



Women and men have different ecological footprints. They approach environmental issues in different ways. They tend to prefer different means of transport, and their consumption patterns vary. Moreover, women in the world's developing countries are affected more severely by climate change and natural disasters than men.

Several UN agencies have [stressed](#) that the world cannot afford to ignore the voices, needs and priorities of half of the population in policies and action on adaptation and mitigation, capacity-building, technology transfer, climate finance, and all other aspects of the climate change response. The gender aspect was [highlighted](#) at the UN conference on climate change ([COP19](#)), by, among others, UN Women.

The Nordic countries are increasingly taking the gender aspect into account. "There is a difference in how men and women act and consume things, which is interesting from an environmental and climate perspective," according to gender expert Charlotte Kirkegaard from the consulting company Unisex Progress. She will be incorporating the gender equality dimension into the programme design and implementation of three projects in the Nordic Prime Ministers' [green growth initiative](#) .

“Sustainability has to include both genders’ perspectives. If you lack the perspective of half the world’s population, you will not be able to find the right solutions to achieve your goals,” Kirkegaard says.

By definition, gender equality is about ensuring equal access to opportunities in society, whether social, political or economic. From a growth perspective, gender inequality prevents women from fully optimising their economic potential and thus restricts their ability to contribute to the shift towards a greener economy. An unbalanced society, in other words, does not fully benefit from its human capital.

One of the solutions to this problem is more research. European studies have shown a lack of research on the significance of the gender perspective to the economy.

“The gender perspective needs to be put on the climate change research agenda. We need to understand the situation today and explore ways to benefit more extensively from applying the gender dimension in research. This would promote green growth and gender equality at the same time,” says Kirkegaard.

The Nordic countries will be celebrating the 40th anniversary of cooperation on gender equality in 2014. The five countries are among the world’s leading nations when it comes to equal opportunities for men and women. In the [Global Gender Gap Report](#) 2013, a World Economic Forum report that ranks countries on their ability to close the gender gap in four key areas: health, education, political engagement and economic participation; Iceland, Finland, Norway and Sweden occupy the top four spots, while Denmark comes eighth on the list.

“If you don’t consider the problems that are specific to women, you cannot make sustainable development happen. The main point is that when you remove these subsidies and have to find alternatives, the strategy should be designed as a driver for development. It should ensure improved conditions for both men and women, but could also be used to promote women’s opportunities to create their own businesses,” Kirkegaard explains.

Source: Norden.org, UNDP, UN Women