

116TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. 868

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 SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 26, 2019

Ms. HIRONO introduced the following bill; which was read twice and referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

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,*

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

4 (a) SHORT TITLE.—This Act may be cited as the
5 “Women and Climate Change Act of 2019”.

6 (b) TABLE OF CONTENTS.—The table of contents for
7 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 globally.

TITLE II—OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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

Sec. 202. Briefing and report.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 Congress makes the following findings:

3 (1) Women in the United States and around
4 the world are the linchpin of families and commu-
5 nities and are often the first to feel the immediate
6 and adverse effects of social, environmental, and eco-
7 nomic stresses on their families and communities.

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

14 (3) The United Nations Development Pro-
15 gramme 2013 Human Development Report has
16 found that the number of people living in extreme
17 poverty could increase by up to 3,000,000,000 by
18 2050 unless environmental disasters are averted by
19 coordinated global action.

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

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

16 (6) Women will disproportionately face harmful
17 impacts from climate change, particularly in poor
18 and developing nations where women regularly as-
19 sume increased responsibility for growing the fam-
20 ily's food and collecting water, fuel, and other re-
21 sources.

22 (7) Epidemics, such as malaria and zika, are
23 expected to worsen and spread due to variations in
24 climate, putting women (especially pregnant mothers
25 and women who hope to become pregnant) and chil-

1 dren without access to prevention and medical serv-
 2 ices at risk.

3 (8) The direct and indirect effects of climate
 4 change have a disproportionate impact on
 5 marginalized women, such as environmental refugees
 6 and displaced persons, migrants, religious, racial, or
 7 ethnic minorities, adolescent girls, lesbian and trans
 8 women, women living in poverty, and women and
 9 girls with disabilities and those who are living with
 10 HIV.

11 (9) Conflict has a disproportionate impact on
 12 the most vulnerable communities and populations,
 13 including women, and is fueled in the poorest re-
 14 gions of the world by harsher climates, leading to
 15 migration, refugee crises, and conflicts over scarce
 16 natural resources, including land and water.

17 (10) Displaced, refugee, and stateless women
 18 and girls face extreme violence and threats, includ-
 19 ing—

20 (A) being forced to exchange sex for food
 21 and humanitarian supplies;

22 (B) being at increased risk of rape, sexual
 23 exploitation, and abuse; and

1 (C) being at increased risk for HIV, sexu-
 2 ally transmitted infections (STIs), unplanned
 3 pregnancy, and poor reproductive health.

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

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

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

19 (14) Despite having a unique capacity and
 20 knowledge to promote and provide for adaptation to
 21 climate change, women often have insufficient re-
 22 sources to undertake such adaptation.

23 (15) Women are shown to have a multiplier ef-
 24 fect because women use their income and resources,
 25 when given the necessary tools, to increase the well-

1 being of their children and families, and thus play
 2 a critical role in reducing food insecurity, poverty,
 3 and socioeconomic effects of climate change.

4 (16) Women are often underrepresented in the
 5 development and formulation of policy regarding
 6 mitigation and adaptation to climate change, even
 7 though women are often in the best position to pro-
 8 vide and consult on adaptive strategies.

9 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

10 In this Act:

11 (1) APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMIT-
 12 TEES.—The term “appropriate congressional com-
 13 mittees” means—

14 (A) the Committee on Foreign Relations
 15 and the Committee on Appropriations of the
 16 Senate; and

17 (B) the Committee on Foreign Affairs and
 18 the Committee on Appropriations of the House
 19 of Representatives.

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

23 (A) human activity; and

24 (B) altering the composition of the global
 25 atmosphere.

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

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

14 (5) ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTERS.—The term
 15 “environmental disasters” means specific events
 16 caused by human activity that result in seriously
 17 negative effects on the environment.

18 (6) ENVIRONMENTAL REFUGEES.—The term
 19 “environmental refugees” means people displaced be-
 20 cause of environmental causes, notably land loss and
 21 degradation, and natural disasters, who have left
 22 their community or country of origin.

23 (7) EXTREME POVERTY.—The term “extreme
 24 poverty” means having an income level or living
 25 standard at a level of extreme deprivation based on

1 living with income below 50 percent of the poverty
 2 line as established by the individual country at issue,
 3 or below \$1.90 per day as determined by the World
 4 Bank.

5 (8) EXTREME WEATHER.—The term “extreme
 6 weather” means unexpected, unusual, unpredictable,
 7 severe, or unseasonal weather that is at the extremes
 8 of the historical distribution range that has been
 9 seen in the past.

10 (9) FEDERAL AGENCY.—The term “Federal
 11 agency” means any executive department, Govern-
 12 ment corporation, Government-controlled corpora-
 13 tion, or other establishment in the executive branch
 14 of the Government (including the Executive Office of
 15 the President), or any independent regulatory agen-
 16 cy.

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

19 (11) MOST VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES AND
 20 POPULATIONS.—The term “most vulnerable commu-
 21 nities and populations” means communities and pop-
 22 ulations, including women, impoverished commu-
 23 nities, adolescent girls, people with disabilities, indig-
 24 enous peoples, refugees, displaced persons, migrants,
 25 religious, racial, or ethnic minorities, lesbian and

1 trans women, women living in poverty, women and
2 girls with disabilities, and those who are living with
3 HIV, who are at risk of substantial adverse impacts
4 of climate change and have limited capacity to re-
5 spond to such impacts.

6 (12) POVERTY.—The term “poverty” means an
7 income level and living standard insufficient to meet
8 basic needs.

9 **SEC. 4. STATEMENT OF POLICY.**

10 It is the policy of the United States, in partnership
11 with affected countries, donor country governments, inter-
12 national financial institutions, international nongovern-
13 mental organizations, multilateral organizations, and civil
14 society groups, especially those led by women, to combat
15 the leading causes of climate change, mitigate the effects
16 of climate change on women and girls, and elevate the par-
17 ticipation of women in policy, program, and community
18 decision-making processes with respect to climate change,
19 by—

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

24 (2) implementing a coordinated, integrated, evi-
25 dence-based, and comprehensive strategy on women

1 and climate change throughout United States poli-
 2 cies in the future.

3 **TITLE I—STRATEGIES, POLICIES,**
 4 **AND PROGRAMS**

5 **SEC. 101. FEDERAL INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP ON**
 6 **WOMEN AND CLIMATE CHANGE.**

7 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established in the
 8 Department of State a Federal Interagency Working
 9 Group on Women and Climate Change (in this Act re-
 10 ferred to as the “Working Group”).

11 (b) CHAIRPERSON.—The Senior Coordinator for
 12 Women and Climate Change designated pursuant to sec-
 13 tion 201 shall serve as the chairperson of the Working
 14 Group.

15 (c) MEMBERSHIP.—

16 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Working Group shall be
 17 composed of one senior-level representative from
 18 each of the Federal agencies described in paragraph
 19 (2), as selected by the head of the respective agency
 20 from the senior ranks of that agency.

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

23 (A) The Department of State, including—
 24 (i) the Office of Global Women’s
 25 Issues;

- 1 (ii) the Office of Civil Rights;
- 2 (iii) the Bureau of Oceans and Inter-
- 3 national Environmental and Scientific Af-
- 4 fairs;
- 5 (iv) the Bureau of Population, Refu-
- 6 gees, and Migration;
- 7 (v) the Bureau of Democracy, Human
- 8 Rights, and Labor; and
- 9 (vi) the Bureau of International Orga-
- 10 nization Affairs.
- 11 (B) The United States Agency for Inter-
- 12 national Development.
- 13 (C) The Centers for Disease Control and
- 14 Prevention.
- 15 (D) The Environmental Protection Agency.
- 16 (E) The National Oceanic and Atmos-
- 17 pheric Administration.
- 18 (F) The National Institutes of Health.
- 19 (G) The National Science Foundation.
- 20 (H) The Council on Environmental Qual-
- 21 ity.
- 22 (I) Such other agencies as may be des-
- 23 igned by the Senior Coordinator for Women
- 24 and Climate Change.
- 25 (d) FUNCTIONS.—The Working Group shall—

1 (1) coordinate and integrate the development of
2 all policies and activities of the Federal Government
3 across all agencies relating to—

4 (A) combating the effects of climate
5 change on women in the national and inter-
6 national sphere; and

7 (B) improving the response and strategy of
8 the Federal Government to fight climate change
9 for the security of the United States and the
10 international community;

11 (2) allow each member of the Working Group
12 to act as a representative for the Working Group
13 within the Federal department or agency of such
14 member to facilitate implementation of the Working
15 Group policies within such department or agency;

16 (3) ensure that all relevant Federal depart-
17 ments or agencies comply with appropriate guide-
18 lines, policies, and directives from the Working
19 Group, the Department of State, and other Federal
20 departments or agencies with responsibilities relating
21 to climate change;

22 (4) ensure that Federal departments or agen-
23 cies, State governments, and relevant congressional
24 committees, in consultation with nongovernmental
25 organizations and policy experts in the field and

1 State and local government officials who administer
 2 or direct policy for programs relating to climate
 3 change and women—

4 (A) have access to, receive, and appro-
 5 priately disseminate best practices in the ad-
 6 ministration of such programs;

7 (B) have adequate resources to maximize
 8 the public awareness of such programs;

9 (C) increase the reach of such programs;

10 (D) share relevant data; and

11 (E) issue relevant guidance; and

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

16 (A) unpaid care work;

17 (B) community advocacy, activism, and
 18 representation;

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

20 (D) access to comprehensive health care,
 21 including reproductive health and rights;

22 (E) desertification and food insecurity;

23 (F) community infrastructure, multilevel
 24 Government adaptability, and climate resilience;

1 (G) climate and weather-related crisis re-
2 sponse, including safety from gender-based vio-
3 lence; and

4 (H) women's involvement and leadership in
5 the development of frameworks and policies for
6 climate resilience.

7 (e) CONSULTATION.—The Working Group may con-
8 sult and obtain recommendations from such independent
9 nongovernmental policy experts, State and local govern-
10 ment officials, independent groups and organizations, or
11 other groups or organizations as the Senior Coordinator
12 for Women and Climate Change determines will assist in
13 carrying out the mission of the Working Group.

14 (f) FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS.—The Working Group
15 shall—

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

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

1 **SEC. 102. DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF**
2 **STRATEGY AND POLICIES TO PREVENT AND**
3 **RESPOND TO THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE**
4 **CHANGE ON WOMEN GLOBALLY.**

5 (a) INITIAL STRATEGY REQUIRED.—Not later than
6 180 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the
7 Senior Coordinator for Women and Climate Change and
8 the Ambassador-at-Large for the Office of Global Wom-
9 en’s Issues of the Department of State, in consultation
10 with the Working Group, shall develop and submit to the
11 appropriate congressional committees a United States Na-
12 tional and International Strategy to prevent and respond
13 to the effects of climate change on women.

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

16 (1) recognizing the disparate impacts of climate
17 change on women and the efforts of women globally
18 to address climate change;

19 (2) taking effective action—

20 (A) to prevent and respond to climate
21 change and mitigate the effects of climate
22 change on women around the world; and

23 (B) to promote gender equality, economic
24 growth, public health, racial justice, and human
25 rights;

1 (3) implementing the United Nations Sustain-
2 able Development Goals listed in subsection (f),
3 through and beyond 2030, as part of the strategy to
4 prevent and respond to the effects of climate change
5 on women globally;

6 (4) implementing balanced gender participation
7 to avoid reinforcing binary roles, especially among
8 individuals from the communities most impacted, in
9 climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts, in-
10 cluding in governance and diplomatic positions with-
11 in the United States Government;

12 (5) working at the local, national, and inter-
13 national levels, including with individuals, families,
14 and communities, to prevent and respond to the ef-
15 fects of climate change on women;

16 (6) systematically integrating and coordinating
17 efforts to prevent and respond to the effects of cli-
18 mate change on women internationally into United
19 States foreign policy and foreign assistance pro-
20 grams;

21 (7) investing in research on climate change
22 through appropriate Federal departments or agen-
23 cies and funding of university and independent re-
24 search groups on the various causes and effects of
25 climate change;

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

5 (9) developing policies to support women who
6 are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate
7 change to prepare for, build their resilience to, and
8 adapt to such impacts, including a commitment to
9 increase education and training opportunities for
10 women to develop local resilience plans to address
11 the effects of climate change;

12 (10) developing and investing in programs for
13 the education and empowerment of women and girls
14 in the United States and across the global commu-
15 nity, including to gather information on how climate
16 change is affecting their lives and for guidance on
17 the needs of their families and communities in the
18 face of climate change, in coordination with the dip-
19 lomatic missions of other countries;

20 (11) consulting with representatives of civil so-
21 ciety, including nongovernmental organizations, com-
22 munity and faith-based organizations, multilateral
23 organizations, local and international civil society
24 groups, and local climate change organizations and
25 their beneficiaries, that have demonstrated experi-

1 ence in preventing and responding to the effects of
2 climate change on women;

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

8 (13) developing programs to empower women in
9 communities to have a voice in the planning, design,
10 implementation, and evaluation of strategies to ad-
11 dress climate change so that their roles and re-
12 sources are taken into account;

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

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

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

22 (c) UPDATES.—The Senior Coordinator for Women
23 and Climate Change shall—

24 (1) consult with the Working Group to collect
25 information and feedback; and

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

5 (d) IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND BUDGET RE-
 6 QUIRED.—Not later than 60 days after the date of the
 7 submittal of the strategy under subsection (a), the Senior
 8 Coordinator for Women and Climate Change shall submit
 9 to the appropriate congressional committees an implemen-
 10 tation plan and budget for the strategy.

11 (e) ASSISTANCE AND CONSULTATION.—The Senior
 12 Coordinator for Women and Climate Change shall assist
 13 and provide consultation to the Secretary of State in pre-
 14 venting and responding to the effects of climate change
 15 on women globally.

16 (f) UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
 17 GOALS THROUGH AND BEYOND 2030.—The United Na-
 18 tions Sustainable Development Goals listed in this sub-
 19 section are the following:

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

21 (2) Ending hunger, achieving food security and
 22 improved nutrition, and promoting sustainable agri-
 23 culture.

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

1 (4) Ensuring inclusive, equitable, and quality
2 education and promoting lifelong learning opportuni-
3 ties for all.

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

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

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

10 (8) Promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustain-
11 able economic growth, full and productive employ-
12 ment, and decent work for all.

13 (9) Building resilient infrastructure, promoting
14 inclusive and sustainable industrialization, and fos-
15 tering innovation.

16 (10) Reducing inequality within and among
17 countries.

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

20 (12) Ensuring sustainable consumption and
21 production patterns.

22 (13) Taking urgent action to combat climate
23 change and its impacts.

1 (14) Conserving and sustainably using the
2 oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable
3 development.

4 (15) Protecting, restoring, and promoting sus-
5 tainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably
6 managing forests, combating desertification, and
7 halting and reversing land degradation and biodiver-
8 sity loss.

9 (16) Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies
10 for sustainable development, providing access to jus-
11 tice for all, and building effective, accountable and
12 inclusive institutions at all levels.

13 (17) Strengthening the means of policy imple-
14 mentation and revitalizing the global partnership for
15 sustainable development.

16 **TITLE II—OVERSIGHT AND** 17 **ACCOUNTABILITY**

18 **SEC. 201. SENIOR COORDINATOR FOR WOMEN AND CLI-** 19 **MATE CHANGE.**

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

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

3 (1) direct the activities, policies, programs, and
4 funding of the Department of State relating to the
5 effects of climate change on women, including with
6 respect to efforts to prevent and respond to those ef-
7 fects;

8 (2) advise the Secretary of State, the relevant
9 heads of other Federal departments and independent
10 agencies, and other entities within the Executive Of-
11 fice of the President, regarding the establishment
12 of—

13 (A) policies, goals, objectives, and priorities
14 for addressing and combating the effects of cli-
15 mate change on women; and

16 (B) mechanisms to improve the effective-
17 ness, coordination, impact, and outcomes of
18 programs relating to addressing and combating
19 the effects of climate change on women, in co-
20 ordination with experts in the field, nongovern-
21 mental organizations, and foreign governments;
22 and

23 (3) identify and assist in the resolution of any
24 disputes that arise between Federal agencies relating
25 to policies and programs to address and combat the

1 effects of climate change on women or other matters
2 within the responsibility of the Office of Global
3 Women's Issues.

4 (c) REPORTING.—The Senior Coordinator for Women
5 and Climate Change shall report to the Ambassador-at-
6 Large for the Office of Global Women's Issues and the
7 Secretary of State.

8 **SEC. 202. BRIEFING AND REPORT.**

9 Not later than 180 days after the date of the enact-
10 ment of this Act, and annually thereafter, the Amba-
11 sador-at-Large and the Senior Coordinator for Women
12 and Climate Change shall jointly—

13 (1) brief the appropriate congressional commit-
14 tees on—

15 (A) the effects of climate change on
16 women; and

17 (B) the prevention and response strategies,
18 programming, and associated outcomes with re-
19 spect to climate change; and

20 (2) submit to the appropriate congressional
21 committees an assessment of the human and finan-
22 cial resources necessary to fulfill the purposes of and
23 carry out this Act.

○