

117TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 260

To address the disparate impact of climate change on women and support the efforts of women globally to address climate change, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

JANUARY 11, 2021

Ms. LEE of California (for herself, Mrs. DEMINGS, Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin, Ms. SCHAKOWSKY, Mr. KHANNA, Ms. BARRAGÁN, Ms. VELÁZQUEZ, Mr. CONNOLLY, Mr. PANETTA, Ms. JAYAPAL, Mr. ESPAILLAT, Mr. CLEAVER, Ms. NORTON, Mr. CARSON, Ms. HOULAHAN, Ms. MENG, Ms. CLARKE of New York, Mrs. CAROLYN B. MALONEY of New York, Ms. WILD, Mr. MALINOWSKI, Mr. SHERMAN, Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD, Mr. COHEN, Mr. SIRES, Ms. UNDERWOOD, Mr. LOWENTHAL, Mr. DANNY K. DAVIS of Illinois, Mr. BLUMENAUER, Mr. HASTINGS, Mrs. TORRES of California, Ms. CASTOR of Florida, Ms. MATSUI, Ms. JACKSON LEE, Mr. POCAN, Ms. BASS, Ms. SPEIER, and Ms. CHU) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Affairs, and in addition to the Committee on Energy and Commerce, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To address the disparate impact of climate change on women and support the efforts of women globally to address climate change, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE; TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

2 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the
3 “Women and Climate Change Act of 2021”.

4 (b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for
5 this Act is as follows:

Sec. 1. Short title; table of contents.

Sec. 2. Findings.

Sec. 3. Definitions.

Sec. 4. Statement of policy.

TITLE I—STRATEGIES, POLICIES, AND PROGRAMS

Sec. 101. Federal Interagency Working Group on Women and Climate Change.

Sec. 102. Development and implementation of strategy and policies to prevent
and respond to the effects of climate change on women glob-
ally.

TITLE II—OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Sec. 201. Senior Coordinator for Women and Climate Change.

Sec. 202. Briefing and report.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 Congress makes the following findings:

8 (1) Women in the United States and around
9 the world are the linchpin of families and commu-
10 nities and are often the first to feel the immediate
11 and adverse effects of social, environmental, and eco-
12 nomic stresses on their families and communities.

13 (2) The United Nations has recognized, as one
14 of the central organizing principles for its work, that
15 “no enduring solution to society’s most threatening
16 social, economic and political problems can be found
17 without the full participation, and the full empower-
18 ment, of the world’s women”.

1 (3) The United Nations Development Pro-
2 gramme 2013 Human Development Report has
3 found that the number of people living in extreme
4 poverty could increase by up to 3,000,000,000 by
5 2050 unless environmental disasters are averted by
6 coordinated global action.

7 (4) Climate change is already forcing the most
8 vulnerable communities and populations in devel-
9 oping countries to face unprecedented climate stress,
10 including water scarcity and drought, as well as se-
11 vere weather events and floods, which can lead to re-
12 duced agricultural productivity, food insecurity, and
13 increased disease.

14 (5) Climate change exacerbates issues of scar-
15 city and lack of accessibility to primary natural re-
16 sources, forest resources, and arable land for food
17 production, thereby contributing to increased conflict
18 and instability, as well as the workload and stresses
19 on women farmers, who are estimated to produce 60
20 to 80 percent of the food in most developing coun-
21 tries.

22 (6) Women will disproportionately face harmful
23 impacts from climate change, particularly in poor
24 and developing nations where women regularly as-
25 sume increased responsibility for growing the fam-

1 ily's food and collecting water, fuel, and other re-
2 sources.

3 (7) Epidemics, such as malaria and zika, are
4 expected to worsen and spread due to variations in
5 climate, putting women (especially pregnant mothers
6 and women who hope to become pregnant) and chil-
7 dren without access to prevention and medical serv-
8 ices at risk.

9 (8) The direct and indirect effects of climate
10 change have a disproportionate impact on marginal-
11 ized women, such as environmental refugees and dis-
12 placed persons, migrants, religious, racial, or ethnic
13 minorities, adolescent girls, lesbian and trans
14 women, women living in poverty, and women and
15 girls with disabilities and those who are living with
16 HIV.

17 (9) Conflict has a disproportionate impact on
18 the most vulnerable communities and populations,
19 including women, and is fueled in the poorest re-
20 gions of the world by harsher climates, leading to
21 migration, refugee crises, and conflicts over scarce
22 natural resources, including land and water.

23 (10) Displaced, refugee, and stateless women
24 and girls face extreme violence and threats, includ-
25 ing—

1 (A) being forced to exchange sex for food
2 and humanitarian supplies;

3 (B) being at increased risk of rape, sexual
4 exploitation, and abuse; and

5 (C) being at increased risk for HIV, sexu-
6 ally transmitted infections (STIs), unplanned
7 pregnancy, and poor reproductive health.

8 (11) It is predicted that climate change will
9 lead to increasing frequency and intensity of extreme
10 weather conditions, precipitating the occurrence of
11 natural disasters around the globe.

12 (12) The relocation and death of women, and
13 especially mothers, as a result of climate-related dis-
14 asters often has devastating impacts on social sup-
15 port networks, family ties, and the coping capacity
16 of families and communities.

17 (13) The ability of women to adapt to climate
18 change is constrained by a lack of economic free-
19 doms, property and inheritance rights, and access to
20 financial resources, education, family planning and
21 reproductive health, and new tools, equipment, and
22 technology.

23 (14) Despite having a unique capacity and
24 knowledge to promote and provide for adaptation to

1 climate change, women often have insufficient re-
2 sources to undertake such adaptation.

3 (15) Women are shown to have a multiplier ef-
4 fect because women use their income and resources,
5 when given the necessary tools, to increase the well-
6 being of their children and families, and thus play
7 a critical role in reducing food insecurity, poverty,
8 and socioeconomic effects of climate change.

9 (16) Women are often underrepresented in the
10 development and formulation of policy regarding
11 mitigation and adaptation to climate change, even
12 though women are often in the best position to pro-
13 vide and consult on adaptive strategies.

14 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

15 In this Act:

16 (1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMIT-
17 TEES.—The term “appropriate congressional com-
18 mittees” means—

19 (A) the Committee on Foreign Relations
20 and the Committee on Appropriations of the
21 Senate; and

22 (B) the Committee on Foreign Affairs and
23 the Committee on Appropriations of the House
24 of Representatives.

1 (2) CLIMATE CHANGE.—The term “climate
2 change” means a change of climate that is attrib-
3 uted directly or indirectly to—

4 (A) human activity; and

5 (B) altering the composition of the global
6 atmosphere.

7 (3) DEVELOPING COUNTRY.—The term “devel-
8 oping country” means a country classified by the
9 World Bank as having a low-income or lower-middle-
10 income economy.

11 (4) DISPARATE IMPACT.—The term “disparate
12 impact” refers to the historical and ongoing impacts
13 of the pattern and practice of discrimination in em-
14 ployment, education, housing, banking, health, and
15 nearly every other aspect of life in the economy, so-
16 ciety, or culture that have an adverse impact on mi-
17 norities, women, or other protected groups, regard-
18 less of whether such practices were motivated by dis-
19 criminatory intent.

20 (5) ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTERS.—The term
21 “environmental disasters” means specific events
22 caused by human activity that result in seriously
23 negative effects on the environment.

24 (6) ENVIRONMENTAL REFUGEES.—The term
25 “environmental refugees” means people displaced be-

1 cause of environmental causes, notably land loss and
2 degradation, and natural disasters, who have left
3 their community or country of origin.

4 (7) EXTREME POVERTY.—The term “extreme
5 poverty” means having an income level or living
6 standard at a level of extreme deprivation based on
7 living with income below 50 percent of the poverty
8 line as established by the individual country at issue,
9 or below \$1.90 per day as determined by the World
10 Bank.

11 (8) EXTREME WEATHER.—The term “extreme
12 weather” means unexpected, unusual, unpredictable,
13 severe, or unseasonal weather that is at the extremes
14 of the historical distribution range that has been
15 seen in the past.

16 (9) FEDERAL AGENCY.—The term “Federal
17 agency” means any executive department, Govern-
18 ment corporation, Government-controlled corpora-
19 tion, or other establishment in the executive branch
20 of the Government (including the Executive Office of
21 the President), or any independent regulatory agen-
22 cy.

23 (10) FOOD INSECURITY.—The term “food inse-
24 curity” means a lack of consistent access to food.

1 (11) MOST VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES AND
2 POPULATIONS.—The term “most vulnerable commu-
3 nities and populations” means communities and pop-
4 ulations, including women, impoverished commu-
5 nities, adolescent girls, people with disabilities, indig-
6 enous peoples, refugees, displaced persons, migrants,
7 religious, racial, or ethnic minorities, lesbian and
8 trans women, women living in poverty, women and
9 girls with disabilities, and those who are living with
10 HIV, who are at risk of substantial adverse impacts
11 of climate change and have limited capacity to re-
12 spond to such impacts.

13 (12) POVERTY.—The term “poverty” means an
14 income level and living standard insufficient to meet
15 basic needs.

16 **SEC. 4. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

17 It is the policy of the United States, in partnership
18 with affected countries, donor country governments, inter-
19 national financial institutions, international nongovern-
20 mental organizations, multilateral organizations, and civil
21 society groups, especially those led by women, to combat
22 the leading causes of climate change, mitigate the effects
23 of climate change on women and girls, and elevate the par-
24 ticipation of women in policy, program, and community

1 decision-making processes with respect to climate change,
2 by—

3 (1) establishing the Federal Interagency Work-
4 ing Group on Women and Climate Change, the mis-
5 sion of which is to prevent and respond to the ef-
6 fects of climate change on women globally; and

7 (2) implementing a coordinated, integrated, evi-
8 dence-based, and comprehensive strategy on women
9 and climate change throughout United States poli-
10 cies in the future.

11 **TITLE I—STRATEGIES, POLICIES,** 12 **AND PROGRAMS**

13 **SEC. 101. FEDERAL INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP ON** 14 **WOMEN AND CLIMATE CHANGE.**

15 (a) **ESTABLISHMENT.**—There is established in the
16 Department of State a Federal Interagency Working
17 Group on Women and Climate Change (in this Act re-
18 ferred to as the “Working Group”).

19 (b) **CHAIRPERSON.**—The Senior Coordinator for
20 Women and Climate Change designated pursuant to sec-
21 tion 201 shall serve as the chairperson of the Working
22 Group.

23 (c) **MEMBERSHIP.**—

24 (1) **IN GENERAL.**—The Working Group shall be
25 composed of one senior-level representative from

1 each of the Federal agencies described in paragraph
2 (2), as selected by the head of the respective agency
3 from the senior ranks of that agency.

4 (2) AGENCIES.—The agencies described in this
5 paragraph are the following:

6 (A) The Department of State, including—

7 (i) the Office of Global Women’s
8 Issues;

9 (ii) the Office of Civil Rights;

10 (iii) the Bureau of Oceans and Inter-
11 national Environmental and Scientific Af-
12 fairs;

13 (iv) the Bureau of Population, Refu-
14 gees, and Migration;

15 (v) the Bureau of Democracy, Human
16 Rights, and Labor; and

17 (vi) the Bureau of International Orga-
18 nization Affairs.

19 (B) The United States Agency for Inter-
20 national Development.

21 (C) The Centers for Disease Control and
22 Prevention.

23 (D) The Environmental Protection Agency.

24 (E) The National Oceanic and Atmos-
25 pheric Administration.

1 (F) The National Institutes of Health.

2 (G) The National Science Foundation.

3 (H) The Council on Environmental Qual-
4 ity.

5 (I) Such other agencies as may be des-
6 ignated by the Senior Coordinator for Women
7 and Climate Change.

8 (d) FUNCTIONS.—The Working Group shall—

9 (1) coordinate and integrate the development of
10 all policies and activities of the Federal Government
11 across all agencies relating to—

12 (A) combating the effects of climate
13 change on women in the national and inter-
14 national sphere; and

15 (B) improving the response and strategy of
16 the Federal Government to fight climate change
17 for the security of the United States and the
18 international community;

19 (2) allow each member of the Working Group
20 to act as a representative for the Working Group
21 within the Federal department or agency of such
22 member to facilitate implementation of the Working
23 Group policies within such department or agency;

24 (3) ensure that all relevant Federal depart-
25 ments or agencies comply with appropriate guide-

1 lines, policies, and directives from the Working
2 Group, the Department of State, and other Federal
3 departments or agencies with responsibilities relating
4 to climate change;

5 (4) ensure that Federal departments or agen-
6 cies, State governments, and relevant congressional
7 committees, in consultation with nongovernmental
8 organizations and policy experts in the field and
9 State and local government officials who administer
10 or direct policy for programs relating to climate
11 change and women—

12 (A) have access to, receive, and appro-
13 priately disseminate best practices in the ad-
14 ministration of such programs;

15 (B) have adequate resources to maximize
16 the public awareness of such programs;

17 (C) increase the reach of such programs;

18 (D) share relevant data; and

19 (E) issue relevant guidance; and

20 (5) identify and disseminate best practices for
21 improved collection on the part of each Federal de-
22 partment or agency of data relevant to the disparate
23 impact of climate change on women, including in—

24 (A) unpaid care work;

1 (B) community advocacy, activism, and
2 representation;

3 (C) women’s and girls’ access to education;

4 (D) access to comprehensive health care,
5 including reproductive health and rights;

6 (E) desertification and food insecurity;

7 (F) community infrastructure, multilevel
8 Government adaptability, and climate resilience;

9 (G) climate and weather-related crisis re-
10 sponse, including safety from gender-based vio-
11 lence; and

12 (H) women’s involvement and leadership in
13 the development of frameworks and policies for
14 climate resilience.

15 (e) CONSULTATION.—The Working Group may con-
16 sult and obtain recommendations from such independent
17 nongovernmental policy experts, State and local govern-
18 ment officials, independent groups and organizations, or
19 other groups or organizations as the Senior Coordinator
20 for Women and Climate Change determines will assist in
21 carrying out the mission of the Working Group.

22 (f) FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS.—The Working Group
23 shall—

1 (1) meet not less frequently than once each
2 quarter to discuss and develop policies, projects, and
3 programs; and

4 (2) meet with the Senior Coordinator for
5 Women and Climate Change not less frequently than
6 once each month to report on and discuss implemen-
7 tation of such policies, projects, and programs.

8 **SEC. 102. DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF**
9 **STRATEGY AND POLICIES TO PREVENT AND**
10 **RESPOND TO THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE**
11 **CHANGE ON WOMEN GLOBALLY.**

12 (a) INITIAL STRATEGY REQUIRED.—Not later than
13 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the
14 Senior Coordinator for Women and Climate Change and
15 the Ambassador-at-Large for the Office of Global Wom-
16 en’s Issues of the Department of State, in consultation
17 with the Working Group, shall develop and submit to the
18 appropriate congressional committees a United States Na-
19 tional and International Strategy to prevent and respond
20 to the effects of climate change on women.

21 (b) CONTENTS.—The strategy submitted under sub-
22 section (a) shall include—

23 (1) recognizing the disparate impacts of climate
24 change on women and the efforts of women globally
25 to address climate change;

1 (2) taking effective action—

2 (A) to prevent and respond to climate
3 change and mitigate the effects of climate
4 change on women around the world; and

5 (B) to promote gender equality, economic
6 growth, public health, racial justice, and human
7 rights;

8 (3) implementing the United Nations Sustain-
9 able Development Goals listed in subsection (f),
10 through and beyond 2030, as part of the strategy to
11 prevent and respond to the effects of climate change
12 on women globally;

13 (4) implementing balanced gender participation
14 to avoid reinforcing binary roles, especially among
15 individuals from the communities most impacted, in
16 climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts, in-
17 cluding in governance and diplomatic positions with-
18 in the United States Government;

19 (5) working at the local, national, and inter-
20 national levels, including with individuals, families,
21 and communities, to prevent and respond to the ef-
22 fects of climate change on women;

23 (6) systematically integrating and coordinating
24 efforts to prevent and respond to the effects of cli-
25 mate change on women internationally into United

1 States foreign policy and foreign assistance pro-
2 grams;

3 (7) investing in research on climate change
4 through appropriate Federal departments or agen-
5 cies and funding of university and independent re-
6 search groups on the various causes and effects of
7 climate change;

8 (8) developing and implementing gender-sen-
9 sitive frameworks in policies to address climate
10 change that account for the specific impacts of cli-
11 mate change on women;

12 (9) developing policies to support women who
13 are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate
14 change to prepare for, build their resilience to, and
15 adapt to such impacts, including a commitment to
16 increase education and training opportunities for
17 women to develop local resilience plans to address
18 the effects of climate change;

19 (10) developing and investing in programs for
20 the education and empowerment of women and girls
21 in the United States and across the global commu-
22 nity, including to gather information on how climate
23 change is affecting their lives and for guidance on
24 the needs of their families and communities in the

1 face of climate change, in coordination with the dip-
2 lomatic missions of other countries;

3 (11) consulting with representatives of civil so-
4 ciety, including nongovernmental organizations, com-
5 munity and faith-based organizations, multilateral
6 organizations, local and international civil society
7 groups, and local climate change organizations and
8 their beneficiaries, that have demonstrated experi-
9 ence in preventing and responding to the effects of
10 climate change on women;

11 (12) supporting and building local capacity in
12 developing countries, including with respect to gov-
13 ernments at all levels and nongovernmental organi-
14 zations (especially women-led), to prevent and re-
15 spond to the effects of climate change on women;

16 (13) developing programs to empower women in
17 communities to have a voice in the planning, design,
18 implementation, and evaluation of strategies to ad-
19 dress climate change so that their roles and re-
20 sources are taken into account;

21 (14) including women in economic development
22 planning, policies, and practices that directly im-
23 prove conditions that result from climate change;

1 (15) integrating a gender approach in all poli-
2 cies and programs in the United States that are
3 globally related to climate change; and

4 (16) ensuring that such policies and programs
5 support women globally to prepare for, build resil-
6 ience for, and adapt to, climate change.

7 (c) UPDATES.—The Senior Coordinator for Women
8 and Climate Change shall—

9 (1) consult with the Working Group to collect
10 information and feedback; and

11 (2) update the strategy and programs to pre-
12 vent and respond to the effects of climate change on
13 women globally, as the Senior Coordinator for
14 Women and Climate Change considers appropriate.

15 (d) IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND BUDGET RE-
16 QUIRED.—Not later than 60 days after the date of the
17 submittal of the strategy under subsection (a), the Senior
18 Coordinator for Women and Climate Change shall submit
19 to the appropriate congressional committees an implemen-
20 tation plan and budget for the strategy.

21 (e) ASSISTANCE AND CONSULTATION.—The Senior
22 Coordinator for Women and Climate Change shall assist
23 and provide consultation to the Secretary of State in pre-
24 venting and responding to the effects of climate change
25 on women globally.

1 (f) UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
2 GOALS THROUGH AND BEYOND 2030.—The United Na-
3 tions Sustainable Development Goals listed in this sub-
4 section are the following:

5 (1) Ending poverty in all its forms everywhere.

6 (2) Ending hunger, achieving food security and
7 improved nutrition, and promoting sustainable agri-
8 culture.

9 (3) Ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-
10 being for all and at all ages.

11 (4) Ensuring inclusive, equitable, and quality
12 education and promoting lifelong learning opportuni-
13 ties for all.

14 (5) Achieving gender equality and empowering
15 all women and girls.

16 (6) Ensuring the availability and sustainable
17 management of water and sanitation for all.

18 (7) Ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sus-
19 tainable, and modern energy for all.

20 (8) Promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustain-
21 able economic growth, full and productive employ-
22 ment, and decent work for all.

23 (9) Building resilient infrastructure, promoting
24 inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and fos-
25 tering innovation.

1 (10) Reducing inequality within and among
2 countries.

3 (11) Making cities and human settlements in-
4 clusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

5 (12) Ensuring sustainable consumption and
6 production patterns.

7 (13) Taking urgent action to combat climate
8 change and its impacts.

9 (14) Conserving and sustainably using the
10 oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable
11 development.

12 (15) Protecting, restoring, and promoting sus-
13 tainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably
14 managing forests, combating desertification, and
15 halting and reversing land degradation and biodiver-
16 sity loss.

17 (16) Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies
18 for sustainable development, providing access to jus-
19 tice for all, and building effective, accountable and
20 inclusive institutions at all levels.

21 (17) Strengthening the means of policy imple-
22 mentation and revitalizing the global partnership for
23 sustainable development.

TITLE II—OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

SEC. 201. SENIOR COORDINATOR FOR WOMEN AND CLIMATE CHANGE.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT.—The Ambassador-at-Large of the Office of Global Women’s Issues of the Department of State shall designate an individual to serve as a Senior Advisor, or equivalent role, who shall serve concurrently as the Senior Coordinator for Women and Climate Change.

(b) DUTIES.—The Senior Coordinator for Women and Climate Change shall—

(1) direct the activities, policies, programs, and funding of the Department of State relating to the effects of climate change on women, including with respect to efforts to prevent and respond to those effects;

(2) advise the Secretary of State, the relevant heads of other Federal departments and independent agencies, and other entities within the Executive Office of the President, regarding the establishment of—

(A) policies, goals, objectives, and priorities for addressing and combating the effects of climate change on women; and

1 (B) mechanisms to improve the effective-
2 ness, coordination, impact, and outcomes of
3 programs relating to addressing and combating
4 the effects of climate change on women, in co-
5 ordination with experts in the field, nongovern-
6 mental organizations, and foreign governments;
7 and

8 (3) identify and assist in the resolution of any
9 disputes that arise between Federal agencies relating
10 to policies and programs to address and combat the
11 effects of climate change on women or other matters
12 within the responsibility of the Office of Global
13 Women's Issues.

14 (c) REPORTING.—The Senior Coordinator for Women
15 and Climate Change shall report to the Ambassador-at-
16 Large for the Office of Global Women's Issues and the
17 Secretary of State.

18 **SEC. 202. BRIEFING AND REPORT.**

19 Not later than 180 days after the date of the enact-
20 ment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Amba-
21 sador-at-Large and the Senior Coordinator for Women
22 and Climate Change shall jointly—

23 (1) brief the appropriate congressional commit-
24 tees on—

1 (A) the effects of climate change on
2 women; and

3 (B) the prevention and response strategies,
4 programming, and associated outcomes with re-
5 spect to climate change; and

6 (2) submit to the appropriate congressional
7 committees an assessment of the human and finan-
8 cial resources necessary to fulfill the purposes of and
9 carry out this Act.

○