

GENDER, CLIMATE & SECURITY

Sustaining inclusive peace on the frontlines of climate change

REPORT SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

In many regions of the world, the impacts of climate change are exacerbating conditions that threaten peace and security. Rising temperatures, extended droughts, or heavier, harsher storms are resulting in loss of livelihoods, increasing competition over scarce resources and fueling migration and displacement.

Gender norms and power structures play a critical role in determining how women and men of different backgrounds are impacted by – and respond to – such crises. Pre-existing inequalities, gender-related roles and expectations, and unequal access to resources can deepen inequality and leave some groups disproportionately vulnerable.

In his 2019 Report on Women, Peace and Security, the UN Secretary-General declared an “urgent need” for better analysis of the linkages between climate change and conflict from a gender perspective. Understanding the gender dimensions of climate-related security risks is not only key to avoiding exacerbating vulnerabilities, but also to uncovering new entry points for advancing gender equality, improving climate resilience and sustaining peace.

“ *The global threat of climate change and environmental degradation is poised to exacerbate the already increasing number of complex emergencies, which disproportionately affect women and girls. There is therefore an urgent need for better analysis and concrete, immediate actions to address the linkages between climate change and conflict from a gender perspective.*

SECRETARY-GENERAL ANTÓNIO GUTERRES, 2019

EVIDENCE FROM THE FIELD

Case studies contributed by [researchers and practitioners](#) from across the globe illustrate the different ways in which gender, climate change and security are linked. Understanding these linkages can help policymakers, development practitioners and peacebuilders mitigate risks of violence and leverage opportunities to build resilient, inclusive, and peaceful societies.

1. In **northern Nigeria**, norms of masculinity, such as the desire to protect family wealth, are intensifying intercommunal farmer-herder conflicts and motivating young men to join armed groups like Boko Haram, as climate change impacts destroy natural resource-based livelihoods.
2. In **Chad**, “everyday violence” against women and girls creates economic stress and undermines households’ and communities’ capacities to adapt to environmental change. Economic insecurity makes adolescent girls more vulnerable to early marriage and young men more vulnerable to being enlisted in armed groups. It also drives male migration within and outside of Chad.
3. In **North Kordofan, Sudan**, the out-migration of men from villages due to the impacts of climate change on traditional pastoral and agriculture-based livelihoods has left women with new economic responsibilities in increasingly challenging environmental conditions. Results from a successful peacebuilding initiative show that interventions focused on climate-resilient natural resource management can provide important entry points for empowering women in local governance and conflict resolution mechanisms.
4. In **Egypt**, rapid population growth and a limited fresh water supply make the country highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Changes to water availability can have major consequences for food and energy security, as well as employment, housing, sanitation, education and healthcare. This situation constitutes a particularly serious risk for women, who are largely marginalized in economic, social and political spheres.

5. In **Freetown, Sierra Leone**, rapid urbanization, combined with heavier, harsher rains and rising sea levels, has resulted in an intensification of flooding and landslides, leaving residents of informal settlements extremely vulnerable. Despite a significant gender gap in political participation, women engaged in local governance are making important contributions to resilience-building, organizing through community structures and city government.
6. In **the Asia Pacific**, integrating a gender-responsive approach into national climate change and disaster risk reduction agendas is critical for responding to where, when and how climate change overlaps with multiple risks from gender inequality, poverty, protracted conflicts, land dispossession and local or community-level resource disputes.
7. In **West Papua, Indonesia**, indigenous women have been disproportionately affected by the impacts of land degradation from extractive industries, which have been exacerbated by a changing climate. This has compounded other vulnerabilities linked to insecurity, including sexual violence and marginalization, as well as land grabbing and displacement.
8. In **urban Pakistan**, women have experienced domestic violence for failing to manage households with depleting water supplies due to climate change. In some cases, water and energy shortages that have been exacerbated by climate change have been associated with the mobilization of men into criminal groups.
9. In **western Nepal**, degraded livelihoods have increased the migration of seasonal workers – mostly men – to neighboring India or to urban areas. Women have reported shouldering increased burdens and higher levels of insecurity as the sole providers for their families in ever more challenging environments.
10. In **Colombia, El Salvador and Ecuador**, gender-responsive approaches to climate adaptation that build social cohesion and address underlying community tensions have made important contributions to strengthening food security and resilience.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTEGRATED ACTION

The report assesses entry points for integrated action and provides recommendations for policymakers, practitioners and donors on advancing three inter-related goals: peace and security, climate action and gender equality:

1. **Integrate complementary policy agendas:** Concerted and coordinated action needs to be undertaken to integrate largely siloed policy frameworks on sustaining peace, climate change, and women, peace and security. Policies to address climate-related security risks should be underpinned by robust analyses that systematically include gender dimensions.
2. **Scale up integrated programming:** Successful interventions that empower women and marginalized groups to address climate-related security risks show that integrated programme design can achieve promising results for gender equality, climate action and peacebuilding goals. Such initiatives should be significantly scaled up through cross-sectoral partnerships.
3. **Increase targeted financing:** The majority of financing for conflict prevention, peacebuilding and sustainable development remains “gender blind”. Dedicated investments in women’s empowerment are particularly low in sectors related to natural resources, including agriculture and rural development, energy access, and water and sanitation.
4. **Expand the evidence base:** Deeper analysis of the gender dimensions of climate-related security risks is needed, including how gender shapes the experiences of women and men across contexts exposed to different climate risks (drought vs. sea level rise) and security threats (armed conflict vs. criminality); how gender dynamics shape climate and conflict-related displacement and migration; and the peacebuilding impacts of engaging women in natural resource governance and climate-resilient livelihoods.

Access the full report at

www.gender-nr-peace.org/gender-climate-security

