

# Report: Activities, commitments and results at Rio+20 achieved by members of the Women's Major Group and WECF in the run up to Rio and from 13 – 22 of June 2012

BY WECF

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## A) Introduction

This report gives a summary of all activities implemented by WECF in partnership with other members of the Women's Major Group, as already published on the WECF website and disseminated to the Women's Major Group and the Network of Women Ministers and Leaders for the Environment, and analysis impacts, results, negotiation outcomes and key focus areas for future work of the Women's Major Group.

## B) Women Major Group activities, impacts and results

About 200 women's organisations from around the world have been preparing the Rio+20 summit for the last 2 years. Coordination was assured by 3 organising partners – WECF, DAWN and VAM – and a core group of women's networks including WEDO, GFC, ENERGIA, and many others such as APWLD, RESURJ, ICADE, Feminist Taskforce etc.

### *1. Focal points for the negotiations of the Rio+20 outcome document*

The women's major group had several focal points for the negotiations focusing on different parts of the draft outcome document.

- Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and references to Cairo and Beijing DAWN had as focal point, and were also covered by RESURJ and member organisations of IPPF.
- The Focal point Forests and biodiversity was covered by the Global Forest Coalition.
- The food security section was the focal point for the Asia Pacific forum for Women, Law and Development (APWLD).
- The section on energy was covered by ENERGIA and by WECF.
- The sections on trade, technology, capacity building, chemicals, mining, energy and water WECF had as focal point.
- DAWN covered chapters 1 and 2.
- WECF also covered Means of Implementation (MOI) including Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- The section on gender and women's empowerment was covered by all above groups including WEDO and ENERGIA.

Financial support: travel funding for some of the Women Major Group members was assured through UNDESA and UNWOMEN. Travel funding for grass roots women through UNWOMEN and

SUSTAINLABOUR. Basic coordination cost for WECF, VAM, DAWN, WEDO and ENERGIA were covered by UNDESA, BMU and BUZA.

### *2. Preparations for Rio+20 in French and Arab speaking Africa*

The Project "Engaging Women from Arab and French speaking developing countries in the preparations for Rio+20", funded by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH (Rio bureau), enabled six Women's organisations in French and Arab speaking Africa to become involved in the preparations of Rio+20. They organized awareness raising workshops and consultations on their specific needs and views for the Rio+20 Sustainable Development Summit and to translate Women's Major Group position papers into Arabic and French.

It followed the objectives to allow civil-society women from Arab and French speaking developing countries:

- To fully participate in the global women's preparation for Rio+20, (as all previous communication had been only on English), and thus to assure that the global Women Major Group benefits from the input and experience.
- to bring the women's policy statement for Rio+20 to the attention of policy makers in their countries, as well as to peers and press.

In Senegal, REFDAF (Women's Network for Sustainable Development in Africa) organised a workshop in Dakar in March 2012, publishing their key recommendations for Rio+20. In Chad, the network of women of the indigenous Mbororo People brought together policy makers and indigenous women in N'Djamena. In Tunisia, the women-lead environmental organisation APEDDUB consulted on the most innovative and interesting sustainable development ideas to be implemented after Rio+20, in Congo Brazzaville the organisation Fondation Femmes Africaines organised a seminar to engage women in their country's preparation for Rio+20. In Congo DRC, the organisation AGF organised a day to reflect on the countries policies on environment and sustainable development from a gender perspective.

Hala Yousry from the Women Major Group Sttering Committee from Egypt translated the women's major Group Rio+20 statement into Arabic, and Solange Goma from FFA Brazzaville into French, they can be found [here](#).

### *3. Women's plenary speech in the opening session with heads of state, 20th of June 2012*

The Women's Major Group was given one speaking slot during the 3 days of the Rio+20 summit. Our colleague Hala Yousry from Egypt got nominated to speak on behalf of the Women's Major Group. Her intervention, which was developed as a common effort of the Women's Major Group and can be found here: [Intervention by Hala Yousry from Egypt during the Opening Plenary at Rio+20](#)

### *4. Women speakers in the Sustainable Dialogue Days 16 – 19 June 2012*

Hortencia Hidalgo, Lourdes Huanca Atencio, Sharan Burrow, Sheila Oparaocha, were among the women which had been nominated by Women's Major Group members and spoke as panelists during the Dialogue Days, see for a report ISSD: <http://www.iisd.ca/uncsd/rio20/sdd/16jun.html>

Travel and accommodation costs for the Women's Major Group participants were covered by the Brazilian government.

### *5. Post Rio+20 Commitments by the Network of Women Ministers and WECF*

On June 20th, the Network of Women Ministers and Leaders for the Environment met and were joined by leaders from UNEP, UN WOMEN, UNDP, IUCN, and civil society members of the network including WECF and others to present their commitments for Gender Equality and Sustainable Development actions post Rio+20. WECF was one of the initiators of the commitments. UNEP commits a.o. to Ensuring that gender perspectives are fully integrated and implemented through UNEP's Programme of Work and in UNEP's support to its partners and stakeholders. WECF commits to support the Network with the organisation of an annual Women's Good Practice Award and empowerment of 20,000 women. [The program and the commitments can be found here](#).

## 6. Women's Major Group Side Events at Rio+20 official summit

### 1. Women's Environmental Health "Protecting the First Environment", 13th of June

Protecting women's health and future generations from harmful environmental impacts was the topic of the event, addressing the origins and the impact of increasing amounts of toxic chemicals and other hazardous substances in women's bodies leading to fast growing instances of infertility, reproductive and breast cancers, early puberty, trans-generational defects and other factors detrimental to health.

### 2. Women's Resistance and Resilience, 15th of June

A strong and diverse group of nine women presented firsthand experience on women's determined resistance to unsustainable projects and policies and their resilience.

### 3. Women creating food sovereignty, 22nd of June

Women organisations from Pakistan, Colombia, South Africa and Papua New Guinea presented case studies of how their food sovereignty and livelihoods are being destroyed by commercial logging, mining and industrial agriculture activities, and how these pressures can be resisted.

In addition, WECF executive director Sascha Gabizon spoke at the Side Event organised by Etcetera Group on June 14th presenting a gender perspective on the need for independent technology assessment. Please see the ISSD Earth Media Bulletin [here](#).

## 7. UN Women – Women's Leadership Forum

Sascha Gabizon, Anita Nayar, Caroline Usikpedo-Omoniye and Hala Yousry were among the women's major group speakers alongside Michelle Bachelet and Gro Harlem Brundland during the full-day Women's Leadership Forum organised by UN Women on the 19th of June. [For copies of speeches and photos go here](#)

On the 21st of June, UN Women organised a second invitation-only event with former and current heads of state, Dilma Rousseff President of Brazil, Helle Thorning-Schmidt's prime minister of Denmark and many others.

Travel and accommodation costs for the Women's Major Group participants were covered by UNWOMEN.

## 8. Women's Rio+20 Good Practice Award Ceremony

On the 21st of June eleven women projects received the **Women's Rio+20 Good Practice Award**, from the women ministers of the Network of Women Ministers and Leaders for the Environment. The awards ceremony was remarkable not only in the participation of eight female high-level ministers from Mexico, South Africa, Brazil, Nigeria, Denmark, Iceland and Switzerland, but also, and quite centrally, in the compelling success stories of each of the prize winner's local projects.

150 applications were received of which 16 were selected as winners (1st, 2nd and 3rd prices). Eleven of these received their award during the Award Ceremony on June 21st in Rio. First place winners received a medal, a certificate, a gift and, most importantly, a check for \$1,000 (USD) in honour of their achievement. The five categories of competition were: Food Sovereignty, Climate Adaptation, Decent Jobs and Health, Water and Sanitation and Sustainable Energy. The Award received financial support from BMZ and support from GIZ and was co-organised with UNEP and the Women's Major Group

The six winning initiatives of the Women Rio+20 Good Practice Award show-case inspiring sustainable development projects by women from Asia, Africa and Latin America.

See for the press report: <http://www.wecf.eu/english/press/releases/2012/06/rio-awards.php>

Local press coverage included a half-page on the winner from Brazil in the main newspaper of Rio de Janeiro.

#### *9. Women's demonstrations and press actions at Rio+20 summit*

The women's major group organised a large demonstration in the central courtyard of the Rio Conference center, with more than 100 participants on June 19th, protesting against the deletion of reproductive rights in the negotiated text.

Our Japanese colleagues spoke at a press briefing on the inexplicable omission that radioactive pollution was not addressed in the Rio+20 text and on June 22nd organised a demonstration to call for action against radioactive pollution.

See press release: <http://www.wecf.eu/english/press/releases/2012/06/globalforum-nuclearRio.php>

#### *10. Other women's activities during the Rio+20 summit*

Many other events were organised by members of the Women's Major Group, including the event with Vandana Shiva, Marina Silva and Ted Turner organised by Women Earth and Climate Caucus ([oolake@jps.net](mailto:oolake@jps.net)), as well as the market place on gender organised by IUCN and WEDO ([www.wedo.org](http://www.wedo.org)), and a reception and award organised by Development Alternatives with Women for a New era - DAWN ([coordinator@dawnnet.org](mailto:coordinator@dawnnet.org))

#### *11. People's Summit: over 20,000 people participated in the People's Summit which took place in parallel to the United Nations summit.*

Many events were arranged by women's organisations at the People's Summit, including the large women's demonstration on the 18th of June. A total of 50.000 people took part in the global demonstration organised on June 20th. WECF co-organized 2 events, one on the need for banning asbestos worldwide (15th of June), and one on phasing out nuclear energy (16th of June). Women Major Group and WECF representatives also participated in the workshop organized by SustainLabour, the international trade union institute on sustainable development (17th of June). The more than 2200 workshops were summarized into one consensus document, which calls for some of the key points which the Women's Major Group has been defending, including an end to violence against women, and rights for local women farmers and communities to stop unsustainable development in their communities such as landgrabbing for biofuels, imposing GMOs, opening (uranium) mines and deforestation, see ([cupuladospovos.org.br](http://cupuladospovos.org.br)).

#### *12. Press releases and media outreach by the Women Major Group and WECF at Rio+20*

WECF and the Women's Major Group had an active press team which organised press-conference, wrote press releases and were active on social media, to spread the key messages of the Women's Major Group.

Find our press-release here:

[24.06.2012 | Women's Major Group Press Release](http://www.wecf.eu/english/press/releases/2012/06/24.06.2012_Women's_Major_Group_Press_Release)

Rio+20: Women "Disappointed and Outraged" Women's Major Group Releases Final Statement on the Outcomes of Rio+20: "We believe that the governments of the world have failed women, future generations and our beautiful but fragile planet earth"

[22.06.2012 | WECF Press Release](#)

Grassroots women from around the world receive prestigious "Women's Rio+20 Good Practice Awards" - Grassroots women from around the world receive prestigious "Women's Rio+20 Good Practice Awards" from eight women Ministers in 21 June Ceremony and Reception at Rio Centro

[15.06.2012 | WECF Press Release](#)

Rio+20 - WECF sponsors June 15th Forum on Phase-Out of Nuclear Energy by 2020 - On the Opening Day of the Rio+20 Peoples' Summit Women in Europe for a Common Future Presents Forum Calling for Global Phase Out of Nuclear Energy by 2020

[13.06.2012 | WECF Press Release](#)

Women Mobilize at Rio+20: Demanding a Just and Sustainable Future - Sascha Gabizon (WECF) says, "Rio+20 could be our last chance to mobilize world leaders and civil society to assure a real paradigm shift away from greed and unsustainable growth towards societies based on human rights and gender equality"

**Women Major Group speakers in Press Conferences**

- Wednesday, June 13th - WEBCAST: 13 JUNE- Civil society digs in for Rio+20  
Maureen Penjueli, Coordinator, Pacific Network on Globalization, Fiji
- Thursday, June 14th- WEBCAST: 14 JUNE - Decent Jobs, Decent Health  
Alexandra Garita, Program Officer, International Policy at International Women's Health Coalition
- Friday, June 15th- WEBCAST: 15 JUNE- Human Rights and Equity at Rio+20  
Gita Sen, Executive Committee Member, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era
- Saturday, June 16th- WEBCAST: 16 JUNE- International Framework for Sustainable Development  
Christine von Weizsäcker, President, Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF) International
- Sunday, June 17th- WEBCAST: 17 JUNE- Reaction to Brazil Text  
Sascha Gabizon, Executive Director, Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF) International
- Monday, June 18th- WEBCAST: 18 JUNE- Energy and Water  
Makiko Imai, Board Member, Japan Civil Network for the United Nations Decade on Biodiversity
- Tuesday, June 19th- WEBCAST: 19 JUNE- Current status of negotiations  
Noelene Nabulivou, Women's Action for Change-Fiji
- Thursday, June 21st- WEBCAST: 21 JUNE- Food and Agriculture  
Ms. Norma Maldonado, National Network in Defense of Food Sovereignty, Guatemala (REDSAG) – Co-Founder

**Traditional Press/Media**

Although traditional media coverage of Women's Major Group and Rio+20 was conducted in a multitude of languages, the articles included in this brief assessment were all written in English, and were primarily hosted on North American and European sites, though articles from Asian and African news agencies also have a significant presence. Both formal articles and blog entries are included. Media outlets that reported on women in Rio+20 include The Guardian, Human Rights Watch, the Telegraph, Huffington Post, CNN and TrustLaw, a division of the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Most of the press related to women at Rio+20 focused on the issue of reproductive rights and its influence on sustainable development; thirty-two of the fifty-two articles compiled mention reproductive rights or sexual health. Articles often elaborated on how access to contraception and gender equality impacted women's well-being, and also linked family planning to sustainable development, education and economic prosperity. Remarks made by US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, and former Norwegian Prime Minister, Gro Harlem Brundtland were cited the most often to illustrate the importance of gender equality and reproductive rights at Rio+20. Additionally, media coverage related to reproductive rights frequently focused on the influence of the Holy See and G77 in Rio+20 negotiations, and the subsequent exclusion of reproductive rights from the final document.

Reporters and bloggers in the listed articles highlighted the connection between women, population, and sustainable development in their assessments of the Rio+20 summit; furthermore, their coverage and editorials are most often in line with and geared positively towards Women's Major Group's advocacy at Rio+20. Members of the Women's Major Group were frequently mentioned, including International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF), and Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO).

### **Social Media**

During Rio+20, the @Women\_Rio20 account reached over 1800 followers from over 100 countries. The account sent over 250 tweets and was retweeted a total of 675 times! With the support of partners such as @WEDO\_Worldwide, @apwldrio20, @mamacash, @femtaskforce, @WorldPulse, @bridiekatie, @UN\_Women, @zlonnywoods, @GGCA\_Gender, @WomenDeliver and many others, the #WomenRio hashtag was used and retweeted thousands of times – helping to amplify the voices and stories of women everywhere! Efforts also helped to highlight specific areas of concern with hashtags such as #sexrightsrio and #NoNuclear. For those new to social media, you can find out more about what a hashtag is here or read this article Understanding Twitter: The Power of Hashtags. According to UN Women, more than 2,200 tweets using #WomenRio from 1,000 people created 36 million impressions, and reached 5 million unique users during Rio+20.

## **C) Analysis of the Rio+20 outcome document, general and from a gender perspective**

### **I. General Analysis of the Rio+20 outcome document**

Coming to Rio, it was already clear that the outcome document would be weak. The draft document of 2nd of June contained some very worrying language against human rights, women's rights, indigenous people's rights, and against the precautionary principle.

From that point of view, the final Rio+20 outcome document is better in many areas then at the start of the final round of negotiations, and it is certain that members of the Women's major group have contributed to the "damage control".

However, from a historic perspective, we have lost a lifetime chance to take bold steps to end poverty and environmental destruction, to protect the rights of the most vulnerable members of our societies, to take concrete measures to fully implement women's rights and women's leadership. We now risk increased poverty, inequities and irreversible environmental damage.

#### ***1. Financing Sustainable Development from new public funds***

The Rio+20 outcome document does not give governments the necessary framework to shift financial resources away from unsustainable and inequitable energy systems to necessary investments in decentralized renewable energy systems. In the Global South, investments should be prioritized for access to safe and clean energy in rural areas with a focus on women and household energy consumption. The Women's Major Group regrets that there are no clear commitments on this matter.

Women are also very concerned about the increased focus on private financing, and the decrease of public revenue for sustainable development.

We also regret that there is no commitment for new financial mechanisms such as the Financial Transaction Tax. Women call for the elimination of subsidies, including indirect subsidies that harm ecosystems and local communities, within, for example, the nuclear and fossil fuel industries. We are, however, pleased with the agreement to address illicit financial flows, it is about time that the billions in illegal tax-paradises are regulated and made to contribute to sustainable development and poverty eradication.

#### ***2. Green economy instruments watered-down***

Women called for the elimination of subsidies, including indirect subsidies that harm ecosystems and local communities, within, for example, the nuclear and fossil fuel industries. There are no strong commitments to Green Economy instruments such as shifting taxes from "good" to "unsustainable" economic areas, or promotion of green procurement and product labelling. Women's informal and unpaid work was recognized, but without specific recognition of women's extra responsibilities in sustaining the care economy

#### ***3. Phase-out of nuclear energy till 2020 worldwide***

There is no position on nuclear energy in general, also radioactive pollution is not mentioned with a word in the Rio+20 outcome document, even though after Chernobyl, Fukushima and the many other accidents (3-mile-island, Tricastin, Asse, Central Asia etc) no-body can ignore the immense health risks for current and future generations and the unacceptable economic costs and indirect subsidies for the nuclear industry.

#### ***4. Technology assessment – acknowledged but too weak***

The technology section now calls on the Secretary General to initiate work on technology assessment, this has been strongly supported by the Women's Major Group, looking back at the devastating lessons learned from asbestos, lead, nuclear, DDT and other pesticides – where large parts of populations were exposed and became ill – because the technologies were not assessed on

health risks and social economic costs. The language on technology assessment is still far too weak, but it is a first step in the right direction, in particular developing countries (and of course future generations) should benefit from this.

#### *5. Means of Implementation; Trade*

Gains have been achieved on trade. The initial proposal by the US to impose WTO rules on any Sustainable Development policy, –which would have made it impossible for countries to apply the precautionary principle, to use product labelling and to protect amongst others small (women) farmers from harmful imports – was deleted from the final version of the document. Also positive is that the language on trade in medicines has survived in section on health the final document. These have been a good exercise in damage control.

#### *6. Governance for sustainable development*

The only concrete new decisions taken at Rio+20 are to establish two new intergovernmental processes, one on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and another on Financial Mechanisms. A committee of 33 experts will be created for the SDG process. Women call for a seat for a representative of civil society's women's organizations on the expert panel for the SDGs. In addition, we call on the Secretary General to ensure gender balance in the composition of the panel.

Finally, Rio+20 has not established stronger governance for sustainable development, and we regret in particular the deletion of the proposed high commissioner for future generations.

#### *7. Protection from land grabbing and extractive industries*

We are very disappointed that there are no clear steps outlined for a moratorium on GMOs and more broadly that there are no concrete measures to assure women's right to access to and control of the natural resources that are the basis of their livelihoods, in particular the mining section does not assure rights of impacted communities.

In many countries of the world women produce up to 80% of the food, cultivating lands that they do not own, gathering food from forests to which they have no entitlements. The rush for resources to fuel our unsustainable development with minerals and biofuels has already evicted great numbers of women from the lands they have cultivated and protected over millennia. Women therefore call for an immediate halt to land-grabbing. We cannot put women's food production in competition with biofuels, Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) and agro-industrial corporations.

#### *8. Global Social Protection floor to eradicate poverty*

The section on employment and social protection recognizes the need to provide social protection to all members of society, including those who are not employed in the formal economy.

Global dialogue on best practices for social protection programmes is encouraged, as well as national and local initiatives aimed at providing social protection floors for all citizens. This is strongly supported by the Women Major Group: social protection floors benefit women in particular, as it covers women working in informal and precarious sectors, or doing unpaid domestic work – not only people in formal employment.

## II. Analysis of specific gender and women's empowerment language in the Rio+20 outcome documents

### 9. Women's equal rights

Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality language was integrated throughout many sections of the document, with 84 mentions of women and gender.

Women's rights and access to resources: the Rio+20 document resolves to make reforms to give women equal **rights to access** to resources such as land, credit and inheritance, but it **does not commit to equal rights** for women to these resources. Excluding half of the world's population from access to resources is foolish. Several heads of state also criticized these grave omissions in the text, and the Prime Minister of Norway commented that in the case of Norway, the share of GDP generated by women exceeds national income from oil revenue.

The critical connection between **climate change and gender is not mentioned** at all. This is unacceptable and contrary to women's daily experiences. Women, children, indigenous peoples and the impoverished (the majority of whom are women) are the most heavily impacted by increasingly dire consequences of climate change. Equally critical is the huge potential contribution to climate mitigation and adaptation that could be made by women, yet their essential role in leading and participating in desperately needed climate solutions is not mentioned.

On the positive side, a gender perspective is highlighted in the **disaster risk management**.

Also positive, empowering rural **women as critical agents for food security**; promoting participation of women farmers in markets, collection of sex disaggregated data and using gender sensitive indicators were included in the document

The connection between gender equality and access to sustainable energy services was clearly acknowledged, and the importance of women regarding specific areas such as water, food security, are also positive.

### 10. Targets for women in leadership positions worldwide

Some small steps forward: the references to the need for women's leadership; the vital role of women's full participation and leadership was reaffirmed, as was the prioritization of removing barriers to decision-making and management. The text included language on targets and measures to increase women in leadership positions, as well as reference to women in business, entrepreneurship, science and technology.

In particular the sentence on the benefits of national measures to reach gender parity is positive, it means WMG can now call on governments to use instruments such as quota to help achieve 50% women in leadership positions (gender parity is 50%)! The women's major group had called to support Iceland's even more concrete proposal on concrete targets and timelines (40% women in leadership positions by 2020), which unfortunately was deleted

### 11. Sexual and reproductive rights

Governments failed to recognize women's reproductive rights as a central aspect of gender equality and sustainable development in the Rio+20 Outcome Document. Reproductive rights are universally recognized as human rights. The linkage between sustainable development and reproductive rights

was recognized in Agenda 21 and subsequently in the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Program of Action.

This is a great loss, as progress had been made on this issue earlier at the CPD in May 2012, and in previous years. At Rio+20 these essential rights for women were rolled back.

The only positive note is that in the closing plenary on Friday night, 22 of June, Iceland and Norway commented that they were very disappointed regarding the omission of reproductive rights, and that these rights are not negotiable, -- this was the only intervention which received a strong applause from the participants – and not just from the civil society back seats!

It is unacceptable that our reproductive rights agreed upon nearly 20 years ago were renegotiated and not reaffirmed in the final outcome document. We are, however, pleased with the reaffirmation of the ICPD and the Beijing Platform for Action as well as their subsequent review outcomes. In particular, as WMG prepares for ICPD +20, Beijing + 20, the MDGs +15, the SDGs processes and the post-2015 development agenda, WMG urge governments worldwide to reaffirm these commitments to gender equality, and in particular, sexual and reproductive health and rights, so that all women and men, adolescents and youth can live their lives to their fullest potential.

On the positive side: the health section called for the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the International Conference on Population and Development Plan of Action, and also emphasized the need for universal access to reproductive health.

Author: Sascha Gabizon, Executive Director, WECF Women in Europe for a Common Future, 24 July 2012

