

30 March 2024

**Issue:** Gender and Climate Change

**Submission:** Inputs on progress, challenges, gaps and priorities in implementing the gender action plan (GAP) and future work to be undertaken on gender and climate change

**Mandate:** FCCC/SBI/2023/L.17, para. 2

**Submitted by:** Women Deliver in consultation with the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and Climate Justice Coalition

### **Introduction**

We welcome the Decision 15/CP.28 of the Conference of the Parties, and the opportunity to provide information on the progress, challenges, gaps and priorities in implementing the gender action plan (GAP) and future work to be undertaken on gender and climate change. Women Deliver makes this submission together with the following accredited observer organizations: Asian Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), Danish Family Planning Association (DFPA), Margaret Pyke Trust, and Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), working in collaboration with the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and Climate Justice Coalition, a coalition of more than 100 organizations from over 50 countries. The above-mentioned organizations and coalition are also aligned with the submission from the Women and Gender Constituency.

### **ELWPG and GAP are important but gaps still exist**

We recognize the vital contribution of the Enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender (ELWPG) and its Gender Action Plan (GAP) to advancing gender equality and achieving gender-responsive climate policy and action. Some progress has been made in recent years, but major gaps exist and the activities to-date have not collectively made marked progress in addressing root causes of gender inequality, in reducing gender inequities in climate action and impacts, or in advancing women’s and girls’ full, equal and meaningful participation in and beyond UNFCCC processes.

### **Gender equality and SRHR linkages with the climate crisis**

The climate crisis is underpinned by grave injustices, with those who contributed the least to the climate crisis suffering first and worst from its consequences, and with limited access to the resources needed to adapt. Within countries and communities, risks from climate change are greater for “[p]eople who are socially, economically, culturally, politically, institutionally or

otherwise marginalized” (IPCC, 2014). This includes risks to ensuring good health and safeguarding human rights, especially for women and girls in all their diversity and intersecting identities across the life course, including Indigenous women and girls, women and girls with disabilities, migrants and refugees, and people with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual expression and characteristics, as well as those with limited financial means, of religious and ethnic minorities, or living in hazard prone and/or remote areas. The disproportionate impacts are a consequence of unequal, patriarchal, neoliberal and colonial systems that limit women’s and girls’ and gender-diverse people’s access to resources and decision-making.

Climate change has a negative impact on health and well-being, which was highlighted recently at COP28 in the [UAE Declaration on Climate and Health](#) and in related discussions. The impacts are far-reaching, including death and disease from extreme weather events, cardiovascular issues and inadequate nutrition. While health overall is under-addressed in relation to climate change and gender equality, the linkage of SRHR and climate justice is even more so, but the evidence continues to grow. The climate crisis is worsening maternal and neonatal health outcomes with extreme heat is linked to prematurity, low birthweight, stillbirth and neonatal stress ([Kuehn, 2017](#); [Chersich, 2023](#); [Chersich, 2020](#); [Syed, 2022](#)); climate-related loss of livelihoods and inadequate emergency shelters are linked to increased gender-based violence (GBV) ([IPCC AR5, 2014](#); [Agrawal, 2023](#); [Desai, 2021](#); [ARROW, 2015](#), [Regenerate Africa, 2024](#)); Child marriage, as a particular form of GBV, has been observed to increase in some contexts as households cope with climate disasters (e.g., [Human Rights Watch, 2015](#); [UNFPA, 2021](#)). The increase in violence reduces the adaptive capacity of women and girls, weakening their climate resilience; climate-related emergencies disrupt life-saving health services and supplies, including contraception and safe abortion ([Behrman & Weitzman, 2016](#), [IPAS, 2022](#)); water scarcity can reduce the ability to access and maintain menstrual health and hygiene; climate change exacerbates the drivers of child marriage ([Pope, McMullen & Baschieri et al., 2022](#)); and household economic hardship leads to withdrawing girls from school and opportunities for comprehensive sexuality education ([ARROW, 2022](#)). These and other climate impacts exacerbate inequalities and make achieving global commitments to universal access to SRHR even more challenging.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and bodily autonomy are an integral part of achieving gender equality and a necessity for building resilience and improving the adaptive capacity of marginalised people and communities who are already experiencing the disproportionate impacts of climate change. It reduces barriers to education and livelihood opportunities and supports people to exercise their agency and engage in climate action and policy making. Bringing SRHR can not only support advancing the wider climate-health

discussions on adapting to climate change in a manner that also advances gender equality, but is necessary for gender inequality not to be exacerbated.

The current ELWPG and its GAP do not reference SRHR; however, the next steps for gender work programs and action plans can address that gap. Parties and relevant organizations that support the realization of SRHR and that are working to robustly implement the GAP should recognize the opportunities for ensuring SRHR and integrate them within their operationalization of ongoing and future GAP activities.

### **Future work**

Given the evidence and experiences, especially of marginalized and highly climate-impacted communities and populations, SRHR should be included in future work on gender and climate change in a substantive way.

We recommend explicitly incorporating health as a cross-cutting issue for gender and climate change, with specific inclusion of SRHR, in terms of topics, activities, and goals within the next iteration of the Lima Work Programme on Gender and any related action plan. Ideas include:

- Creating space to explore and address gender-differentiated aspects of SRHR and climate change impacts and actions through a dedicated expert dialogue, workshop or similar substantive events or processes. These spaces can serve to share experience and best practices, successful initiatives, challenges and learnings, capacity-building, tools and resources, among all relevant actors including non-Party stakeholders. Key discussions could include reviewing and analyzing how SRHR is incorporated in NDCs (e.g. UNFPA's [Taking Stock: Sexual and Reproductive and Health and Rights in Climate Commitments: A Global Review](#)) and NAPs (e.g. NAP Global Network's [Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights \(SRHR\) in National Adaptation Plan \(NAP\) Processes](#)) to support Parties in further integrating SRHR into their national plans and policies.
- Inviting experts on SRHR, gender and climate to contribute to related events and processes to support an intersectoral and intersectional approach, e.g. in the upcoming "Expert dialogue on the disproportionate impacts of climate change on children and relevant policy solutions" at SB60, and in spaces centering on adaptation, resilience, loss and damage, and capacity building, to support further exploration and awareness of the gender-differentiated impacts on SRHR.
- Continuing discussions and action in follow-up to the COP28 [Gender-Responsive Just Transitions and Climate Action Partnership](#), which expressed concern that "climate change is exacerbating existing inequalities...and barriers to accessing critical services that underpin access to decent work, including, but not limited to...health services including sexual and reproductive health...and stress the need to strengthen and expand

access to gender-responsive social protection systems”, including through the Just Transition Work Programme.

- Continuing discussions and action in follow-up to the COP28 [Guiding Principles for Financing Climate and Health Solutions](#), recognizing that “delivering universal health coverage and high-quality care to all in a changing climate” as part of accelerating transformative climate and health solutions to save and improve lives now and in the future includes delivering the full suite of sexual and reproductive health services. Ever-emerging evidence on the interlinkages between SRHR and climate change adaptation and resilience also highlights the importance of this health topic as a “priority for the most impacted countries and communities,” and in line with existing commitments to achieving universal health coverage ([UHC 2023](#)) and advancing gender equality ([CSW66](#)).
- Supporting Parties to center human rights, bodily autonomy, menstrual dignity and intersectionality in communications and programming on SRHR and the climate crisis. These approaches must recognize and reference the impacts, needs, and/or experiences in relation to climate change and SRHR based on people's intersecting identities such as but not limited to race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, gender identity, sexual and expression and characteristics, education, disability, and Indigeneity, among others.

The next phase of work on gender and climate action should recognize and build from the established linkages between gender equality, SRHR, and the climate crisis, providing opportunities for knowledge-sharing and capacity-strengthening on planning, policymaking, and programming. The inclusion and participation of grassroots groups, women’s rights organizations and gender-related groups, disability rights groups, and youth and Indigenous organizations is vital for this work to be representative and applicable.

#### **Additional resources on the links between SRHR and climate change:**

- ARROW. [Climate Justice in Planet A](#)
- CHANGE. [Climate change is a Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Issue: Fact Sheet](#)
- IISD/NAP GLOBAL NETWORK. [Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights \(SRHR\) in National Adaptation Plan \(NAP\) Processes](#)
- IPAS. [Climate change impacts women’s sexual and reproductive health](#)
- IPPF. [Position paper: The climate crisis and sexual and reproductive health and rights](#)
- MARGARET PYKE TRUST. [Climate change engagement: A guide for SRHR organisations](#)
- SRHR & CLIMATE JUSTICE COALITION. [Integrating SRHR into the UNFCCC GAP](#)

- SRHR & CLIMATE JUSTICE COALITION. [Climate Change, Gender Equality and Sexual and Reproductive Rights at CSW66](#)
- SRHR & CLIMATE JUSTICE COALITION. [Key Messages and Recommendations at COP27](#)
- UNFPA. [In Our Words: Voices of Women of African Descent for Reproductive and Climate Justice](#)
- UNFPA. [Taking Stock: Sexual and Reproductive and Health and Rights in Climate Commitments: A Global Review](#)
- WOMEN DELIVER. [The link between Climate Change and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: An Evidence Review](#)