THIRD EDITION



OSCE WOMEN'S PEACE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

WIN – Women & Men Innovating & Networking for Gender Equality

OSCE Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

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About the OSCE Gender Issues Programme

The Gender Issues Programme (GIP) in the OSCE Secretariat works towards the implementation of the 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality*, as well as relevant Ministerial Council decisions. It supports systematic efforts to mainstream gender equality across the Organization in all its policies, programmes, projects and activities and its three dimensions of comprehensive security, namely the politico-military, economic and environmental, and human.

Under its multi-year, comprehensive project WIN — Women and Men Innovating and Networking for Gender Equality, the GIP is striving to advance gender equality as a prerequisite for achieving and maintaining stable, prosperous and peaceful societies in the OSCE area, in line with the 2004 Action Plan and other OSCE commitments.

About the 3rd edition of the OSCE Women's Peace Leadership Programme

This program, implemented under the umbrella of the OSCE Networking Platform of Women leaders including Peacebuilders and Mediators, takes a comprehensive approach to addressing the gendered impacts of climate change and aims to empower women to take on meaningful leadership roles in climate action across the OSCE region and Partners for Cooperation.

The third edition of the Women's Peace Leadership Programme includes women working in civil society organizations, government institutions and women-led mediation networks working on environmental governance and climate advocacy and policies with the aim to strengthen their ability to engage in climate-related policy processes and leadership at national and international levels. The programme supports the participants' in developing leadership, negotiation, and communication skills while supporting their career development in climate action.

**In line with the consensual 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality, the OSCE works to promote equality between men and women, boys and girls.*

The views, opinions, findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in these stories are those of the respective contributors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), its donors, or its participating States.

Women are more and more on the frontlines of climate change, facing disproportionate impacts compared to others. Despite these challenges, they work tirelessly each day to reduce climate risks and protect their communities. Recognizing women's role in preventing and addressing climate-related security challenges is indispensable."

Dr. Lara Scarpitta,
OSCE Senior Adviser on Gender Issues and
Head of the Gender Issues Programme



LEADING WITH EMPATHY

Policy rooms in Brussels and local communities across Europe may appear far apart. For Alva Bruun, they are linked by one central question: who is heard in security decisions and who remains invisible? Her professional path showed her that environmental sustainability, social cohesion and women's leadership must advance together.

"I have been interested in peace and climate issues early on," she says. At 17, she wrote her thesis on urbanisation in Finland and travelled to Brussels to interview decision-makers. Through her work, she encountered marginalized groups whose voices were often overlooked. This background reinforced her commitment to advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda within climate and governance processes, ensuring that those most affected are included.

Alva sees leadership as "opening doors for others, challenging structures that limit participation and creating platforms where women's voices are valued." Taking part in the WPLP further refined her approach. "One important lesson I gained was the value of leading with empathy." The programme strengthened her confidence. "It has changed how I engage. I now focus more on listening and consider the dynamics more," she says.

Alva describes networks as essential for lasting impact. "Being part of a diverse and inspiring community of women working on peace and climate issues has created trust and solidarity." She believes that when women come together with a shared sense of purpose and champion each other's efforts, they create the kind of collective strength that can move mountains and is essential for sustainable change.

ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE FOR STABILITY



Environmental protection and human security are deeply interconnected. In North Macedonia, Angela Temelkovska has witnessed how pollution, unmanaged waste and weak environmental governance affect health, livelihoods and stability. “My inspiration to take action on peace and climate issues came from observing how environmental degradation directly affects people’s well-being, especially in vulnerable communities,” she explains. “I understood that protecting the environment means protecting people’s dignity, health and their right to live in harmony with nature.”

Working in the environmental inspection sector as a woman, she faced skepticism about her technical expertise. Rather than discouraging her, it increased her determination. “I learned to lead through knowledge, empathy and persistence,” she says.

Through the WPLP, Angela linked environmental governance with social cohesion and gained practical skills in negotiation, advocacy and strategic communication. “Participating in the programme was transformative. It helped me connect my environmental work to broader peacebuilding goals — understanding that climate resilience is a foundation for social stability,” she emphasizes. It also prompted her to reflect more deeply on the kind of decision-making needed to drive lasting change: “It reminded me that change begins with solidarity and that leadership rooted in compassion can drive systemic transformation.”

The WPLP network continues to support collaboration across borders. “What I valued most is that the programme does not end — the connections continue.” Today, her work spans environmental inspection, circular economy initiatives and youth empowerment, helping communities turn awareness into real, lasting action.

On women shaping the peace and climate agenda, Angela is clear: “Women are not just part of the future. We are shaping it.”



FROM LOCAL CHANGE TO GLOBAL IMPACT

Growing up in Andorra, Enya Folguera Diaz observed how climate change can transform everyday life. “As a child, snow in the mountains was stable and predictable. Today, climate change is visible: winters are shorter, snow is scarce and ecosystems are changing,” she says. These early observations shaped her determination to address the links between climate, peace and security.

With a background in European and international law, Enya’s work has been guided by a strong belief in education and inclusion. Working in international environments, she became increasingly aware that global efforts on climate, gender equality and conflict are not always shaped by diverse voices. “I realized that laws alone are not enough. Sustainable peace requires empathy, education and action,” she explains. Her efforts increasingly focused on solutions that place people and communities at the centre.

Through WPLP, Enya discovered a more collaborative approach to leadership. “Being surrounded by women leaders from different backgrounds showed me that it can be creative, caring and shared.” The programme also provided a trusted community. “I found allies who continue to inspire and challenge me to work with purpose,” she adds.

She highlights the importance of international forums in amplifying diverse perspectives and strengthening dialogue and co-operation. Coming from a small country, she sees representation as key to ensuring that global discussions reflect a wider range of realities.

For Enya, leadership that includes everyone is essential. “Women are crucial to shaping the peace and climate agenda. Their voices help ensure that solutions are inclusive, sustainable and centred on people.”

UNITING VOICES FOR CLIMATE AND PEACE



Ibtissame Azzaoui's activities are driven by a strong commitment to collaboration at the intersection of peace, governance and climate action. As a former parliamentarian, she has seen how inclusive partnerships can strengthen stability and resilience.

A defining moment came when she began building the Parliamentarians for Climate (P4C) network, bringing together current and former MPs from across countries. "It reinforced my conviction that peace and climate resilience are not just political priorities; they are shared responsibilities that require trust, collective leadership and inclusive spaces where people can work across differences," she explains.

Working in political environments often not designed with women in mind, Ibtissame learned to turn challenges into opportunities for coalition-building and dialogue. "The future of peace and climate action depends on women stepping forward, taking the lead and creating the conditions for societies to thrive sustainably and equitably."

The WPLP programme further enriched her work by providing a trusted environment to explore links between climate and the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Just as important was the sense of community. "The WPLP group has been one of the most empowering elements of the programme. The space created encouraged honest conversations, mutual support and shared learning," she recalls.

Through her continued efforts connecting policymakers and change-makers, Ibtissame demonstrates how inclusive leadership and strong networks can advance dialogue and co-operation to address climate-related security risks. "I see women playing an increasingly central role in shaping the peace and climate agenda. Women bring unique perspectives and creativity essential for designing inclusive and sustainable solutions," she adds.



BREAKING BARRIERS, THROUGH NETWORKS

“Growing up in a small town in Azerbaijan that experienced both droughts and floods, as well as being part of a post-war generation, instilled in me an interest in both peace and climate issues,” says Incha Aliyeva. Witnessing environmental stress and instability shaped her motivation to explore the links between climate, peace and resilience.

Raised in a rural community where traditional gender roles were strong, she had to choose a field considered more suitable for women. However, later on she pursued international studies and strengthened her commitment to inclusive leadership. “Although much has changed with regard to outdated gender norms, there remains a need for decisive action,” she adds.

Incha describes the WPLP as “a truly unique opportunity”. The programme created a collaborative space for learning and exchange with women leaders from across the region working on climate, peace and security. “The all-women environment was especially meaningful. Recognizing shared challenges and discussing them openly made me feel safe and deeply connected to others,” she highlights.

Through online and in-person engagement, Incha deepened her insight of climate issues and the importance of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Equally significant were the trusted relationships she built. “Meeting in person and sharing experiences, both in conference rooms and informal settings, was particularly empowering.” The network continues to strengthen her confidence and supports collaboration beyond the programme.

For Incha, inclusive participation in decision-making is essential for advancing sustainable development and lasting peace. Strong networks, she believes, help women transform knowledge into collective action.

FROM LOCAL COUNCILS TO GLOBAL TABLES



The connection between climate and peace is not theoretical in Isabell Steidel's work - it is lived. Through Heilbronn's youth municipal council, she worked with young refugees rebuilding their lives after conflict and displacement. "Not only wars, but also the direct effects of climate change are already displacing millions of people each year. That reality demands action at every level," she emphasizes.

Today, as a city councillor in her second term, Isabell advances local solutions, from renewable energy to waste reduction. She also leads the University of Heilbronn's role in a European Commission-funded alliance on AI in higher education, reflecting her belief that emerging technologies must be governed proactively. "Whether the issue is climate adaptation or AI governance, the logic is the same: resilient communities and fair resource management reduce risks before they escalate."

As one of Germany's Youth Delegates to the G7 and G20, she brought this approach to international negotiations. "Finding compromise across cultures is not always easy, but it is always worth it. Diversity at the table strengthens outcomes," Isabell believes.

Through the WPLP, Isabell gained strategic insight and solidarity. Exchanges with women leading peace, climate and policy initiatives across the OSCE region deepened her understanding that environmental and human security are inseparable. "The WPLP created something rare: a space where ambition and vulnerability coexist, reminding every leader that effective leadership requires a network that challenges and supports them in equal measure," she says.

Isabell is clear about what comes next: "Women should not just participate in shaping responses to climate, technology and security challenges. We should help set the agenda."



LINKING GENDER EQUALITY, CLIMATE ACTION AND PEACE

For Johana Simao, the connection between inequality, climate and peace became clear during her university studies. An important moment came when she met Leymah Gbowee, a Liberian peace activist awarded the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize. “Her story of courage, explaining how women had created peace in her country, inspired me deeply. I understood how peace is impossible without justice and women’s leadership,” she begins her story.

Learning that climate disasters disproportionately affect women reinforced her understanding that environmental risks and systemic inequalities are closely connected. Since then, she has worked across Africa, Central Asia, North America and Europe as a gender expert, consistently integrating gender equality into climate and peace processes.

As a young professional in international environments, she often had to establish her credibility. “I learned to anchor myself and to adapt to the different cultural contexts I have worked in. This taught me to speak with confidence, to bring evidence and to stand firm even when my voice shook,” Johana says.

Participating in the WPLP deepened her awareness of the climate–peace–gender nexus and refined her leadership approach. “The programme gave me tools and more self-assurance to lead with emotional intelligence - something essential when addressing topics such as gender-based violence.” The network also encouraged collaboration and ambition. “All experts sharing their knowledge during online and in-person sessions encouraged me to think bigger,” she emphasizes.

Through her work, Johana shows how women’s leadership and strong networks can drive inclusive, lasting change for peace and climate resilience.

WHERE CLIMATE MEETS PEACE



For Myrzagul Baialieva, climate and peace are inseparable. With over seven years of experience in peacebuilding, she has witnessed how water scarcity, land degradation and environmental pressures can increase tensions and disproportionately affect women in local communities. These realities inspired her to promote eco-friendly practices and sustainable solutions. “Unfortunately, these topics are still not widely recognized as priorities, which motivated me to raise awareness,” she says.

Her work with rural women restoring ecosystems and livelihoods shaped her leadership approach. “This experience reinforced my belief that when women lead, sustainable and peaceful change becomes possible.”

As a woman in technical and policy fields, she encountered stereotypes questioning women’s expertise. “I often had to work harder to demonstrate expertise and earn trust. I used it as motivation to build evidence, mentor other women and advocate for inclusive decision-making.”

Thanks to the WPLP, Myrzagul deepened her understanding of the climate–peace–gender nexus. “Through the programme, I strengthened my knowledge of how to integrate peacebuilding perspectives into climate action and frame environmental initiatives as tools for dialogue and social cohesion.”

Equally important was the group she became part of. “This type of network is unique because it brings together women leaders from different fields who strengthen each other, providing mentorship, guidance and opportunities for growth,” she underscores.

Looking ahead, she sees women’s leadership and sustained partnerships as central to advancing inclusive climate responses and long-term peace. “The WPLP community has shown me the power of collective leadership. After the programme, some of us have initiated new project ideas, supported each other and motivated one another.”



FINANCING RESILIENCE FOR INCLUSIVE FUTURE

For Nandin-Erdene Enkhtuvshin, the connection between climate and peace is deeply personal. Growing up in Mongolia, she witnessed how droughts, harsh winters and water shortages affected families, livelihoods and everyday reality. “Early in my career, I worked closely with financial institutions and government bodies on national sustainable finance policies. These experiences showed me how deeply climate shocks affect women, rural families and small enterprises.”

Her work on Mongolia’s first national green financing vehicle strengthened her belief that financial systems can advance both climate resilience and inclusive development. Since then, she has focused on sustainable finance frameworks and gender-responsive financial products to build them while supporting social cohesion.

As a woman working in the financial sector, she often challenged established norms that limited women’s participation. “Rather than allowing those barriers to limit me, I used them as motivation to generate evidence and build momentum for change. Leadership is not only about stepping forward yourself; it is also about creating setting for other women to grow, to be heard and to lead.”

Joining the WPLP marked an important step in her journey. “The programme gave me space and tools to reflect on my own leading style, especially as someone who often works in environments shaped by androcentric norms. It helped me better understand how to lead authentically while navigating these dynamics,” she says.

Today, she highlights the importance of women’s contribution and networks in shaping more inclusive financial systems and policies. “Networks like WPLP play a crucial role in peace and climate work. They elevate women’s voices and open doors for collaboration.”

BRIDGING CLIMATE, PEACE AND PEOPLE



Growing up between Austria and Poland, Pauline Trepczyk saw how political decisions and environmental change shape everyday lives. “It made me question whether, amid all the political decisions, environmental changes on our planet and the economic priorities, we still consider how these issues affect real people. This inspired my desire to link climate policy, peacebuilding, gender equality and security to advance more comprehensive solutions,” she explains.

Through co-founding a youth-led climate initiative and engaging with governments and international institutions, Pauline observed how climate change can deepen inequalities and contribute to instability, particularly for vulnerable communities. “I saw how institutions respond to climate risks while young people, especially young women, remain excluded from key processes.” For her, advancing the Women, Peace and Security agenda is essential to effective, holistic climate action responses.

The WPLP programme helped Pauline strengthen her leadership and policy perspective. “I have learned about frameworks for understanding climate-related security risks and integrating them into policy. The diverse backgrounds in this network helped me understand how peacebuilders and climate experts can co-create inclusive responses,” she says.

Just as important were the connections she built. “Networks like WPLP act as accelerators for peace and climate action by sharing knowledge, amplifying voices and opening doors for each other. The connections created a caring space encouraging vulnerability, shared learning and genuine collaboration.”

Pauline encourages emerging leaders to collaborate rather than compete: “Build supportive networks. Intersectional thinking is your strength,” she concludes.



WATER AND YOUTH FOR REGIONAL RESILIENCE

For Selbi Matveliyeva, the link between climate change, peace and security became personal when she returned to her childhood village in Turkmenistan and found the irrigation channels dry. “For me, water represents peace, stability and prosperity,” she says. Learning that more than 95 per cent of her country’s water originates beyond its borders revealed how deeply interconnected Central Asian societies are, and how climate pressures can affect co-operation and stability.

“That moment was the beginning of my advocacy journey,” she recalls. Selbi began organizing eco-camps, workshops and conferences, building a new generation of environmental leaders. “My goal was to empower young people to take action and pursue education in climate-related fields.”

The WPLP became a source of motivation and expanded opportunities for collaboration, reinforcing that leadership grows through solidarity and mutual support. The programme deepened her awareness of the climate–peace–gender nexus and connected her to women leaders facing similar challenges. “I was ready to give up many times. I burned out and felt frustrated, but through this initiative I learned that I was not alone and I am glad I continued.”

Like other participants, Selbi valued the platform she became part of: “This network is unique. We came together to advance and help each other. For me personally this has opened many possibilities to grow,” she explains.

Today, many of the young people she mentored lead their own initiatives. Selbi believes empowering youth, especially young women, is essential for sustainable peace. “We must share experiences, mentor the next generation and build societies that work together.”

BUILDING PEACE THROUGH PEOPLE-CENTRED APPROACHES AND NETWORKS



Siranush Grigoryan's commitment to peacebuilding was shaped by both research and real-life exposure. Through her engagement with displaced women she witnessed resilience in the face of profound loss. "Their resilience shaped how I understand the everyday meaning of peace," she says.

Her academic research on international sanctions further showed how global decisions directly affect communities living in uncertainty. These insights deepened her focus on inclusive, people-centred approaches to peace and security.

Early in her career, working in development and academic environments required adaptability and conviction. "In my first roles, I often had to present information to diverse teams and adjust quickly to new responsibilities. These experiences helped me build confidence step by step."

The WPLP provided space for reflection, mentorship and peer exchange. "The mentorship component was especially valuable. Listening to women with many years of experience in peacebuilding helped me understand how leadership grows over time," she explains.

For Siranush, the regional network remains one of the programme's most meaningful outcomes. "One of the most impactful aspects of WPLP was the women it brought together. Although we came from different regions, many of our experiences felt familiar," she underscores.

Today, she combines governance projects, teaching and research to support inclusive institutions and people-centred perspectives. "I want to contribute to these approaches, so they are easy to understand and grounded in real community needs. I also plan to carry forward the insights of the inspiring women I met through the WPLP."



CONNECTING INNOVATION, CLIMATE AND SECURITY

Suzana Carp's path into climate and peace engagement began by linking environmental and social perspectives. During her studies, she saw how climate pressures, displacement and insecurity are interconnected, with women often most affected. This shaped her focus on climate change, which she calls "the ultimate super-accelerator of environmental degradation" and a key driver of insecurity and forced migration.

Like many women leaders in climate policy, she faced barriers, including limited support inside the organizations she worked for and being underestimated in high-level forums due to young age. "The unfair situations we encounter as women leaders tend to dominate our professional journeys, but we could just as well tell stories of unusual alliances being forged or support emerging in the face of adversity," she highlights.

Participation in WPLP came at a turning point in her career, as she had just launched a new climate initiative for Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe, providing new perspectives and connections: "I needed some support to be able to anchor this new initiative in a broader set of knowledge, a wider network as well as a new understanding of what my role in the greater puzzle is. I appreciated learning from my peers about the challenges and solutions they are working on."

The experience also reshaped her perspective on leadership. "I realized that leadership is not an individual endeavour but a cultivated set of relationships that yield personal and professional growth."

Today, Suzana emphasises the importance of women-led networks in addressing climate-related risks to peace and security and turning barriers into inclusive and sustainable solutions.

NETWORKS AS CATALYSTS FOR CHANGE



A similar realization shaped Zarina Sayfieva's journey, as she witnessed climate impacts on communities: "Growing up in Tajikistan, I saw how climate change directly affects people's lives from water scarcity to migration and how women often carry the heaviest burden."

A defining moment in her career came when she took part in a training for young women scientists on sustainable energy and climate resilience. Working in technical fields, she often faced doubts about women's leadership. "The main challenge was to make women's voices heard where decisions are made," she explains.

Participation in the WPLP marked a turning point in her professional development. The programme increased her confidence and broadened her insight of how gender equality, peace and climate action are interconnected. Engaging with women leaders expanded her perspective: "Meeting women from across the OSCE region, each working on peacebuilding, environmental governance and community resilience, inspired me to think beyond local challenges and see our shared purpose. One of the most meaningful outcomes was realizing that leadership can be collective, rooted in listening, collaboration and care."

Zarina sees women's networks as powerful engines for change. "Such networks amplify women's voices, create solidarity and show that sustainable peace and climate action require inclusive leadership."

Today, she integrates peace-sensitive approaches into environmental decision-making processes and uses regional partnerships to promote women's participation. She is convinced that solidarity among women leaders is essential for addressing climate risks and building lasting peace. "Women are not only part of change," she says. "Together, we are driving it."