

## Gender roles have always had stake in climate action

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Published Oct 18, 2024 | 11:19 AM — Updated Oct 18, 2024 | 11:19 AM

Recently a prominent woman author, entrepreneur, and social activist used AI-generated content to showcase an Instagram post showing women from an ethnic community performing a traditional dance form.

Not only did this post seem odd among her usual posts, but it also stood out from her usual intellectual posts, which showcased the depth and diversity in her content from her grassroots knowledge about issues.

While presenting at a panel recently in Christchurch about the role of women in audio-visual narratives, I choose this story above to center my discussion about the role of women in climate conversations.

## Women and environmental identity

In her book *Women Who Run with the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*, Clarissa Pinkola Estés says, “Return to your true nature, tap into your wild instincts and this gives a woman the edge to live as freely as possible.”



*A Chipko protester at a development project in Pune. (Creative Commons)*

Looking back at the Chipko movement in the forests of the lower regions of the Himalayas, it is hard to imagine, how the rural women, in a symbolic sense, were composing a map of the woods in which they lived. They were delineating the predators where they lived and describing their *modi operandi*.

Looking at the literature on audio-visual narratives, women are mostly assigned commentary roles, while in the Chipko movement, they took centerstage through their visual aesthetics of hugging a tree.

There are plenty of examples today of women taking on the roles through the environmental identity of the regions they serve – Padma Shri Tulasi Gowda, Padma Shri Jamuna Tudu, Padma Shri Saalumarada Thimmakka.

Through their voices and actions, we recognise the importance of including diverse perspectives, particularly of marginalised groups, in discussions about the environment.

## **Youth and climate change**

The year 2025 will mark 30 years since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Change, as well as 20 years since the UN World Summit on the Information Society.



*Women and girls are the most vulnerable groups being affected by climate change. (South First)*

On both occasions, inequalities about media and digital technologies have been addressed by the international community, and recommendations have been made to governments, inter-governmental organisations, media companies, and civic outfits to develop new communication models, policies, and practices, given reducing inequalities and fostering women and girls' participation in public life while promoting their communication rights.

At every Conference of Parties (COP) Summit, a young person opens the summit, and it is usually a Pacific Islander talking about climate leadership, and what s/he has done on their island. Why is this interesting? Because the youth matter in this discussion about climate change. We are going to be handing over the climate leadership to the youth and transferring our knowledge systems, and hence, how we communicate with them is significant.

The older generation may have had access to one newspaper and one preferred news channel, but the youth of today have a diverse set of voices affecting their decision-making process and therefore it can be quite overwhelming for them to deal with the climate situation.

We need to foster and create forums for the communication rights of women and girls in the public sphere, especially for their voice and visibility to matter on climate adaptation and mitigation – they are the most vulnerable groups being affected by climate change.

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