



Concept Note and Agenda for the Capacity Building on Gender Equality and Climate Change

11 December 2024, Athens, Greece

Titania Athens Hotel (<https://www.titania.gr/titania-athens-hotel/>)

1. Background

The intersection of gender and climate change has gained prominence as a critical area for action, particularly in the Euro-Mediterranean region, warming 20% faster than the global average. Women, especially those in vulnerable and impoverished communities, face a disproportionate burden from the impacts of climate change. The nexus Gender Equality and Climate Change is a key priority identified in the [5th UfM Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society](#), the political framework of UfM within the Women empowerment dossier.

Women in the MENA region are particularly vulnerable to the economic and social impacts of climate change. According to the World Bank, the MENA region is one of the most water-scarce areas globally, where climate-induced droughts and environmental stress exacerbate the vulnerabilities of female-led households and businesses. Moreover, the gender gaps in the MENA financial sector are stark, with **less than 5% of businesses being women-led**, compared to a global average of 23-26%. At the funding stage, women entrepreneurs in male-dominated sectors are 26% less likely to use external equity and 48% less likely to access Venture Capital (VC) funding. Concerning the entrepreneurial activity within the MENA region, female **entrepreneurship rates in the region are the lowest globally**, at just 4 %, far below the global average of around 12%. This lack of financial access hampers women's resilience to climate change and diminishes their entrepreneurial potential, particularly in green sectors like renewable energy. Indeed, globally **women are also underrepresented in the energy sector**, especially in STEM and leadership roles,



with only 32% working in renewable energy, and in MENA, only 20% of women seek employment in this sector.¹

Besides these economic constraints, **women in the MENA Region** – one of the most affected regions worldwide by the climate change’s impacts – face **climate vulnerability**. Women in climate-vulnerable areas face triple burdens, by being overrepresented in sectors susceptible to climate risk, limited by structural barriers in finance and technology, and by being the ones managing household climate risks, all of which intensify their exposure. Furthermore, according to Res4africa’s report, Women tend to carry the burden of “energy poverty” with the resulting negative effects such as devoting less time to income-earning or educational activities.

Despite all these challenges, women are key agents of change, playing a crucial role in community resilience, disaster response, and climate governance. Indeed, evidence shows that when women participate in decision-making bodies, climate policies are more stringent and effective. It is worth noting that women also play a key role in the transition to a green economy, therefore the sustainable energy sector has the potential to enhance their entrepreneurship in this field. Adequate public finance is essential to build women capacity and ensure the availability of skills to meet current and future energy demands.

According to [the WE-Fi report](#), women already have a strong presence in three key areas: Energy systems and last-mile interventions; the circular economy; and food systems. For instance, women hold 40% of the jobs in solar businesses. Other areas of opportunity include carbon capture and storage, sustainable transportation, manufacturing and environmental engineering. In these male-dominated sectors, the barriers for women are high, and so are the opportunities for new innovations and higher profits.

Access to financial systems, entrepreneurship opportunities, and supportive frameworks remain limited, which hampers women's ability to fully engage in climate action and adaptation. The report also focused on financial vehicles that show promise for expanding the funds available for women climate entrepreneurs from the private sector, including venture capital, blended finance, gender and climate bonds, and results-based instruments, such as social impact bonds.

2. Challenges and Potential Solutions

¹ 2024, Res4africa, *Women in Energy*, [Women in Energy Infographics \(res4africa.org\)](https://res4africa.org)



Challenges²:

a. Access to finance

As mentioned, women entrepreneurs in climate-related sectors often struggle to secure financial resources due to discriminatory lending practices, lack of collateral, and limited access to financial services. This climate finance gap is particularly pronounced for women entrepreneurs since they face systemic obstacles to accessing loans, credit, and investment opportunities. There are different financial instruments crucial in this field and to which women have fewer access:

- **Savings:** Without formal savings, women remain financially insecure in the face of climate-related disasters. Approximately 840 million women globally lack access to emergency savings, leaving them vulnerable during crises.
- **Insurance:** Only 1% of the world's population has access to climate-related microinsurance, and there is a 20% gender gap in this area. Lack of insurance limits women's ability to recover from extreme weather events.
- **Credit:** Many women entrepreneurs lack access to credit to invest in climate-adaptive technologies like solar-powered equipment or irrigation systems, crucial for increasing resilience.
- **Digital Payments:** In regions prone to climate disasters, 880 million women still do not have access to digital payments, making recovery even harder.

b. Access to Markets

Women-led businesses often struggle to penetrate emerging markets, particularly in male-dominated climate-related industries such as renewable energy and agriculture. Gender-based violence (GBV) adds another layer of complexity, as women working in sectors like off-grid solar energy and natural resource management face increased vulnerability.

c. Social norms and cultural barriers

² 2024, We-Fi, "Women Climate Entrepreneurs", [Womens-Climate 6-28-2.pdf \(we-fi.org\)](#)



Social norms often discourage women from entering STEM fields and male-dominated industries that are critical for the green economy. Discrimination and societal pressures limit the growth of women entrepreneurs, especially in sectors requiring technical knowledge and innovation.

Potential solutions:

- **Expand access to finance** through innovative financial products like including venture capital, blended finance, gender and climate bonds, and results-based instruments, such as social impact bonds. that incentivizes private capital investment in women's climate-related enterprises.
- **Encourage market access and technological integration** by fostering partnerships with financial institutions, impact investors, and companies to include women in green value chains and incorporate climate-gender performance indicators.
- **Address enabling environments** by promoting legislative reforms that eliminate regulatory barriers preventing women from accessing climate sectors.
- **Provide training and mentorship** for women entrepreneurs, including reskilling in climate-adaptive technologies and practices that enhance their participation in the green economy.

3. Examples of Good Practices

Several initiatives effectively demonstrate how gender equality can be integrated with climate action through various approaches, such as visibility support, capacity building, mentorship, networking, regulatory frameworks' adaptation, and access to finance.

For instance, the [**Women's Climate Leadership Network \(WCLN\)**](#), an initiative powered by the European Investment Bank Group (**EIB**), empowers women leaders coming from the private sectors of all 27 EU countries by providing them access to decision-making platforms and networking opportunities on issues of critical importance to climate mitigation and adaptation. This program is pivotal in giving **visibility to female leadership in climate resilience**, fostering an environment where women's voices can influence climate policies.



A good example of access to finance for women working in climate, is the [Microfund for Women in Jordan](#), that has signed with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) a \$2 million program supporting female entrepreneurs in adopting green technologies. This initiative **provides women in the MENA region with the financial means to invest in climate-resilient businesses**, creating a pathway for them to contribute to the green economy.

Another good example of financial support to women entrepreneurs in climate issues, is [We-Fi](#), a collaborative partnership among 14 governments, eight multilateral development banks (MDBs), and other public and private sector stakeholders - hosted by the World Bank Group - which seeks to address financial and non-financial constraints faced by women-owned/led small and medium enterprises in developing countries. **We-Fi's approach combines access to finance, market entry, and technological adaptation with a strong focus on regulatory frameworks that incorporate gender-responsive policies.**

This exemplary initiative focuses on boosting the prospects for women entrepreneurs in climate-related sectors. It operates on two main fronts:

1. **Boosting Women-Led Climate Businesses:** We-Fi mobilizes private and public capital through blended finance instruments to support women innovators and leaders in green and blue economies.
2. **Building Climate Resilience for Women Entrepreneurs:** The initiative provides access to financing for women-led SMEs to adopt climate-resilient technologies and expand their businesses in climate-sensitive sectors.

On a similar note, [She Wins Climate](#) is a flagship program led by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group, that seeks **to enable women-led climate startups to accelerate their businesses** and increase their access to climate investment in emerging markets and developing economies. She Wins Climate is guided by the principle that progress on climate change and gender equality are closely intertwined, and that women-led climate startups, if enabled and financed, can drive inclusive and innovative solutions to the climate crisis.

An example of support to female entrepreneurship towards the green transition through toolkits, comes from the [European Institute of Innovation and Technology \(EIT\) Climate-KIC](#), who developed the [WeClim Equally – gender-smart handbook for climate entrepreneurs](#), designed to drive gender equality in the climate sector and to support climate start-ups in making their businesses more inclusive. It is an **easy-to-**



use guide with practical exercises that can **help start-ups not only promote gender equality but also drive innovation and business success across the climate innovation sector.**

Similarly, the [2X Global Climate Toolkit](#) offers a **comprehensive guide for integrating gender-responsive investment strategies into climate projects.** It highlights practical methods to ensure that women benefit from and contribute to the global climate transition, emphasizing the need for gender-inclusive policies in climate finance.

Moreover, The [Gender Inclusive Finance \(GIF\) policy model](#) provides a **framework for regulators and policymakers to foster financial inclusion for women.** Anchored on key themes like digital financial services, inclusive green finance, and SME finance, it highlights policies, success stories, and country examples from **Alliance for Financial Inclusion (AFI)** members. It emphasizes women's financial inclusion as essential for achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly poverty reduction and gender equality.

Finally, the UfM's partnership with the [Regional Center for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency \(RCREEE\)](#)'s Winnergy initiative and MENALINKS in the 'Empowering Women in Sustainable Energy' workshop, held within the framework of the [Cairo Energy Week 2024](#), demonstrates a collaborative approach to advancing gender equality in climate change, by fostering women's active participation in the energy transition across the MENA region, through capacity building, stakeholder engagement, awareness raising, and practical solutions for overcoming gender barriers in the sustainable energy sector.

4. Specific Objectives of the Capacity Building

This capacity-building event is designed to provide essential knowledge and tools to around 40 women entrepreneurs in the MENA region, empowering them to overcome the challenges they face in accessing finance and markets. Focusing on green and blue entrepreneurship, this event aims to create a supportive ecosystem for women working in climate sectors by fostering collaboration among stakeholders, including financial institutions, policymakers, and the private sector. The specific objectives of the capacity building are the following:

- 1. Increase access to finance for women entrepreneurs in the green and blue economy.**



2. **Promote the development of gender-responsive financial tools** that address the unique needs of women in climate-vulnerable sectors.
3. **Support green and blue female entrepreneurship** by equipping women with the necessary tools, knowledge, and networks to thrive in climate-related industries.
4. **Seek the views of green and blue female entrepreneurship on additional needed support**

The event will serve as well as a launch of the soon to be established regional **Community of Practices (CoP) on the Nexus Gender-Climate Change**.



Draft Agenda:

- **Event Date:** December 11, 2024
- **Venue:** Titania Athens Hotel (<https://www.titania.gr/titania-athens-hotel/>)

Time	Session Topic
08:30 – 9:00	Registration
09:00 - 9:30	<p>Opening remarks</p> <p>Amb. Stephen Borg, Deputy Secretary General, Social and Civil Affairs Division, UfM</p> <p>Setting the scene</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UfM Community of practices on the nexus Gender and Climate Change: Rawan Ababneh, Senior Expert, Water, Environment and Beyond - Policy Study on Gender and Climate risks: Gemma Aubarell, Director of the Culture, Gender and Civil Society Department of IEMed
9:30- 9:35	Introduction of trainer and training structure
9:35- 9:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How we create a business model for our business. • Business value proposition and how we use it to differentiate our business.
9:45-10:30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise: Create a value proposition Canvas



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10:30- 11:00	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exercise: Present your value propositions canvas and explain what makes the business stand out.
11:00- 11:30	Coffee Break
11:30- 11:45	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How to strengthen your business model by incorporating impact metrics.
11:45- 12:05	Exercise: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work on your own impact metrics
12:05-12:25	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial readiness and ways to achieve it (Gender budgeting)
12:25- 12:50	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exercise: Make your budget more gender inclusive
12:50- 12:55	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is an elevator pitch
12:55- 13:10	Exercise: Write an elevator pitch for your business
13:10-13:20	Exercise: Present your elevator pitch
13:20-13:30	Funding options in the MENA region
13:30-14:30	Lunch Break
14:30 - 15:30	Session 2: Promoting Green and Blue Female Entrepreneurship <ul style="list-style-type: none">• IWMI WEFE and Gender Nexus



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15:30-14:30	Open discussion with women entrepreneurs on needed tailored support to address their needs
16:30 - 17:00	Coffee Break
17:00 - 17:30	Exchange + Conclusions and Next Steps
18:00 - 20:00	Networking Cocktail