

WORLD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT 2021

**WOMEN ON THE RISE:
REDEFINING OUR COMMON FUTURE**

December 9, 2020



Webinar proceedings

Women on the Rise: Redefining Our Common Future

WSDS 2021 pre-event

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The 2019 Conference of Parties (COP25) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) focused on 'Gender Just Climate Solutions.' However, presently, there is a paucity of frameworks, guidelines, and empirical evidence to address the concerns of women and girls that could ensure their greater participation in the climate change discourse. To realize the goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, gender equality and women empowerment are some of the prerequisites to harness women's potential to act as agents of change. These overarching objectives were deliberated during 'Women on the Rise: Redefining our Common Future' – a virtual event held on 9 December 2020. The dialogue was hosted by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), in partnership with United States Agency for International Development (USAID), US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF), and South Asia Women in Energy (SAWIE) as a pre-event in the run-up to its annual flagship event – the World Sustainable Development Summit (WSDS) 2021.

Leaders and experts from leading national and international academia, policymakers, practitioners, and civil society members joined the deliberation to discuss issues related to gender equality and women empowerment. The inaugural session guided by special addresses from Vaishali Nigam Sinha, Founding Chair, ReNew Foundation and Chair, SAWIE; Ramona M El Hamzaoui, Mission Director (Acting), USAID, India; Daya Shankar, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India; and concluded by Dr Ajay Mathur, Director General, TERI perfectly set the context, where the speakers put forth compelling arguments regarding gender-inclusive sustainable development. Participants discussed the need to address gender gaps to ensure women's well-being in a society, which is on a path to achieve sustainable development. The Government of India's efforts to address issues of gender equality, security, and dignity of women in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic were aptly highlighted by Daya Shankar. Commitment to gender equality by USAID through their policy measures was reiterated by Ramona M El Hamzaoui, who said, "USAID strives to strengthen opportunities for women to formally participate in all sectors and at all levels."

Broader perspectives to overcome gender challenges in the era of the ongoing pandemic and existing differential effects of climate change on women on account of gender gaps in the distribution and control of resources, technologies, and services were discussed by the esteemed panel comprising Shloka Nath, Head, Sustainability and Special Projects, Tata Trusts, and Executive Director, India Climate Collaborative (ICC); Meagen Fallone, Director and CEO, Barefoot College; and Anjali Garg, Energy Specialist, International Finance Corporation (IFC); moderated by Soma Dutta, Former Program Coordinator, ENERGIA. The key arguments revolved around creating several opportunities, such as the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) paving the way for a gender-responsive approach, mobilizing international climate finance to advance gender equality, and shifting narratives of renewables to ensure entrepreneurial opportunities for women. India's efforts in leading actions towards gender parity in the Global South, the importance of asking the right questions and developing frameworks to overcome the challenges arising out of the intersectionality of gender and climate change were highlighted during the session to inform future policies, boost social protection, and enhance strategies.

The next round of discussions focused on the pertinent role of women as agents of change in bringing their perspectives and experiences into decision-making and implementation processes to achieve gender-inclusive outcomes. The esteemed panel constituted of Jill Evanko, President and CEO, Chart Industries; Mohandas Pai, Chairman, Manipal Global; and Dr Shalini Sarin, Co-Founder and Executive Director, Elektromobilitat; moderated by Gauri Jauhar, Executive Director, IHS Markit. The panellists highlighted the importance of education and skill development in addition to access to finance to solidify women's agency and autonomy. This, they argued, would harness their legal entitlements and help them champion both entrepreneurial and leadership roles. A conducive, gender-sensitive environment would thus boost the development of women in the services sector. The panel's optimistic concluding remarks underlined women's capability to claim the next decade as the winds of change are blowing in their favour.

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