value if it is for the market. Most of women's work, especially in global South is for self-consumption. Hence, most of women's work is of less or no value. The current economic policies is built on women's labour but considers women's labour as the same bottomless pit that will absorb all adversities and continue to provide care and subsistence limitlessly, and always.

### ***Claiming for Climate Justice***

The irony of current climate debates is that we want to change nothing, but we want climate change or climate justice. We are not willing to change our consumption patterns or lifestyle. Transition from fossil fuel to renewables for example is not going to resolve the climate crisis. There also needs to be changes in consumption and lifestyles.

The solutions to address climate crisis are sort through science and technology – renewables or reduction in carbon emission through climate change adaptations. The solutions are not human centric but science centric. Women due to their gendered role and cultural norms do have indigenous knowledge in sustainable resource management. The knowledge held by women at community level is scientific but is not valued. For

example, in several agricultural communities, seeds are maintained by women and proper gene pool is ensured. This is an in-depth scientific knowledge that is passed from one generation to another – mother to daughters and within the community of women. And if women's leadership is engaged to address climate crisis there would surely be sustainable, inclusive and 'scientific' solutions.

Climate change effects are aggravated through loss of biodiversity that affects poor women and their food from the common resources and common land.

It is also ironic that the top 10 richest countries of the world are the top countries in global philanthropy. Developed countries hold technical solution and continue to pressure less developing countries to have climate adaptation solutions. Through philanthropic grants these rich countries also provide west based consultants to provide technical support to governments and institutions in the South. This whole process also renders local knowledge, especially held by women on the ground regarding traditional resilience practices absolutely irrelevant and useless.

These same rich countries, however, have their multinationals and brands exploit labour, and environment in these developing countries.

**By leaving women out from the solutions, most climate change solutions directly or indirectly further contribute towards gender inequalities.** For example, with all the noise around shift towards renewables, governments have not provided women

with clean, green energy for cooking. Women still in most parts of the world, especially in the global South, continue to burn biomass for cooking.

Climate change debates and solutions therefore need to recognise women's role as workers and producers and as guardians of environment and nature and ensure they are at the centre of all discussions and solutions as key stakeholders.

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## **Ecuador unrest: Amazonian women denounce 'state violence'**

*Indigenous protesters accuse security forces of using excessive force as demonstrations continue for tenth day.*

By Kimberley Brown

Al Jazeera (13.10.2019) – <https://bit.ly/2oHUBE3> – Lineth Calapucha distributed blankets and clothes to other protesters in a cultural centre in the Ecuadorian capital Quito on Friday as the sounds of bombs from tear gas and pepper spray echoed outside.

It was the ninth day of anti-government protests that began as calls for President Lenin Moreno to abandon fuel subsidy cuts

and labour and tax reforms. But for indigenous protesters, it has since grown into a wider movement against the government's treatment of indigenous people and their land.

"What we're asking for is peace, tranquillity, and that the government understand that we, the people and [indigenous] nationalities act peacefully," Calapucha told Al Jazeera, as women and children streamed into the cultural centre to take shelter.

"Look, even now, we weren't even doing anything and they started launching tear gas," she said.

Calapucha is one of dozens of women from the Amazonian Women's collective who travelled to Quito to join the national protests and denounce the "inhumane repression" of protesters by police.

"We are women of peace, defenders of our territories and our families," the collective said in a statement on Saturday.

"We have come in peace but the state, as always, received us again with violence," the women added. "We want to build a society and a country where our rights are respected."

Moreno declared a state of emergency and moved the government out of Quito earlier this week as tens of thousands of protesters converged on the capital, vowing to stay put until the government reverses its decision to cut the decades-old

fuel subsidies and roll back the reforms.

The government, however, has also remained defiant, saying the reforms are necessary to comply with a \$4.2bn loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Calapucha said indigenous people reject the austerity measures, but their complaints go much further: They are demanding that the government stop all oil and mining in indigenous territory.

“We felt from the Amazon what was happening here in Quito and Guayaquil. That hurt us,” Calapucha said.

On Friday night, clashes began after police fired tear gas and pepper spray on a crowd of about 20,000 protesters in front of the National Assembly. The protesters had been rallying for hours, chanting anti-government slogans, with indigenous women singing and burning palo santo, a tree native to Ecuador, in front of the heavily guarded building.

By Saturday, the government and indigenous leaders announced they would begin talks to negotiate the details of the austerity measures. But protests continued, prompting Moreno to impose a curfew in the capital.

## **Excessive force**

Protesters have accused security forces of using excessive force. At least five people have been killed, 800 severely wounded and more than 1,000 people arrested since the protests began, the state ombudsman said late on Friday.

Inocencio Tucumbi, an indigenous leader, was killed earlier this week when a tear gas canister fired by police hit his head, according to witnesses. The indigenous community honoured him by holding a mass procession and mass on Wednesday. They also detained eight police officers for several hours during the day, forcing them to witness the mass, before releasing them to the United Nations officials in the evening.

The vast majority of those wounded have been in Quito, where police have been accused of firing tear gas and pepper spray near hospital entrances, as well the cultural centre and universities, where the more than 10,000 indigenous people have been sleeping. This includes pregnant women and small children.

“There has been an excessive use of tear gas, of which weighs a lot on the protesters, but also on the girls and women who are around,” says Monica Vega Puebla, legal accessor with the human rights organisation INREDH.

Government officials were not available for comment, but according to local media, Interior Minister Maria Paula Romo apologised for tear gas being fired at the universities, saying: “These are places where indigenous people are staying and have to remain safe places and they will be. These acts



have no justification and will not be repeated.”

Romo, however, denied that there has been an overuse of force, and instead continuously pointing out the violent acts by protesters.

Calapucha said there were clashes with police in the Amazon city of Puyo, where she has been protesting since the uprising began last week, but it never reached the same level of violence as Quito.

For the Amazonian women and many indigenous people in Ecuador, this month’s protests only highlight what they call years of repression by the government.

“We want a country where we don’t have to live in fear that our lands will be destroyed, our rivers will be polluted, our forests will be cut down. Where we are never afraid of our children being discriminated against and excluded in their own lands,” the Amazonian women said in their statement.

“Yes, we are angry,” Calapucha added, but “this is how we chant: ‘not one more bomb, not one more rock.’”

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# CANADA: Femicide report: Woman or girl murdered every 2.5 days in 2018

*A goal of the report is to acknowledge that circumstances surrounding women's violent deaths differs from those of men so that femicide can be better prevented*

By Nicole Thompson

The National Post (20.01.2019) – <https://bit.ly/2MDr0TQ>– A woman or girl was killed every 2.5 days on average in Canada last year, according to an inaugural report on femicide that argues the issue must be better understood in order to reduce the number of slayings.

The first annual report by the Canadian Femicide Observatory for Justice and Accountability – titled “#CallItFemicide” – was released Wednesday and answers a call from the United Nations for countries to better track gender-related killings of women, said lead author Myrna Dawson, the observatory's director and a professor at the University of Guelph.

“It really drove home how often this was happening when we were monitoring this on a daily basis,” she said. “Women are still most at risk of men that they are intimate with or who they should be able to trust.”

The goal of the report, at least in part, is to acknowledge that the circumstances and motivations surrounding women's violent deaths differs from those of men so that femicide can be better understood and prevented.

"The context in which women and girls are killed is vastly different because they're most often killed by people they know, and that's in contrast to males who are most often killed by acquaintances and strangers," Dawson said. "Calling it for what it is and recognizing the distinctiveness underscores the fact that we need different types of prevention."

The report said 148 women and girls were killed in 133 incidents in 2018, with 140 people accused in their deaths. In 12 of the 133 incidents, no accused has been identified. Some cases involve multiple accused.

More than 90 per cent of those accused were men.

In many cases, a police investigation is still ongoing, Dawson said, adding that researchers intend to follow the cases through the justice system the coming years to better understand the factors that went into each.

The statistics include a van attack that left eight women and two men dead in Toronto last year. The accused in that case, Alek Minassian, has been charged with 10 counts of first-degree murder and 16 of attempted murder. He is set to stand trial in February 2020.

The women who died in the van attack are among the 21 per cent allegedly killed in 2018 by a stranger. By contrast, 53 per cent were allegedly killed by intimate partners, according to the report. Another 13 per cent were allegedly killed by other male family members.

That includes the case of Krassimira Pejcinovski and her 13-year-old daughter Venallia, who were allegedly slain by the elder Pejcinovski's partner in May 2018. Her 15-year-old son Roy was also killed in the incident, but is not included in the statistics.

The numbers and demographic information were pulled from media reports of the deaths, the study said. Dawson said information from the media was more handily available and at least as accurate as information from official sources. But the report notes that in coming years, as these cases progress through the justice system, researchers will look at court records to track updates.

Dawson said there are some demographics disproportionately represented in the statistics. For instance, the report indicates Indigenous women represent only about five per cent of the population, but made up 36 per cent of the women and girls killed by violence. Thirty-four per cent of the women and girls were killed in rural areas, where only 16 per cent of the population lives, the report said.

Understanding these issues is key to preventing further femicides, said Julie Lalonde, a women's rights advocate and

public educator.

For instance, she noted, funding for sexual assault centres and women's shelters is distributed on a per capita basis in Ontario, which puts women in sparsely populated areas at an even greater disadvantage.

"The argument is there's less of a need (in rural areas). Perhaps in terms of numbers, but you have a more complex need in rural communities that requires more resources, because you have to travel long distances. You don't have public transit for people to get away," Lalonde said.

She said statistics like those in the report also help cut down on misconceptions about violence against women, such as the idea that women in abusive relationships should just leave.

"We don't talk about things like criminal harassment or the fact that most women are killed after leaving or declaring that they're going to leave a partner," she said. "We have to challenge all the myths and stereotypes that tell women it's their own fault."

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# **CANADA: End forced sterilizations of Indigenous women**

By Nickita Longman

The Washington Post (4.12.2018) – <https://wapo.st/2G2uH69>– Last month 60 Indigenous women sued the Saskatoon Health Region, the province of Saskatchewan, the Canadian government and medical professionals for their experiences with coerced, forced or pressured sterilization in Saskatchewan over the course of 20 to 25 years. The procedures, which occurred from about the 1930s to as recently as 2017, targeted Indigenous women specifically. Each claimant is filing for \$7 million in compensation, citing psychological and physical damage since the procedures.

While some women do not recall giving consent for sterilization, others say they consented because of post-delivery exhaustion and persistence from health staff. Some women state that they were unclear about the permanent damage

such procedures would have or were told that the sterilization could be reversed later. Others cite that health officials leveraged the procedure as a means to be able to see their newborn children immediately after birth.

This is plainly an act of genocide and should not be labeled as anything less, in accordance with Article II of the United Nations convention on genocide which prohibits “imposing measures intended to prevent birth within a group.”

In November 2015, two Indigenous women contacted local media to tell their personal experiences with the sterilization procedure within the Saskatoon Health Region. Brenda Pelletier reported that after providing consent post-birth, she had done so to relieve the badgering and pestering of health staff. Once on the operating table, the exhausted mother once again contested the operation, but the procedure was carried out despite her protest.

In an interview on Oct. 27, 2017, Alisa Lombard, a lawyer with Maurice Law who filed the statements, posed the question: Where would our communities be if not for the coerced or forced sterilization of our women? The procedures have larger implications for our community and its ability to thrive and work toward self-determination.

Sen. Yvonne Boyer, a Métis lawyer and former nurse who has conducted an external review on tubal ligations in the Saskatoon Health Region, has suggested that if this happened in Saskatoon, it has likely also happened in other cities on the prairies where the Indigenous population is dense. The

government of Canada has had a long history of violence and oppression against Indigenous people, and this is especially true on the prairies. Saskatchewan in particular has one of the highest incarceration rates of Indigenous people of any province in Canada; most victims of police shootings in Saskatchewan were Indigenous; it also has one of the highest rates of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls, and alarming rates of poverty, including child poverty, both on and off reserve.

The harm of ongoing colonization, including theft of land, resources and children, is no secret on the Canadian prairies. It should be noted that the child welfare system is big business in Canada. As it stands, there are more Indigenous children in the government's care than there were at the height of Canada's infamous residential school era. In fact, Saskatchewan hosted the last of the residential school closures as recently as 1996. Is sterilization the government's attempt at addressing the very social conditions it has created over time? Is forced sterilization of Indigenous women the Canadian state's most reasonable solution to a population living in enforced poverty?

The Canadian government, the province of Saskatchewan and the Saskatoon Health Region have remained complicit in yet another form of contemporary genocide under the guise of eugenic ideology. It has attempted the erasure of Indigenous motherhood and in turn has limited the growth of the Indigenous nation. In the House of Commons on Nov. 21, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said the "coerced sterilization of some Indigenous women is a serious violation of human rights" and acknowledged the systemic discrimination and racism that Indigenous people face within the health care system. But at this time, the Liberal government has not taken concrete



action as it continues to sidestep the nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous people it promised in its platform.

Sen. Boyer has called for a nationwide review; Lombard, the lawyer, has delivered her findings in Geneva to the U.N. Committee Against Torture. Before the lawsuit cases hit the courtroom in 2019, the physicians performing these procedures, as well as the nurses and social workers who are assisting by pressuring for consent, should be prevented from practicing medicine. All levels of government need to immediately address this issue and ban sterilization without free, prior and informed consent from each patient.

Forced, coerced or pressured sterilization of Indigenous women breaches the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' definition of "free, prior, and informed consent," which in Canada is often cited in relation to land. It is important to note that in many Indigenous traditions, the land is viewed as mothering. The ravaging of the land and water in the name of colonization and capitalism has devastating effects on the living. It stunts our growth and, in some cases, our survival. This same lens can be used when understanding the damaging effects that sterilization can have on a woman physically.

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