

# **GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE ARAB REGION**

## **REVIEW OF EVIDENCE AND PATHWAYS**





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A version of this study encompassing the wider membership scope of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation beyond the Arab region will also be published in the Flagship report of the Women Development Organisation, titled "The Status of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in OIC Member States 2021-2022: Women and Climate Change".

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## FOREWORD

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The impact of climate change is not felt the same by everyone. As climate change impacts access to resources and livelihoods, women and girls, especially those experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, face heightened risks of gender-based violence, including harmful practices, while their access to prevention and response services may be disrupted by extreme weather events and disasters. Gender-based violence also limits prevention and response efforts to climate change as it creates barriers for women and girls to participate in decision-making and resilience efforts to climate change. In line with the human-centred sustainable development outlined in the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action and as reinforced by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we have an obligation to address the gendered impacts of climate change to meet the internationally agreed commitments for achieving gender equality and fulfilling the human rights of all women and girls for a world where they can exercise their bodily autonomy and live up to their full potential, free from violence.

As part of these efforts, this paper aims to present the evidence on the interlinkages between climate change and gender-based violence in the Arab region and to provide recommendations to support the international community, policy-makers, feminist and climate change advocates, researchers and professionals in the field of climate change and gender issues, in acting jointly to strengthen gender-responsive climate action as part of our collective efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

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## ABBREVIATION/ ACRONYM LIST

<b>CEDAW</b>	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
<b>CSW</b>	Commission on the Status of Women
<b>DRR</b>	Disaster Risk Reduction
<b>FGM</b>	Female genital mutilation
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based violence
<b>GCC</b>	Gulf Cooperation Council
<b>ICPD</b>	International Conference on Population and Development
<b>ICRC</b>	International Committee of the Red Cross
<b>IDP</b>	Internally displaced people
<b>IPCC</b>	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
<b>IPV</b>	Intimate partner violence
<b>NDC</b>	Nationally Determined Contributions
<b>OR</b>	Odds ratio
<b>QMUL</b>	Queen Mary University London
<b>RR</b>	Relative risk
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
<b>UNFCCC</b>	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organisation

# UNFPA CURRENT POLICIES AND INITIATIVES

Climate change poses major threats to the vision of human-centred sustainable development outlined in the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action, as reinforced by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It can have significant impact on gender equality including reproductive health and rights across the development peace and humanitarian and peace nexus settings. Gender-based violence (GBV) and child marriage are known to increase in times of stress and scarcity and in the aftermath of extreme weather events and disasters (McLoed, Barr & Rall, 2019). GBV can limit women's ability to build resilience to climate change, impeding the capacity of survivors and their dependents to proactively and positively respond to and manage ongoing challenges and crises (Le Masson, 2019).

UNFPA has committed to three transformative results by 2030: ending preventable maternal mortality, ending unmet need for family planning, and ending gender-based violence and harmful practices. The rapid pace of climate change over this decade will make each of these transformative results more difficult to achieve.

In order to scale up action on this issue, in 2019 UNFPA organised an International Symposium on SRHR, Gender and Climate Change Resilience. The aim was to share knowledge and identify programmes to reduce the impacts of climate change and build the resilience of communities in vulnerable settings. The resulting Future

Africa Call to Action outlines both the impact of climate change on attaining universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights and the contributions that the ICPD community can make to building climate resilience. These consultations supported the work to develop a programmatic action to support UNFPA operational work. In December 2020, UNFPA launched its value proposition on climate change, outlining four pillars of programmatic work connecting the promise of the ICPD and climate change adaptation and resilience in order to achieve gender-responsive responses for women, girls, young people and vulnerable communities.

These programmatic areas of work outline a multi-pronged approach that addresses gaps in programming to ensure action toward climate change at various levels:

1. **Ensure a healthy empowered population including women, girls, and young people** whose sexual and reproductive health and rights are addressed and fulfilled by addressing the impact of climate change on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).
2. **Ensure risk reduction, enhanced preparedness, and strengthened emergency response.** Strengthening health and protection systems that respond to climate impacts including ensuring the continuity of SRHR services and stronger protection services for GBV responses.



3. **Ensure risk reduction, enhanced preparedness, and strengthened emergency response.** UNFPA's humanitarian and development nexus approach is working to ensure better preparedness and response in emergency situations as well as meeting the SRHR needs of those impacted, displaced and at risk of climate crises.
4. **Strengthen data systems for climate vulnerability and adaptive capacity.** We are also working to support stronger data systems for climate vulnerability. Climate-related vulnerability assessments and actions must be informed by disaggregated population, health and gender data to reflect the multiple and differentiated impacts of the climate crisis, including assessment of the impact on SRH.

In addition, UNFPA has developed a Climate Strategy that is anchored around three pillars that aim to support the achievement of these three transformative results:

1. **the Climate Change Value Proposition** ("what" we propose to deliver in our programmes),
2. **UNFPA Social and Environmental Standards** ("how" we strengthen and mainstream social and environmental sustainability and accountability in our programmes),
3. and **UNFPA's Environmental Efficiency Strategy** ("how" we make our operation greener).

In order to achieve its goals, UNFPA supports governments in the design of climate solutions to ensure that national climate policies incorporate SRHR issues, and that young people play a key role in developing innovative solutions to improve the adaptive capacities of their communities. Ensuring access to accurate, human rights-based sexual and reproductive health services and information is vital when it comes to empowering young people and women to fulfil their potential.

## ABSTRACT

While the linkages between conflict and gender-based violence (GBV) are well-established, less consideration is given to how the impact of climate change can affect women's and girls' experiences of violence. In this chapter, we examine the global evidence on climate change impacts and GBV with a special focus on Arab region countries, taking special account of the humanitarian dimension.

Systematic evidence reviews, plus research into understanding GBV patterns in the context of humanitarian settings, have identified three hypothesized pathways that explain the relationship between climate change or extreme events and GBV. These are: (1) *an increase in economic and psychological stress factors for families and communities;* (2) *an increase in "enabling" environments for GBV, such as an absence of policing and law enforcement, and reduced access to health and social services, especially for populations on the move.* (3) *the exacerbation of underlying harmful social and gendered norms in emergencies.*

Given the above pathways, this report provides substantive recommendations to ensure the mitigation of GBV in the context of climate change in Arab region countries. Recommendations include: (1) Generation of data and research to support evidence-based policies and programmes relating to each of the above pathways against geographic vulnerabilities; (2) Deployment of feminist, inclusive and participatory approaches to design, implement and monitor climate-related programmes and policies. (3) Analysis of national law, policy and governance mechanisms; (4) The integration of GBV into preparedness and disaster risk reduction policies and interventions.

GBV refers to harmful acts directed at an individual or a group of individuals based on their gender. Its roots are based in systemic gender inequality, the abuse of power and unequal social norms (Carney et al., 2020). Everyone can be affected by GBV, but there is overwhelming evidence that women and girls constitute the primary targets (Le Masson, 2022). Addressing GBV is a fundamental part of achieving a healthy, sustainable future for all. While there has been increased international attention over the last decade in understanding and addressing gender/climate issues in policies and programmes, there has been much less focus on the intersections between climate change and GBV.

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# BACKGROUND



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## I. BACKGROUND

Climate change has been acknowledged repeatedly by global institutions and leaders as the greatest threat to security and human development (CEDAW, 2018; Pörtner et al., 2022; IPCC, 2018; Thurston, et al. 2021). It affects economic, food and housing security, the availability of water, a range of health conditions, agricultural productivity and natural ecosystems (Pörtner et al., 2022; IPCC., 2018; King & Harrington, 2018; Thurston et al., 2021). There is recognition that the climate crisis will affect men, women and children differently, and will serve to exacerbate existing intersectional vulnerabilities among those most reliant on natural resources (Carney, et al, 2020). Due to gendered power inequalities, harmful social norms and social vulnerabilities in many settings, women are more likely than men to experience increases in violence or die during and in the aftermath of extreme weather events or climate-related disasters (Sanson, Van Hoorn, & Burke, 2019; Thurston et al., 2021). Research highlights how the intersections between gender, ethnicity, age, disability, power dynamics, socio-economic structures, and gender-discriminatory societal norms exacerbate the impact of climate change among women compared to men and other vulnerable people and communities, including increased violence (Le Masson, 2022).

Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to harmful acts directed at an individual or a group of individuals based on their gender, and its roots are based in systemic gender inequality, the abuse of power and unequal social norms (Carney et al., 2020). Everyone can be affected by GBV, but there is overwhelming evidence that women and girls constitute the primary targets (Le Masson, 2022). Occurring at all stages of life and across countries, GBV encompasses many different expressions of violence, including physical, sexual and emotional violence by an intimate partner, non-partner violence, such as sexual harassment, rape, sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and harmful practices, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM) (Heise, 1998). Globally, one-in-three women experience intimate partner violence (IPV), or rape from a non-partner in their lifetime (WHO 2021). This violence starts at a young age: one-in-four young women between ages 15-24 have experienced IPV (WHO, 2021). Abuse is associated with increased risk of injuries, depression, anxiety disorders, unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and various other health problems (Bacchus, et al, 2018; Jewkes, 2010). Evidence indicates that GBV also affects whole societies and that it comes with tremendous costs that can and do affect national budgets and overall development (Jewkes, 2002).

External shocks, such as pandemics, conflict or climate-related extreme events affect multiple aspects of people's well-being, not just their immediate physical conditions, but also their mental health as well as their interactions

and relations within family and community (Le Masson, 2022). While linkages between conflict and GBV are well-established with evidence attesting to an escalation in instances of GBV after a conflict (Human Security Research Group, 2012), there is less consideration of how climate change impacts can affect women's experiences of IPV, non-partner violence and sexual exploitation. The COVID-19 pandemic showed evidence of the prevalence and increase of domestic violence inside the household as a result of lockdown measures (Peterman & Donnell, 2020) and the need for gender-responsive disaster responses (Gavrilovic, et al, 2022).

Furthermore, while addressing gender inequalities and securing environmental sustainability are each global priorities in international legal commitments (the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement<sup>1</sup> to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC<sup>2</sup>), the Gender Action Plan and Lima Work Programme on Gender) *only recently* has there been recognition of the need to address climate change and GBV both to protect and safeguard women and vulnerable populations, but also for reasons of violence prevention. More specifically, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee), in its general recommendation no 37 (2018) specifically raised the need for “*policies and programmes to address risk factors for GBV within the context of climate change and disaster risk reduction*”. Most recently in 2022, the conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66) recognised the urgency of eliminating GBV in the context of climate change, disasters and environmental damage (CSW, 2022). However, the gendered components of climate change law and policy have been mostly addressed in the adaptation space rather than with regard to mitigation.

The first section of this report provides definitional clarity on GBV and the rationale for linking it with climate change impacts. The second section that follows, is an evidence desk review of the linkages between climate change impacts and GBV with global examples,

followed by specific examples from countries in the Arab region. The final section outlines research gaps and programmatic measures that Member States in the Arab region need to consider ensuring that GBV response and prevention take the impacts of climate change into account.



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Climate change has been acknowledged repeatedly by global institutions and leaders as the greatest threat to security and human development. It affects **economic, food and housing security, the availability of water, a range of health conditions, agricultural productivity and natural ecosystems**

1 Paris Agreement to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Dec. 12, 2015, T.I.A.S. No. 16-1104

2 UN General Assembly, *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 20 January 1994, A/RES/48/18.



**GLOBAL SYSTEMATIC REVIEW  
EVIDENCE AND PATHWAYS  
BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE  
AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**

## II. GLOBAL SYSTEMATIC REVIEW EVIDENCE AND PATHWAYS BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

In academic literature, two recent global mixed-method systematic reviews examined the evidence on extreme weather events (van Daalen et al., 2022) and climate-related disasters (Thurston et al., 2021) and GBV.

A review by van Daalen and others (2022)<sup>3</sup> on extreme weather events and GBV explored several types of extreme events (i.e., storms, floods, droughts, heatwaves, and wildfires) and different types of GBV experiences (van Daalen et al., 2022). The studies covered more than 40 countries, with primary representation from studies on hurricane Katrina in the United States of America (USA), droughts in India, and floods in Bangladesh<sup>4</sup>. Most quantitative studies were cross-sectional or ecological in design and rated as poor quality. In comparison, the qualitative studies were rated to be of reasonable quality. The overarching finding was that despite limitations in the data, there is evidence that extreme weather events (floods, droughts, hurricanes, cyclones, heatwaves, typhoons, and wildfires) are associated with increases in different types of GBV, particularly IPV. The limitations are geographic gaps, methodological gaps (limited before and after studies, and cohort studies to establish causality between the weather event and GBV) and how climate change affects GBV differently across different settings (Pörtner et al., 2022). These risks relate not just to the type of climate event and the stress factors they create, but also to pre-existing social and gender norms, traditions, vulnerability, exposure, reporting mechanisms and practices around women's rights and GBV (van Daalen et al., 2022). This has implications for policy and programmes that protect women and girls from violence and climate risks.

The review by Thurston and others (2021)<sup>5</sup> on climate-related hazards, disasters and violence against women and girls included 37 studies that explored several types of disasters caused by natural hazards (climatological, geophysical, hydrological and meteorological) and different forms of GBV. Eleven of the 20 quantitative studies found a positive association with disaster exposure and at least one type of violence, particularly IPV (Thurston et al., 2021). The review also cited a lack of good quality quantitative studies, specifically around study designs and the measurement of variables. Also highlighted was the limited geographic scope that revealed a gap in the evidence from Member States in the Arab region. The qualitative evidence in the review appears to be of reasonable quality (Le Masson, 2022).



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Drawing on the qualitative studies from the review, Thurston and others offered the following *hypothesized pathways* to frame our conceptual understanding around how climate change impacts drive GBV. These are:

1. *An increase in economic and psychological stressors* that can increase GBV, such as trauma and poor mental health due to poverty, loss of housing and livelihoods and lack of social support. Chronic or acute stress resulting from economic insecurity (alongside the use of alcohol) can trigger conflict and arguments leading to increases in violence;
2. *An increase in "enabling" environments for GBV*, may occur when extreme weather events (floods or hurricanes e.g.) result in the absence of policing and law enforcement, as well as the inaccessibility of health and social services. This can lead to impunity for those commissioning violence and perpetuate harmful social and gendered norms that serve to normalise GBV. Decreased access to services will also reduce the ability of women and girls to mitigate the risks of violence. It may also lead to increased exposure of women and girls to unsafe and risky settings, including exposure to sexual violence and harassment when seeking to procure basic goods such as food and water (Busza, et al, 2014; Stoebenau, et al, 2016; Wamoyi, et al, 2010);
3. *The worsening of existing drivers of GBV*, such as gender and social inequalities, unequal power relations and harmful social and gendered norms. This manifests in reduced female representation, participation and inclusion in climate adaptation and mitigation policies and programmes. In particular, the low status and agency of women and girls, combined with the effects of post-disaster poverty can facilitate an increase in the forced early marriage of girls, and women may engage in transactional sex for survival in order to support themselves and those in their care, which can result in sexually exploitative situations.

3 This review was based on 41 studies (20 quantitative, 14 qualitative, 5 mixed methods and 2 reports)

4 There were six studies from the United States of America (USA), five from droughts in India, and five from floods in Bangladesh.

5 The review was based on 37 studies (20 quantitative, 16 qualitative and one mixed-methods study).

For men, climate change may fuel a sense of powerlessness, particularly given its impact on their provider/protector role due to economic insecurity and the loss of livelihoods, which can trigger violence in a relationship (Thurston et al., 2021). Coupled with

community norms around the acceptability of violence, and women's financial dependence, this can also lead to greater acceptance of violence by individuals and the community. These pathways are yet to be tested empirically, but some examples follow.

## II.A Specific global examples of GBV in the context of climate change



As demonstrated by the two systematic reviews and a rapid literature review conducted for this chapter, quantitative studies that provide evidence of linkages and examine pathways between climate change impacts and GBV are primarily from non-Arab countries. This reflects a gap in the evidence base from Member States in the Arab region. Nevertheless, the empirical studies from non-Arab countries are included here to show the types of climate events that are associated with different typologies of GBV using *quantitative* methods and datasets. They are as follows:

### *Droughts and heat waves:*

In Sub-Saharan Africa, based on an analysis of 19 Demographic Health Survey (DHS) data<sup>6</sup>, drought was associated with reporting a controlling partner and experiencing physical and sexual violence, with stronger associations among adolescent girls and unemployed women. Drought was not associated with reported emotional violence. There was heterogeneity in findings across countries; drought was protective for at least one type of violence in Uganda, Namibia, and Tanzania (Epstein et al., 2020). In Spain, there was strong statistical evidence as indicated by the p-value that

heat waves between 2008-2016 were associated with increased risk of IPV (relative risk (RR)=1.02; p<0.001)<sup>7</sup> and intimate partner femicide (RR=1.40; p=0.048), one-to-three days after an extreme heat event (Sanz-Barbero et al., 2018). In Australia, there was some evidence of increased domestic violence during severe drought years. According to service providers, financial pressures associated with the drought were partly the cause of an increase in alcohol and drug consumption by men as a coping mechanism, which resulted in increased violence against women. The research noted that the violence – mainly emotional abuse, financial control, physical abuse and isolation of women – was first reported by service providers instead of being directly mentioned by the women (Whittenbury, 2013).

### *Hurricanes, tsunamis and cyclones:*

There were heterogeneous effects of hurricanes on GBV. For instance, in the USA, in 2008, exposure to Hurricane Ike was significantly associated with increasing the odds of boys physically (odds ratio (OR)<sup>8</sup>=3.19; p<0.01) or sexually (OR=3.73; p<0.01) assaulting dating partners (Temple. et al., 2011). However, interestingly, exposure to Hurricane Katrina had no effect on the risk of non-partner

6 19 Demographic and Health Surveys from Sub-Saharan Africa from 2011 to 2018 with publicly available historical rainfall data. The countries included in the analysis are: Sierra Leone, Togo, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Gabon, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Angola, Namibia.

7 *Relative risk (RR)* is the ratio of the risks for an event for the exposure group to the risks for the non-exposure group. A p-value, or probability value, is a number describing how likely it is that your data would have occurred by random chance (i.e., that the null hypothesis is true). A p-value less than 0.05 (typically  $\leq 0.05$ ) is statistically significant. It indicates strong evidence against the null hypothesis and shows that the research hypothesis can be accepted.

8 An *odds ratio (OR)* is a measure of the association between an exposure and an outcome. The OR represents the odds that an outcome will occur given a particular exposure, compared to the odds of the outcome occurring in the absence of that exposure.



The research noted that the violence – mainly emotional abuse, financial control, physical abuse and isolation of women – was first reported by service providers instead of being directly mentioned by the women.

sexual violence among girls (aged 12–18) and female university students (Fagen, et al, 2011; Madkour, et al, 2011). The study on Hurricane Katrina postulated that the sense of community on campus and available social support were protective factors against sexual violence among young women (Fagen et al 2011). Another study, also on the impacts of Hurricane Katrina, however, did demonstrate that hurricane exposure increased the risk of adult women experiencing violent acts by intimate partners by 5–8 times (Harville et al, 2011). In India, there was strong evidence that the odds of IPV was much higher among women living in states severely (OR=1.98;  $p<0.001$ ) and moderately (OR=1.85;  $p<0.001$ ) affected by tsunamis compared with those living in an unaffected state (Rao, 2020). In Vanuatu in 2011, there was a 300 per cent increase in new domestic violence cases after two tropical cyclones (Carney et al., 2020).

There is also *qualitative* literature from research conducted by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that complement academic literature. This research documents forms of non-partner violence, such as sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape that may occur due to the climate-related events. For instance, in South Asia, sexual harassment against women, rape, and domestic abuse were reported after the 2004 tsunami (Felten-Biermann, 2006; Fisher, 2010). In Nepal, sexual harassment and exploitation was used as a tool to intimidate women and prevent them from engaging in ecosystem restoration activities (Carney et al., 2020). In Bangladesh, after Cyclone Sidr in 2007, criminal networks forced some women and girls into prostitution along the Indian border. Child marriages also increased after Cyclone Sidr as a means of reducing families' financial burdens (Jha, 2017). Another study from Bangladesh that used qualitative data after Cyclone Roanu indicated direct and indirect associations to forced marriage and trafficking immediately before, during, and after the cyclone (Rezwana & Pain, 2021). Again, in Bangladesh, two studies showed that women and girls faced sexual harassment during and post-floods, either when going to the latrines at night or inside cyclone shelters. This was attributed to men loitering around more than usual because their work was interrupted, and because girls did not get the privacy that they needed when they bathed or sought to access toilets in flood shelters or camps. Sexual violence also affected adolescent girls in particular (both married and unmarried), as well as women with disabilities during floods (Nasreen M, 2010; Rashid & Michaud, 2000).

In East Africa, there is evidence that drought resulted in tensions in gender relations and resulted in GBV. For instance, in Uganda, due to the failure of cash crops caused by prolonged dry seasons, men were prompted to try to sell the crops that had been grown by women specifically for household consumption. Tensions led to men beating their wives to exercise control over the land, while there were also cases in which women beat men (Carney et al., 2020). In Kenya, the drought forced many girls to engage in transactional sex or to be forced into early marriages (IFRC, 2015).

There are also some examples from humanitarian contexts faced with the dual crises of climate change and conflict. In the Lake Chad Basin, as drought makes water scarcer, women and girls are forced to walk longer distances to obtain potable water, which increases their exposure to sexual harassment and assault far from home (Masson et al., 2016). Because of male out-migration, women and girls left behind often lack the capacity to provide for their families, exposing them to sexual violence and sexual exploitation. Child marriage is reportedly widespread in response to these added burdens (UNFPA, 2020). Finally, the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) research has also qualitatively indicated that women in Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger experience high levels of discrimination based on marriage rights and family code, and violence against women, and access to resources (Bouchama et al, 2018).

In the *global* examples cited here, the risk of increased violence was linked to a decrease in police protection and the lack of law enforcement with regard to dealing with domestic disputes. Thus, the risk of violence might not solely be triggered by direct adverse impacts of extreme weather events or disasters on people's mental health and families' well-being and economic security, but also by a failure of safeguarding and protective systems, as evidenced by the hypothesised pathways to GBV risk, described above (Thurston et al, 2021, Le Masson, 2022).



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## II.B Specific examples of GBV in the context of climate change in the Arab region



As acknowledged earlier, there are limited large-scale representative datasets on the intersection between climate change impacts and GBV globally, but particularly in Arab countries. However, some local qualitative studies in Arab countries provide some evidence of the pathways and relationship between climate change and different forms of GBV. The following examples from the Arab countries are from both stable, development settings and humanitarian contexts subject to the compounding risks of conflict and political instability. But all the examples that follow show *qualitative* evidence of increases in different forms of GBV in the aftermath of extreme weather events. In particular, these studies describe the lived experiences of those women and girls who are facing multiple risks of climate change and GBV. Moreover, in some contexts, especially in humanitarian settings, there are other compounding risks, so the qualitative evidence provides a good basis to inform interventions and programmes.

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Some local qualitative studies in Arab countries provide some evidence of the pathways and relationship between climate change and different forms of GBV.

In development contexts, UNFPA Jordan's research showed that women experiencing multiple vulnerabilities in the country (e.g. refugees or those living in non-urban areas) may be more affected by challenges specifically related to such effects of climate change as water scarcity. For instance, in Jordan, particularly in certain refugee camps, water scarcity appears to have led to an increase in of various forms of GBV incidents, including IPV and sexual harassment. This is because refugee women have the task of fetching and collecting water and must often walk long distances to do so, putting them at risk for verbal abuse and sexual harassment (UNFPA Jordan, 2022). It is worth noting that discriminatory gender and social norms impact the roles and responsibilities of men and women in Jordan, including their access to resources and decision-making power, which in turn diminishes women and girls' abilities to adapt to and recover from climate-related events (UNFPA Jordan, 2022).

In humanitarian contexts, an individual's risk of experiencing GBV due to extreme weather or disaster is compounded by additional risks driven by conflict and other factors that complicate the task of disentangling and identifying the specific causes. Nevertheless, the interaction of different factors, makes the need for programmes to focus on integrated services that offer protection to women and other vulnerable members of society, alongside access to health and social services. For instance, the Sahel region has been identified by the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report as a “climate change hot spot”, a reference to areas where the impact of climate change poses a threat to human security (ICRC, 2020). IPV represents 55% of reported GBV cases among Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), refugees, and host community members, while rape and sexual assaults represent 21% of cases. (UNFPA, 2020). Further to this, the risk of GBV among crisis-affected people is very high in complex



humanitarian situations where they may have to contend with terrorism, mixed-migration, drought and epidemics (UNFPA, 2020).

In Syria, in early 2009, a multi-year drought caused the migration of over a million people from rural areas to semi-urban and urban areas. As men left to find alternative sources of income, many women were forced to become heads of household, leaving many malnourished, without land in their names, exposed to GBV, which resulted in girls being taken out of school (Verner, 2012). UNFPA Syria's research also showed that during the extreme weather conditions and heavy snowfall in northwest Syria of January 2022, there was a spike in reported GBV incidents among affected

households. This was attributed to the loss of tents, and the increased psychological distress experienced by unemployed husbands no longer able to provide for the basic needs of their households. Female head of households were also exposed to sexual exploitation and abuse when attempting to meet basic needs such as securing new tents, furniture, heating supplies and/or food for their households (UNFPA Syria, 2021). In Somalia, in 2019, drought and flood conditions caused the internal displacement of 2.6 million people, making women and girls increasingly vulnerable to GBV as they were forced to reside in camp facilities with weak protection mechanisms. Qualitative interviews indicated that domestic violence, sexual violence, and FGM reportedly increased in this setting (UNFPA Somalia Country Office, 2020).

## II.C Rapid review of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)<sup>9</sup> from the Arab region



To inform this report, we conducted a rapid search of the NDC Registry<sup>10</sup> using the terms "gender-based violence", or "violence". Our review shows that 18 of the 20 countries from the Arab region have submitted NDCs in the official language of the State: English, French, or Arabic. Only two countries from the Arab region (Libya, Yemen) have not submitted any NDCs. We restricted the search to the 11 of the 18 Arab countries<sup>11</sup> that had submitted their NDC reports in English.

As part of this process, of the 11 that submitted reports in English, only one, Somalia, has recognised GBV as a significant impact confronting vulnerable populations, especially women and girls, and outlined plans on how to address it in this specific context. Somalia recognises the dual and compounding effects of conflict and climate change on GBV (The Federal Republic of Somalia, 2021)

and acknowledged that the promotion of gender equality is critical for effective climate adaptation and mitigation in Somalia.

Four Arab countries reporting in English also provided a framework for gender-responsive action on climate change in their NDCs, but without reference to GBV. They are: Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Tunisia. All acknowledge that climate change has impacted women and girls and identify components of gender-responsive action that includes participation by women and a focus on strengthening the resilience of women, communities and systems to ensure their enhanced capacity to adapt.

Moreover, Jordan was the first country in the Arab region to recognise the importance of and integrate a gender equality perspective in its National Climate Change

9 NDCs by countries outline future efforts to reduce emissions and include information on national plans for adaptation to the effects of climate change

10 <https://unfccc.int/NDCREG>

11 Egypt, Gulf Cooperation Council (Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates), Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Somalia, Sudan.



Water scarcity affects health by limiting access to safe water for drinking and hygiene practices and increases the threat of contracting water-borne diseases such as cholera.



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Policy<sup>12</sup>. One good practice included in the policy is the development of a *Road Map for Gender Equality and Climate Change* that was designed to support the government, particularly the National Committee on Climate Change, to advance its work on mainstreaming gender equality and women empowerment through the adoption of gender-climate just solutions designed to help realize the NDCs. This road map, developed by UNDP as part of its 2021 gender analysis report, includes several actions and ways forward: 1) Strengthen the capacity of climate change and gender equality experts; 2) build a strong evidence-based discourse about gender equality and climate change, with age and gender-disaggregated data; 3) engage women and men, girls and boys in the response and mitigation process, especially those most affected by its impact such as rural women; 4) ensure the participation of women's organisations in designing and reviewing climate change policies, strategic plans and action plans.

An important point to note is that the above NDC mapping relates to gender and that within gender, *the issue of GBV is neither well articulated, understood nor addressed*. So, while we have some best practices, we need to see this recognised both nationally and globally as a key strategy in reducing risk of GBV as a result of both climate change and climate change adaptation and mitigation policies. Finally, while we recognise that this was a rapid search with limitations, UNFPA, in partnership with Queen Mary University, London (QMUL), is finalising an in-depth gender analysis of NDC contributions with a regional focus designed to include a section on GBV.

This 2022 UNFPA and QMUL report (forthcoming) reviewed 15 NDC documents for countries in the Arab region that were submitted in or after 2020. The 2022 UNFPA and QMUL report for the Arab Region found that a majority of documents (11/15) made some reference to gender. Seven NDCs describe women as a group vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, and most of the NDCs (10/14) reference gender-mainstreaming or gender-responsiveness as a means to engage with this and ensure the representation of women in NDCs. Of the 15 reviewed NDCs, five made specific reference to GBV. The Somalia NDC states that 70-80% of internally-displaced persons and camp-based refugees are women who are exposed to GBV<sup>13</sup>. Both Jordan and Tunisia include a measure to support women exposed to GBV as a health-related adaptation pillar<sup>14</sup>.

In the Arab region, water scarcity represents a key intersection between health and gender issues and is recognised as a real and growing regional issue. Water scarcity affects health by limiting access to safe water for drinking and hygiene practices and increases the threat of contracting water-borne diseases such as cholera. Women and children are also most vulnerable to the consequences of water scarcity since they are often the ones responsible for collecting it, and when they have to travel further to find safe water this requires more time and exposes them to GBV risks.

<sup>12</sup> The Jordan National Climate Change Policy (2013-2030) (JNCCP), the National Adaptation Plan (NAP) and Jordan's Third National Communication on Climate Change

<sup>13</sup> Somalia NDC, 2021: p12

<sup>14</sup> Jordan NDC, 2021: p54; Tunisia NDC, 2021: p66



## RESEARCH AND PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

## III. RESEARCH AND PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

### III.A Research gaps



In order to strengthen gender-responsive climate action and uphold international commitments to end GBV and to address climate change, there is an urgent need to strengthen national comparable data that highlights the gendered impact of climate change, with emphasis on the prevalence of GBV, including harmful practices. We also need to identify best practices and generate evidence for designing interventions and programmes that have mutual co-benefits in being both climate-resilient and gender transformative. Specific recommendations:

- **Generate evidence on the linkages between climate change impacts and GBV in the Arab States region to inform programming.** Some qualitative research offers evidence on GBV in the context of climate change in the Arab States region. However, it cannot be used to support a global evidence base, since it does not use quantitative or standardised methodologies that are better representative of the population (van Daalen et al., 2022). Promoting data and evidence-generation on the links between different climate hazards and GBV serves multiple purposes. GBV stakeholders can use the data for advocacy efforts to flag the importance of addressing GBV in climate change action, and also to utilise the data to design appropriate interventions before a disaster or slow-onset climate event has fully struck.
- Design ethnographically diverse cohorts that use both quantitative and qualitative methods to further explore the mechanisms and underlying driving factors of GBV in the context of climate change. This could be inclusion of modules capturing self-reported experiences of climate change within large-scale violence prevalence surveys<sup>15</sup> that already exist in different countries.
- Conduct country case studies within the Arab region on GBV and environment/climate indicators to understand lived experiences and to strengthen national statistics capacity and identify entry points.
- Conducting assessments of norms and practices that inform women and girls' violence risks related to climate-induced disasters (both acute and slow-onset); mapping services; especially mapping at-risk or "marginalised" groups of women in order to develop strategies to support their specific needs related to climate change; etc.
- **Establish the evidence on the linkages between climate change and different forms of GBV, including such harmful practices as child marriage, FGM, sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse.** There is a need to further understand how climate change impacts different forms of GBV to ensure targeted and effective GBV programming.

<sup>15</sup> To support this evidence generation, there are now a range of programmes, data and evidence available on collecting and conducting violence research. These are the What Works to Prevent Violence research programme, the kNOWVAWdata initiative which support increased availability and access to quality violence against women prevalence data, and other tools, including the UNFPA Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) geospatial dashboard.

There is an urgent need for research to contextualise the nature and consequences of the violence and quantify the scale of these problems to examine potential solutions, keeping in mind that sexual harassment and exploitation and harmful practices are exacerbated by the impacts of climate change.

- **Identify promising best practices globally and regionally and strengthen South-South knowledge sharing on effective programmes and interventions for tackling GBV in the context of climate change.** Locally-led community-based programmes that are climate-resilient (e.g., alternative livelihoods) offer a good basis for co-designing a gender-transformative programme that can tackle unequal gender norms. Such programmes offer mutual benefits for both sustainable development and GBV prevention.
- **Include a "power" analysis in any data collection efforts.** Given that gender inequalities are driven by power imbalances, in addition to researching whether GBV increases during and after a climate event (whether an acute event or a slow onset climate change), it is essential to question if and how

changes triggered by an extreme event or slow onset climate change affect people's interactions, their privileges (or lack of), income, and power. Also, we need to ask if changes in roles or power dynamics are short-term or long-lasting; how coping mechanisms influence the occurrence of violence; and the role of relief programmes in protecting (or not) climate change-affected individuals and GBV survivors.

- **Map national and regional policies, laws and frameworks and governance mechanisms** that serve to support them systematically. This is to support the integration of gender-responsive climate action into systems and structures. This mapping will enable the identification of the mechanisms through which the highest level of influence may be leveraged to give effect to the data and research in advocating for gender-responsive climate action in laws and policies. This will also serve to support countries in ensuring cross-sectoral learning and related considerations across governmental climate, humanitarian and development and gender sectors.

### III.B Programmatic recommendations



- **Design inclusive programmes that address GBV and climate change impacts by building adaptive livelihoods and including local women at the centre of the strategy.** Climate change adaptation and mitigation programmes and strategies need to integrate local stakeholder and women's perspectives. Programmes need to be designed for safeguarding women, and should effectively respond to the needs and priorities of women and girls and overcome multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, harmful gender norms and systemic power imbalances for gender-transformative outcomes, including addressing GBV. Such an approach also entails for example, building adaptive

livelihoods for promoting resilience to climate shocks and/or adding complementary "plus" components to existing cash transfer programmes. Finally, promoting adaptation and resilience requires a significantly greater investment in strengthening women's organisations and groups so that they can be part of the solution.

- **Promote strategic cross-sectoral Arab States and South-South partnerships and cooperation at global, regional, national and local levels.** Cultivate partnerships between climate policymakers, international organisations, programme staff and women's ministers or gender equality mechanisms, ensuring the involvement of agency and women's

civil society organisation leadership that possess expertise on ending GBV in all climate change processes across climate change and GBV sectors.

- **Integrate GBV actors in government ministries and decision-making.** The GBV community must build a fuller understanding of the global, regional and national systems, policies and funding streams related to climate change. Because these systems are often included within and guided by development processes, this means that GBV actors working in humanitarian crises need to link to development action. GBV actors can build upon and seek to broaden the capacity of relevant government partners, such as ministries related to gender and environment, to understand and get involved in climate change action at national level. This
- **Better integration of GBV across all frameworks and responses.** There is still a gap when it comes to standardizing an integrated approach to GBV in disaster risk reduction (DRR) including preparedness and anticipatory action. Greater efforts have to be made both to prevent GBV and to ensure that comprehensive and safe services are available to survivors affected by either slow-onset or acute climate-related emergencies.



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Climate change adaptation and mitigation programmes and strategies need to integrate local stakeholder and women's perspectives.



**IV.**

**CONCLUSION**

## IV. CONCLUSION

Addressing GBV is a fundamental part of achieving a healthy, sustainable future for all. While there has been increased international attention over the last decade in understanding and addressing gender-climate issues in policies and programmes, the intersections between climate change and GBV have been the subject of much less focus. Cross-sectoral South-South action is urgently required to ensure comprehensive, integrated approaches to address GBV across the humanitarian-development-peace-and climate continuum. While a single project will not end GBV, concerted efforts from across sectors at all levels can contribute to its powerful progress.





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# **GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN THE CONTEXT OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE ARAB REGION REVIEW OF EVIDENCE AND PATHWAYS**



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