



Peace, Feminism, and the Environment

Background and discussion paper
September 2021
Guiding WILPF Strategies for Advocacy and Action

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Introduction

The future of our planet – and all living things that call it home – is at a crossroads.

As a result of human activity driven by capitalism, militarism, patriarchy, and colonialism, climate change and environmental destruction now threaten the very existence of people, animals, and the life-giving ecosystems on which we all depend.

Resource scarcity, loss of biodiversity, destruction of landscapes, conflicts over natural resources, warming and rising oceans, a disappearing Arctic, and more frequent extreme weather events are all consequences of the ongoing degradation of our environment and ecosystems.

For people – particularly those living in the Global South, in countries affected by conflict and those in communities in marginalised situations – these consequences have meant growing rates of poverty, lack of access to safe, clean food and water, forced displacement, greater vulnerability to violence, and other types of human rights violations.

All of these issues uniquely impact women and girls, Indigenous peoples, and individuals in marginalised situations – driving deeper inequalities and preventing the attainment of peace, equality, and the enjoyment of human rights.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is deeply committed to addressing the root causes of violence, including including environmental destruction, by advancing the principles of environmental justice and feminist peace. Following a series of consultations with Sections, Groups, members, staff and partners around the world, this background discussion paper has been developed to help WILPF better integrate environmental issues as part of its work. As a non-exhaustive summary of the consultations that have taken place to date, this report outlines WILPF's key perspectives on the environment, thematic focus areas, and guidance for continued work. It has been designed to support the next stage of in-depth discussions and dialogues, planning, and action rooted in concepts of ecofeminism, human security, degrowth, human rights and environmental justice.

Background: WILPF's History of Environmental Activism

The environment was a topic of concern to many founding members of WILPF – such as Elin Wägner, who stated in 1915 that “Everything that disturbs nature’s self-activity must be removed or we too”. There was also a reference in Emily Green Balch’s address to Congress in 1924 of the link between corporate interests and war related to the extraction of natural resources. Yet, it wasn’t until the 1960s that the organisation as a whole began formally turning its attention to issues of environmental degradation and climate change.¹

At the 17th International Congress in 1968, WILPF passed its first formal resolution acknowledging the impacts of human activity on natural resources. The resolution recognised the seabed as a critical resource that must be protected from appropriation by corporate interests and military activities and should be used only for peaceful purposes “in the interests of all mankind.”

In the years that followed, a number of resolutions, statements, and activities relating to issues of environmental destruction and climate change were enacted by the WILPF International Secretariat and WILPF Sections and members around the world. These included:

- A 1970 resolution deploring the impact of growing defence expenditures and military activities on environmental pollution (in addition to poverty, disease, and illiteracy).
- A 1980 resolution calling on governments to immediately phase out all nuclear reactors and adopt safe, renewable energy sources. At the same meeting, WILPF Sections were urged to learn about the impacts of toxic chemicals on the environment and human security and to advocate for “ecologically sound alternatives.”
- A 2015 resolution, adopted for the 100th year anniversary, on Climate Change, Environmental Justice, and Peace. The resolution recognised that climate change has a disproportionate effect on the poor, women, Indigenous peoples, coastal and small island communities and called for demanded the participation of women experts and representatives of impacted communities in climate mitigation and adaptation policy negotiations.

In 1992, 200 WILPF members from 39 countries gathered in Santa Cruz, Bolivia for the 25th International Congress, where links between militarism and environmental harm were a major topic of discussion. Emerging from this Congress, the WILPF Secretary General called on the UN Conference on Environment and Development to incorporate into its agenda actions to address the negative impacts of military activities on the environment. WILPF also has a history of engaging in climate conferences and the United Nations Environment Program and Assembly (UNEP/UNEA) as well as the UN’s High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and SDGs relating to the environment. At the international level, WILPF has increasingly raised issues related to the environment with UN human rights bodies including regarding the impacts of Canadian mining companies on indigenous communities in Guatemala and of artisanal mining in the DRC, the gendered impacts of the water crisis in Zimbabwe, as well as the impacts of Israel’s warfare and Israeli companies on environmental degradation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Since 2015, WILPF has also been actively engaged in advocacy on the process for a UN treaty which would increase accountability of corporations for violations of human rights, including those deriving from environmental harm. WILPF has also supported joint NGO calls for the establishing of a UN Special Rapporteur on human rights and climate change, a call that was also included in the resolution on “Climate Change, Environmental Justice, and Peace” adopted at the Congress in The Hague in 2015. At the local level, WILPF Sections

¹ Given the historical racism within the environmental movement and the current dominance of white men within the environmental movement (as referenced below), should we reflect more deeply on our own environmental activism in relation to these issues?

and members around the world have been actively engaged in projects and initiatives focused on addressing and preventing the gendered impacts of environmental destruction and climate change.

While various concerns related to the environment have been regularly discussed and addressed by WILPF and its Sections and members over the years, in the past several years the topic has grown in importance – not only for WILPF members but for activists around the world.

The Environment Working Group was established in 1999 to support WILPF's advocacy and activism on environmental matters, and to explore and make known the reasons and effects of war in relation to the biosphere. The Environment Working Group has brought together members at events like the COP (Conference of the Parties, decision making body of the Paris Agreement) and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development; it has written on issues like the impact of war on the environment, human right to a healthy and safe environment, environmental justice etc.; and enabled knowledge sharing between sections.

In 2015, WILPF published the [WILPF Manifesto](#), the official declaration of the organisation's intentions, views, and work for the coming century. This document explicitly points to "environmental destruction and ecocide as both cause and consequence of conflict and possibly the greatest danger we face in the modern world." It commits the organisation "To learn, teach and practice relations of respect and care for the flora and fauna and natural resources of the Earth, in order to ensure its health and habitability and eliminate environmental causes of conflict."

In 2018, at the 32nd International Congress, WILPF committed to the following key actions related to the environment under the International Programme:

- Work to address the impacts and interconnections between militarism, war and climate change, and the imminent necessity to protect the environment.
- Make known from a feminist peace perspective the causes and consequences of current unjust economic and environmental policies and practices.
- Raise awareness, educate and collaborate with partners to bring a feminist peace analysis into advocacy and activities on economic justice and environmental sustainability.
- Raise public and political awareness about the interconnections between climate change and war and the imminent necessity to protect the environment.
- Monitor and advocate for women's rights, women's participation and gender analysis in economic, social and environmental processes both at national and international levels, including through advocacy on States' extraterritorial human rights obligations with regard to regulating transnational corporations and other financial institutions.

Furthermore, WILPF committed to the following key actions related to the environment:

- Launch of the Environmental Peace Education Initiative, which supports environmental sustainability initiatives being delivered by Sections and Groups through small grants.
- Continued work to advocate for a UN treaty which would increase accountability of corporations for violations of human rights in partnership with Feminists4BindingTreaty, a coalition of over 25 human rights and women's rights organisations around the world.

In 2020, in collaboration with the International Secretariat, a consultation was undertaken with members on priorities and areas of work related to the environment. As a result of these recent consultations, this report has been developed to inform WILPF strategies that bring together peace activism, feminism, and the environment.

For more information about WILPF's recent work in this area, visit the following resources:

- [WILPF's work on peace, gender, and the environment](#)
- [Down the Green Feminist Road \(zine\)](#)
- [Stories of Feminist Peace 2020: Walking the Green Feminist Road](#)

For a more comprehensive overview at WILPF's activities relating to the environment over the years, please see the document WILPF's Environmental History.

Framing WILPF's Approach on the Environment

Drawing on our history of environmental advocacy and activism, we have identified the following guiding principles and values as informing our work on peace, feminism, and the environment.

In stating these approaches, we also acknowledge that there is much we do not know – and that our work today honours and recognises the decades of activism, education, and analysis driven by generations of Indigenous peoples, environmental human rights defenders, youth activists, and others who have committed their lives to protecting our planet. As we continue on our own journey of education and action, we are deeply grateful for the opportunity to learn from their knowledge and experiences.

Ecofeminism²

Ecofeminism is a movement spanning a broad range of fields – from philosophy to economics to political theory and beyond – that identifies, examines, and analyses linkages and relationships between the environment and humans, with a focus on how destruction of the natural environment disproportionately impacts women's rights, lives, and livelihoods.

The movement views the reduction of the environment into “resources” to be acquired, extracted, developed, sold, and consumed – activities rooted in the oppressive systems previously described – as driving a fundamental disconnect between humanity and Earth's ecosystems.

Through the lens of ecofeminism, WILPF:

- Recognises the profound impacts of environmental destruction on women and girls, particularly women and girls living in the Global South, those living in poverty, Indigenous women and girls, rural women and girls, women and girls of colour, and women and girls living in conflict zones and acknowledges their leadership in environmental activism.
- Recognises the inherent autonomy and balance of the environment and our collective responsibility to protect it from destructive human activity and ensure its sustainable regeneration.
- Promotes an “earth first” approach to all government decisions and policies, calling for protection of ecosystems and biodiversity to be prioritised above the maintenance of destructive political, economic, and social constructs.

Within ecofeminism, the gendered impacts of environmental destruction and the growing climate crisis are made visible and are central to the analysis. Globally, [women currently represent](#) 70 per cent of people living in poverty. Communities living in poverty – particularly those living in rural areas, including Indigenous peoples – rely heavily on land, water, animals, and plants for their livelihood, including for obtaining water, food, and energy for cooking and heating. Women and girls often bear the primary responsibility of gathering these resources. As extreme weather events resulting from climate change become more frequent, and as the environment is destroyed, women and girls are less likely to have ready access to water, food, and energy needed to provide for their families and are spending more time working to access these resources. This reality also places them at [greater risk of sexual violence](#)

² For further discussion: Do WILPF members support eco-feminist approach? Are there other approaches we've considered e.g. environmental peacebuilding?

as they make longer and more frequent journeys to obtain food or water. Loss of livelihoods due to climate change also increases the risk of girls dropping out of school and of child marriage.

Forced displacement, deepening poverty, limited economic opportunities, and greater overall inequality and harm are consequences of the climate crisis. We heard from consultations with WILPF members from the African region that effects are particularly pronounced in Africa, where the impacts of colonialism, climate change and neoliberalism have eroded the well-being of communities, instigated conflicts, and driven social breakdown in many regions – all of which [overwhelmingly impact women and girls](#) “in the form of culturally-sanctioned crimes such as honor killings, female genital mutilation, [and] forced marriages” in addition to driving food insecurity, malnutrition, and worsening health among these same populations. The resulting social breakdown permits a resurgence of extremism as people latch on to custom, identities and myth in the search for certainty.³

Feminist Political Economy Analysis and Degrowth⁴

Political economy seeks to understand how politics can influence the economy and vice versa. By using the framework of feminist political economy analysis⁵, WILPF advocates for economic policies that address the highly gendered impacts that conflict and post-conflict recovery processes have on the lives of people.

The degrowth movement is focused on finding ways to reduce the world’s consumption of energy and material goods in a way that is globally just, taking into account the impacts of colonialism and neoliberal capitalism that create a vastly unequal world. Resource consumption under capitalism perpetuates a political economy of violence, which is used to “justify” the production and use of weapons. Each aspect is devastating to the environment. We’re interested in exploring, from an intersectional feminist perspective, how degrowth politics and economics can ally with, and help advance movements for demilitarisation and disarmament, which are essential to conflict prevention.

Human security approach

WILPF recognises the immediate and long-term consequences of environmental destruction on human security, including the well-being of people and communities, access to safe food and water, economic stability, rates of gender-based violence, the perpetuation of conflict, and more.

Approaches, policies, laws, and regulations relating to the environment must be designed to build sustainable peace and security for all people, with a particular focus on populations experiencing unique vulnerabilities – including women and girls, Indigenous peoples, and people living in poverty.

Environmental justice lens

WILPF recognises that a just, fair, and sustainable way of living – for women and girls and for everyone – will not be possible without a radical transformation of society rooted in decolonisation,

³ For further discussion: (How) should we include the topic of environmental racism, and the impact of pollution and hazardous waste of communities of colour in the North, but also on communities in the Global South?

⁴ For further discussion: What are WILPF positions on de-growth concept and practice? What are other alternative economic models supported by WILPF?

⁵ Further explanation needed on WILPFs position on feminist political economy analysis.

demilitarisation, degrowth and fulfilment of human rights, justice, peace, and deep respect for and understanding of humanity's place within the complex web of life.

Environmental justice demands that environmental laws, regulations, and policies promote and advance peace and well-being for all people and living things on earth through the achievement of human rights, equality, and justice for all, eradication of poverty, full demilitarisation, and solidarity within and between nations and peoples. Environmental justice must also be about restorative reparations through for example land restoration or prioritising investments and transparency in communities affected by climate change, for example disaster risk reduction mitigation strategies. Environmental justice and human rights are interconnected. A safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment is necessary for the full enjoyment of human rights.⁶ Similarly, the exercise of human rights, such as the right to freedom of expression, including the right to seek, receive and impart information, the rights to education, to meaningful and informed participation, and to remedy is vital to environmental protection and to the work of environmental human rights defenders. States' obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights all apply in relation to the environment. As part of these obligations, States must also protect against environmental harm committed by business enterprises and other private actors. Business enterprises also have a responsibility to respect human rights, which in should avoid infringing on human rights by taking proactive steps to identify, prevent, mitigate and address adverse impacts with which they are involved, including impacts on the environment.

Environmental justice also means that governments, particularly former colonial legacy states, must take steps to recognise and reconcile the consequences of [systemic racism and colonialism](#) on peace, justice, and the environment. These values and systems continue to exploit the natural resources including land, water, minerals, animals and labour in the Global South and areas of the Global North, devalue the lives of Indigenous peoples and racialised people and those living in poverty, and deny appropriate aid and resources to countries disproportionately impacted by climate change.

WILPF Advocacy

In a 2021 Policy Brief on Feminist Action for Climate Justice, WILPF included the following advocacy demands. There are also various other advocacy papers and recommendations on environment. These are included as recent examples to reflect, develop and build on.

WILPF calls on States, and other actors to take the following actions:

- **Halt the exploitative relationship to the environment and break the myth of infinite resources.** The false dichotomy of environment versus economy must come to an end—there will be no economy without climate action. Long-term investment and funding plans made by member states and international organisations must be guided by gender equality, environment, and human rights. These investments should be grounded in feminist values towards a regenerative, care-centred economy that challenges gender inequalities in care work and simultaneously divests from extractive, fossil-fuelled, militarised sectors and industries. It is necessary to invest in and provide stimulus for green energy sources, and simultaneously to reduce energy use.
- **Address the devastating impacts of militarisation on the environment.** This includes development and implementation of conflict prevention and resolution strategies that include an analysis of the gendered dimensions of environmental change resulting from war and specific tools

⁶ Framework principles on human rights and the environment, The main human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, health and sustainable environment, 2018

of warfare, and ways in which gender roles facilitate or constrain post-conflict environmental recovery.

- **Advance divestment, disarmament and demilitarisation efforts by shifting** military spending to be redirected into systems and infrastructure that strengthen social and environmental wellbeing, including investments in communities affected by climate change and enhancing access to resources for women, girls, and other marginalised populations before, during, and after climate-related disasters.
- **Adopt an integrated approach to climate financing for long-term, sustainable solutions, that will secure the development and implementation of funding mechanisms for climate and environment smart solutions.** This should aim at capacity building to catalyse and maintain genuine shifts in power. It should incorporate improved access to education for climate resilience, demilitarisation and end to fossil fuel subsidies and procurement as well as delivery of fair share compensation for loss and damage, strengthening the capacity of local women and supporting local women's initiatives. Governments must develop and implement policy coherence in addressing mismanagement, inefficiency and exceptionalism in finance and militarised and extractive industries. This should include development and implementation of directives and legislation.
- **Develop a comprehensive gender-integrative approach to addressing climate change and creating gender-responsive environmental sustainability strategies and programs, and by addressing the knowledge gaps on the intersection of gender, climate, and peace, and that recognises the linkages between gender equality, environmental wellbeing and peace and security.** Governments must incorporate gender-disaggregated data and gender budgeting with comprehensive monitoring and evaluation frameworks to ensure transparent regulations, which can be rigorously tracked to safeguard human rights obligations.
- **Build and enforce robust legal and policy frameworks informed and guided by environmental social justice,** including holding accountable polluter states and corporations making profits from natural resources; safeguarding and protecting environmental and women's human rights defenders; conserving biodiversity; and moving toward responsible use of resources within the realm of public and community needs. Progressive taxes, fees, fines, penalties, incentives, tariffs, and other regulations must be enacted to promote sustainable consumption and production and emissions reductions.
- **Redistribute resources, democratise and decolonise decision-making spaces for effective climate action.** In particular, the rights of Indigenous Peoples to treaty rights, land restoration, sovereignty, self-determination, and decolonisation must be respected, and women's civil society organisations must be seen as equal partners, leaders and decision-makers in climate-related discussions and political fora, ensuring their effective and consequential participation, as well as their rights and priorities, in the design of our green future, including through comprehensive funding mechanisms. States, international organisations, and international financial institutions should make every effort to protect civil society and human rights and environmental defenders against reprisals and restricted freedoms.

Thematic Focus Areas for WILPF Current and Future Work

Based on consultations with WILPF Sections, Groups, members, staff and partners around the world, the following intersecting thematic focus areas have emerged to focus WILPF's current and future activity on the environment.

Challenging militarism

WILPF raises awareness of the relationship between militarism, military activity, and environmental degradation and their gendered impacts. Through analysis and action, WILPF strives to build a future of peace and human security through divestment, disarmament, and demilitarisation efforts.

Issue: Military activity and militarised landscapes and resources directly contribute to environmental degradation through pollution of land, air, and water, greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption, land grabbing, land clearing and use, the development and production of nuclear weapons, the production and dumping of massive volumes of hazardous waste, agricultural degradation due to landmines and cluster bombs, contamination from heavy metals and other toxic materials in weapons production and use, justification of military action on the basis of securing fossil fuel resources, and much more.

Not only are women directly impacted by military activity and conflict, but the environmental impacts of militarism also [disproportionately impact women and girls](#).

With many women and girls in conflict-affected areas primarily responsible for locating and providing clean water and food for their families and communities, pollution and the destruction of landscapes resulting from military activity has driven a historic hunger crisis, forced mass displacement of women and children, and deepened poverty.

Yet despite the vast consequences of militarism on human security and the environment, each year governments around the world [spend nearly two trillion dollars](#) on these activities rather than investing these funds into public infrastructure and environmental protection and regeneration efforts. Meanwhile, militarised responses to the climate crisis and environmental destruction perpetuate and deepen the role of militarism and reinforce its underpinning patriarchal ideologies.

Example of WILPF work and WILPF Resources:

- WILPF Sweden and WILPF Norway engagement with key issues related to impact of military activity, militarism, and conflict on human rights and the environment
- WILPF US has launched website <https://www.militarypoisons.org/> - for a project to expose the military's role in PFAS contamination. currently mainly US-based but they'll create country pages and invite Sections to submit material.
- NATO Watch
- Move the Money advocacy
- Work on nuclear disarmament, incl. raising awareness of environmental impacts, incl. by promoting the TPNW
- Work on explosive weapons & highlighting environmental impacts
- Calling for phasing out of nuclear energy & promotion of renewable sources (alongside reduction of overall energy consumption)

Critique of capitalism and neoliberalism

WILPF seeks to examine how unsustainable economic practices and policies, at local, global, regional and national levels, are contributing to and exacerbating the climate crisis and environmental destruction – and how these gendered practices drive conflicts. This work is anchored in local perspectives and realities and also linked to the analysis of the environmental impacts of global systems such as financial institutions, trade agreements, and corporations.

Issue: Economic policies contributing to environmental destruction and the climate crisis are rooted in colonialism, which have also led to the systematic oppression of Black, Indigenous peoples, and other communities in marginalised situations.

Environmental harm and climate change instigated by capitalist political economy, including colonialism, militarism, racism, and patriarchy, push individuals and communities into poverty or perpetuate the cycle of poverty by destroying traditional ways of life and by creating socioeconomic barriers to stability and well-being.

The impacts of environmental harm and the climate crisis also contribute to significant human rights violations, with women and girls, Indigenous peoples, and individuals in marginalised situations increasingly unable to access safe food, clean water and sanitation, health services as well as other human rights.

Women and children are disproportionately represented in forced migration patterns influenced, in part, by the climate crisis and resource wars, a reality that puts their lives at risk and erodes community strength and well-being.

Environmental sustainability cannot be linked to economic growth. Every economic policy must contribute to the protection and regeneration of ecosystems, for which current principles of competition- and consumer-driven capitalism do not serve.

Investments must be made in public infrastructure to support women's ability to access the resources they need to achieve food security, access quality education and healthcare, overcome poverty, and move forward toward environmental justice.

International financial institutions – specifically the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) – are contributing directly to environmental degradation and the climate crisis by designing, upholding, and perpetuating neoliberal economic policies and the “myth of infinite growth” – capitalism's false promise of “trickle down” wealth across all countries and socioeconomic demographics – and by directly supporting governments (IMF) and financing businesses and projects that are engaging in harmful practices.

Corporations particularly in the extractive and agribusiness sectors are also directly responsible for environmental degradation and climate change. Large-scale agriculture, mining and logging are also driving the majority of [attacks against environmental human rights defenders](#) across the world. States must take action against irresponsible companies and those that finance them to ensure that their operations do not harm our environment, human rights and those who stand up to protect it.

Example of WILPF work and WILPF Resources:

- Monitoring financial institutions
- Advocacy on accountability of corporations with regard to human rights, including in conflict-affected contexts
- Engagement with High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development and SDGs
- UN Environment Program and Assembly, Women's Major Group, and Women and Gender Constituency civil society advocacy groups

Addressing conflict over natural resources

WILPF addresses the growing issue of [conflict over natural resources](#), which is particularly impacting regions of the Global South.

Issue: As governments, non-state actors, transnational corporations, and other businesses compete over land, water, minerals, animals and other riches of nature, to meet demand for production of consumer goods, local populations – particularly women and Indigenous peoples – are becoming increasingly affected by resource scarcity, which compounds existing challenges. As a result, [at least 18 violent conflicts](#) have been linked to exploitation of natural resources since 1990.

Ironically, natural resource-related wars and conflicts will only continue to increase as the world moves toward ongoing digitisation and alternative technologies to reduce emissions and pollution: [demand for rare earth metals](#) required for consumer electronics, electric vehicles, and renewable energy – primarily found in Latin America, Africa, and the Middle East – is growing exponentially, resulting in destruction of ecosystems, loss of biodiversity, extreme weather events, supply shortages, violation of labour rights, and armed conflict.

Although conflict, environmental destruction, and resource scarcity have a particularly devastating impact on women and Indigenous peoples, women and Indigenous activists and their organisations are underrepresented in decision-making spaces, particularly in countries affected by conflict. This leads to a lack of gendered or culturally sensitive perspectives and solutions.

Violence against environmental human rights defenders – especially against those from Indigenous peoples – continues. Women activists, especially Indigenous women defending community land and environmental rights are particularly targeted. Environmental defenders are also subjected to harassment, incarceration, and other forms of violence by States and corporations, including by private military and security companies.

With focus mainly placed on environment-focused movements and initiatives that are dominated by white men, it is critical to support and follow the lead of women and Indigenous peoples and to centre their rights for a future of environmental justice and sustainable solutions.⁷

Example of WILPF work and WILPF Resources:

- WILPF Canada's advocacy to prevent construction of pipelines and protect Indigenous peoples' rights
- Mines (Zimbabwe, DRC)
- Preventing construction of dam such as in Lebanon)
- Advocacy on accountability of corporations with regard to human rights, including in conflict-affected contexts

Leveraging feminist perspectives on climate crisis, gender and security

Issue: Disrupted or destroyed ecosystems and the effects of climate change have [differential impacts on women](#), Indigenous peoples, and other communities in marginalised situations, particularly those in the Global South. These impacts include: Compromised ability to access safe, clean food and water, Compromised ability to access safe energy sources, More time spent working to obtain basic necessities and resources, Greater exposure to violence, including gender-based violence and violence targeting women environmental activists, Deepening poverty and reduced access to education and

⁷ For further discussion: How will WILPF be working with Indigenous peoples through its environmental Strategy?

opportunities for economic advancement, Erosion of land and community and resilience and Overrepresentation in climate-related migration patterns.

In Yemen, for example, the combined impacts of a devastating civil war, a collapsed healthcare system, and a historic hunger crisis have left women scrambling to protect, feed, and care for children, family members, and communities – all without economic resources or social support. Indeed, all across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, women and their families are facing extraordinary obstacles to health, well-being, and stability.

In Zimbabwe, a climate change-driven food crisis and the country's deepening economic crisis have pushed millions of precariously employed women and girls into poverty and led to an increase in child marriages, sex trafficking, and other forms of gender-based violence. And in countries like Afghanistan and Nigeria, limited access to gasoline – a result of economic policies driving up prices – is leading to the destruction of forests as families rely on firewood for heat and cooking. This is creating long-term health challenges for women, who are most exposed to indoor pollution created by firewood.

Multinational corporations are significant contributors to global industrial emissions, with just 100 companies contributing over 70 per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions since 1988. The activities of these companies contribute to climate change, degrade the environment, push people into poverty, and weaken communities – all in the name of profit and power.

In addition to posing a direct and existential threat to human security, the climate crisis also exacerbates the direct and indirect drivers of armed conflict and violence: resource scarcity, forced displacement, stressed governance and humanitarian systems, widespread hunger, the disappearance of economic opportunities, land grabbing, and more.

Thus, it is crucial that conflict prevention efforts reflect the importance of intersectional, gender-responsive responses to the climate crisis. Peacebuilding dialogues must also support the meaningful participation of diverse women and girls as leaders, defenders, and frontline responders to the climate crisis, including through participation in the development of early warning systems that identify the potential emergence of conflict.

Example of WILPF work and WILPF Resources:

- WILPF Australia and WILPF Spain addressing effects of climate change, including displaced peoples, land rights, and disaster management, as well as causes of climate change, including garbage disposal, deforestation, fossil fuels, and factory-based pollution
- WILPF Afghanistan tree-planting programme: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNYfXcjwFw>
- PTI and WILPF [joint submission](#) to the CESC pre-session, which include sections on water scarcity and on environmental degradation.
- West Africa - awareness raising at community level re use of fire wood, plastic etc
- PeaceWomen policy brief for Generation Equality - Action Coalition 4: Feminist Action for Climate Justice
- WILPF Sweden Feminist policies for climate justice <https://ikff.se/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/fem-rapport-2020-final.pdf>
- Read more in WILPF's recent report [COVID-19 and Gender Justice: Feminists in MENA Defying Global Structural Failure](#).

Peace agreements, resolutions, and National Action Plans

Issue: Too often, diplomatic actions designed to promote peace – such as peace agreements, United Nations Security Council (UNSCR) resolutions, and National Actions Plans (NAPs) – are largely focused on a liberal concept of development that prioritises economic growth within the existing capitalist system, which is driving environmental destruction, inequality, poverty, and other major challenges around the world as described previously. As the capitalist political economy is a driver of conflict, inevitably, natural resources are viewed as a “prize” to be obtained from that conflict and the subsequent peace., both by those engaged in the actual fighting and those who enable the agreements. This approach is validated and embedded in diplomatic discourse on how peace is brokered and conflict resolved.

This approach to the making of ‘peace’ and resolutions requires the exclusion of those who are not vested in the patriarchal system, and prevents the development of solutions that address inter alia, the racial, [gendered impacts](#) of the issues at hand.

Working within legal frameworks and the guidance set out by the SDGs, WILPF is committed to advocating for the inclusion of diverse women and ecofeminist perspectives in these critical agreements, resolutions, and plans for action on the environment. This work is rooted in WILPF’s feminist political economy approach, which allows for gendered analysis of the root causes of conflict and the development of new concepts of negotiation and reconstruction that advance feminist peace and sustainability.

Example of WILPF work and WILPF Resources:

- WILPF Sri Lanka advocating for deeper engagement between government and civil society on response to environmental crisis
- NGO Working Group on WPS position paper on WPS and Environment

Moving Forward

This paper has been designed as a starting point to guide the next stage of dialogue, planning, and action toward WILPF's environment strategies.

Building on the concepts and themes described here, key discussion points to take this further could include:

1. Capturing WILPF background: are there any other key historic dates and actions to highlight?
2. Exploring and developing WILPF framing
 - a. Does WILPF members support eco-feminist approach? Are there other approaches that WILPF have considered?
 - i. (not mentioned In discussion paper but linked to WILPF's initial exploration of this field) Does WILPF support an environmental peacebuilding approach? Should this be included in WILPF's framing?
 - b. What are WILPF positions on de-growth concept and practice? What are other alternative economic models supported by WILPF?
 - i. SDG support economic growth, specifically targets within goals 8 and 17. Feminists have been trying to change this for a long time and our advocacy tries to push for deprioritization of these in favor of other targets. Although we work within the SDGs framework, we are critical of the SDGs?
 - c. What are some of the issues relating to the gendered impacts of the climate crisis/environmental destruction that should be debated?
 - d. Is WILPF working to combat and highlight environmental racism, both in the Global North and Global South?
 - e. How can WILPF better support and reflect the priorities of indigenous communities/women in its environmental strategy, given the values and voices of Indigenous communities are regularly referenced in the aims going forward?
3. What are WILPF's key advocacy positions demands for each of the thematic focus areas? What are our key policy frameworks and entry mechanisms for each? How can these be clearer?
4. In each of thematic areas, what are the concrete opportunities and entry points for further action?
5. Overall, what added value does WILPF bring to the global environmental activism movement?