



PERSPECTIVES ON SUSTAINABLE FUTURES: GENDER, HEALTH AND CLIMATE CHANGE

PANEL TOOLKIT

25 March 2025 | 5:00 – 6:00pm | Online via Zoom

**FALLING
WALLS
ENGAGE**

**FALLING WALLS
FEMALE SCIENCE
TALENTS**

SUMMARY

The discussion opened with an exploration of how climate change is deepening existing healthcare challenges — particularly for women, who often face financial, cultural, and systemic barriers to accessing care. The invited panelists highlighted the growing threats to reproductive health, maternal services, and essential medical support in many parts of the world. Historical insights revealed how male-dominated, Western scientific traditions have long marginalized women's health needs and dismissed Indigenous medical knowledge — a legacy that continues to reinforce inequalities today.

The panel emphasized the critical value of traditional and Indigenous knowledge systems, which offer sustainable, community-driven approaches to tackling climate-related health issues. Yet this wisdom remains underrecognized, at risk of being lost through language erosion, and often lacks legal protection. The speakers stressed the need for co-creation with local communities, forging equitable partnerships, and ensuring traditional leaders have a seat at the decision-making table.

The conversation also highlighted the prominent role of technology. Innovations like Artificial Intelligence, telemedicine, and mobile clinics were highlighted as vital tools for expanding access and strengthening healthcare resilience. However, barriers such as digital illiteracy and limited infrastructure must be addressed to realize their full potential. Investing in women's empowerment, healthcare worker education, and preventative care emerged as key priorities for building long-term health resilience.

The session closed with an inspiring call to action. In an era of overlapping crises — or “polycrisis” — panelists urged participants to stay engaged, strengthen community networks, and remember that while no one can solve these challenges alone, collective action can drive real and lasting change. The closing message resonated deeply: resilience is rooted in community, and even in times of crisis, shared purpose and collaboration can light the path forward.



APPROACHES TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

How do we keep going in the face of challenges? Here are our panelists responses on how they best stay engaged and active:

- Everybody has something to offer – we all have our strengths that we can bring to collective action. We can't solve things by ourselves, but we can all do something small to have a big impact in the right direction.
- It's about having the right voices at the table: having women in leadership positions, guiding policy and investment into the areas where they are vitally needed.
- Science alone is not enough: we need to integrate other sources of knowledge like traditional knowledge into our solutions.
- Traditional knowledge needs to be recognised, valorised, protected and integrated into climate adaptation policy.
- In the end, it's not just about talking but also taking action – always having a call to action at the end of every conversation.
- You have to remember your 'why' - why you started in the first place. This will always be important and keep you going despite the challenges.
- Looking at history helps us to understand that science also happens outside of the lab.
- In history, there was always this separation – the 'us' and the 'them', these otherings, which prevent taking action and changing the system. We need to integrate knowledge and understand that it is not a case of 'us' and 'them' but that we are all in the same boat.
- Community resilience is key if we're going to have any kind of impact and change these systems. We achieve more when we work together.
- During a time when we're facing a global cooperation problem (to put it lightly), this is what gives me hope: look to the helpers, look to the community leaders, roll up your sleeves and dive in.



SPEAKERS

We thank our speakers who provided their perspectives and words of advice.



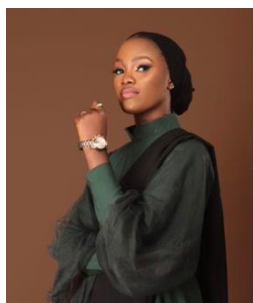
MARA ANNE
FRANKE

CHARITÉ CENTER
FOR GLOBAL
HEALTH, DE

Mara Franke is a medical doctor from Germany with over five years of experience in development cooperation, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa. As the founder and leader of the NGO "Woé zon loo e.V.," Mara has worked on health education and gender equality in Togo. In her current position at "Doctors for Madagascar" Mara has led projects in healthcare delivery and public health, impacting over 300,000 individuals. Further, Mara holds a master's degree in "Health Policy, Planning and Financing" from the London School of Economics and Political Science and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. She is currently an MD/PhD candidate in global health at the Charité University in Berlin with a thematic focus on financial risk protection in health and access to healthcare.

"In my career, I aim to advance equity in global healthcare access, with a focus on financial risk protection in health. My goal is to combine impactful research and programmatic interventions, to drive evidence-based solutions that safeguard individuals and communities from the economic burden of illness and promote universal health coverage."

Mara Anna Franke participated in the Falling Walls Female Science Talents Intensive Track 2025.



MARYAM BELLO

PARKERS MOBILE
CLINIC, NG

Maryam Bello, a 22-year-old visionary co-founder, is dedicated to revolutionising healthcare access amid environmental challenges. She leads Parker's mobile clinic, a pioneering initiative using telemedicine and AI to support over 100,000 underserved people during climate-induced disasters. Her notable achievements include being named Technovation Youth Representative at COP27, a UNDP Youth4Climate Sparking Solutions Finalist in Italy 2023, and a finalist in Ashoka Green Change Makers 2023.

Maryam Bello's 2024 Falling Walls Engage Winner Project is Parkers Resilient Health.

Parkers Resilient Health empowers Nigerian communities to adapt to climate change through sustainable healthcare practices, environmental health education, and solar-powered mobile clinics offering accessible services. The initiative promotes climate-resilient agriculture and water sanitation to protect health and food security, addressing climate change by integrating sustainable, health-focused solutions within vulnerable communities in Nigeria.



JUSTINE GERMO
NZWEUNDJI

INSTITUTE OF
MEDICAL
RESEARCH AND
MEDICINAL
PLANT STUDIES,
CM

Dr. Justine Germa Nzweundji is a Plant Biotechnologist and Science Policy expert. Born in Cameroon, she received a UNESCO-I'Oreal Fellowship for her PhD research at the University of Florida and Alabama A&M University in the US, where she studied the Tissue culture of *Prunus africana* for its domestication and conservation in Cameroon's agroforestry system. She was a TWAS-DFG Postdoc Fellow at the Geisenheim Hochschule University in Germany, working on molecular tools for characterization of *Prunus africana*. Currently, Justine Germa is Deputy Director of Research, Valorization and Innovation of the Institute of Medical Research and Medicinal Plants Studies (IMPM) in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

"I want to support evidence-based solutions to help address the grand developmental challenges of our times, and advocate for more Women in STEM by developing a critical mass of young female scientists in Central Africa I want this because bringing the voice and competencies of young women to STEM fields is my passion, which is what has led me to become interested in science policy over the past few years. It offers an opportunity to better understand the mechanics of policy-making and implementation that determines which science communities can thrive."

Justine Germa Nzweundji participated in the Female Science Talents Intensive Track 2023.



SARAH
SCHEIDMANTEL

UNIVERSITY OF
ZURICH, CH

Sarah Scheidmantel is a cultural scientist and medical historian working on gender, sexuality, consumption and medical history. Her main interest is the study of how femininity was constructed between medicine and consumption around 1900, as women became consumers of beauty care devices. She studied media and cultural studies as well as history of science in Weimar, Berlin and Cambridge (UK) and is doing her PhD at the University of Zurich, Switzerland. Her interest in gender roles in a cultural context has also taken her to Poland, Slovenia, and the Max-Planck-Institute for Human Development Berlin. Sarah is actively engaged in science dialogue, having written several online articles and spoken as an expert on panels and at seminars.

"I want to rethink ways to gender equality. I want this because only with the understanding that our world is of our own making we achieve real gender equality faster. I can do this because with my research I generate knowledge about how strongly historical gender concepts are connected to today's gender inequalities."

Sarah Scheidmantel participated in the Female Science Talents Intensive Track 2023.



MODERATOR:
CARRIE BOYCE

ROYAL CANADIAN
INSTITUTE FOR
SCIENCE
(RCISCIENCE)

Carrie Boyce is the Manager of the Engage Hub Canada and the Executive Director of the Royal Canadian Institute for Science (RCIScience), Canada's oldest scientific society that's been connecting Canadians with science since 1849! She's also one of the co-founders and Executive Producers of Science is a Drag - an award-winning, community-driven, science-themed drag show by and for the 2SLGBTQIA+ community.

With over a decade's experience working in science communication and public engagement, it's fair to say Carrie's become a Jack of all trades, master of some... Originally from Northern Ireland, she moved to Cambridge, England to pursue a degree in Natural Sciences, before working for organisations like the University of Cambridge, the Royal Society of Chemistry and Cancer Research UK. Eager for life's next adventure, she moved to Canada in 2017 and has been happily working with RCIScience (and drinking maple syrup) ever since.