

# IGDS FACT SHEETS

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## Gender and Climate Change



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“ —

“We were the ones whose blood, sweat and tears financed the industrial revolution. Are we now to face double jeopardy by having to pay the cost as a result of those greenhouse gases from the industrial revolution? That is fundamentally unfair.”

Mia Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados

# Gender and Climate Change

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# 1 What is Climate Change?

Climate Change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. Before the Industrial Revolution of the 1800s, climate change was primarily influenced by natural phenomena. Since then, however, climate change has been largely driven by human activities. The unprecedented increase in greenhouse gas emissions from the burning of fossil fuels has sped up global warming and sparked the current climate change crisis

Climate Change affects every region of the earth and the current crisis constitutes a global human rights threat.

Climate Change phenomena include:

- declining biodiversity
- more intense drought, water scarcity, and severe fires
- more intense rainfall and associated flooding
- sea-level rise, contributing to more frequent and severe coastal flooding in low-lying areas and coastal erosion
- ocean warming, more frequent marine heatwaves, ocean acidification, and reduced oxygen levels.



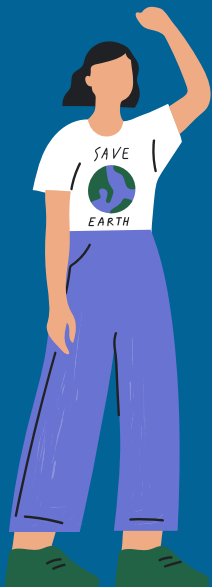
## 2 What is Climate Justice?

Climate Justice recognizes that individuals and communities are differently affected by Climate Change and that climate impacts can exacerbate inequitable social conditions.



Climate justice “insists on a shift from a discourse on greenhouse gases and melting ice caps into a civil rights movement with the people and communities most vulnerable to climate impacts at its heart.”

Mary Robinson, the former President of Ireland  
and the current Chair of the Elders



"There can be no ecological security without climate justice. Equity is a precondition for sustainability. We will live together or die together."

Vandana Shiva, Indian scholar,  
environmental activist, food sovereignty advocate,  
ecofeminist and anti-globalisation author

### 3 Vulnerability and Adaptation

The people face of Climate Change is measured by Vulnerability and Adaptation. *Vulnerability* is commonly understood as social, economic, political, cultural, or other factors which make specific groups more susceptible to adverse change. *Adaptation* is the ability to change in response to the impacts of an event in order to minimize adverse consequences.

According to the IPPC, an individual's vulnerability and capacity to adapt to Climate Change are influenced by the following factors, which are heavily differentiated across gender lines:


- Human capital i.e., literacy, education, access to information, health and nutritional status;
- Economic capital i.e., sources of income, diverse financial portfolios, access to capital and productive resources;
- Social capital i.e., the quality of informal and formal institutions and support networks ; and
- Availability of and access to technology, public utilities and agricultural inputs.



## 4 The “Gender Lens” and Climate Change

Climate Change hazards “increase or heighten existing gender inequalities” (IPCC 2013). Gender analysis helps examine to what extent different groups in society are vulnerable and their ability to adapt. Utilising gender as an analytical framework to develop policy and project initiatives around mitigation, preparedness, response and recovery, prevents governments and civil society organizations from leaving anyone behind. A gendered approach in Climate Change financing is another tool that takes into consideration the different lived realities of persons within the context of climate change and ensures resources are allocated to main priority areas that will have wider impact.

Climate Change affects women and men differently due to socially constructed gender roles and responsibilities. Compared to men, women often have fewer rights, limited mobility, and less access to resources, information, and decision-making authorities. This is also the case for gender and sexual minorities because of systemic marginalisation. Consequently, women and LGBTQI+ people are significantly more vulnerable to Climate Change effects and have fewer capacities to adapt.

An illustration of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a yellow short-sleeved shirt with red polka dots and orange wide-leg trousers. She is walking and holding a yellow rectangular sign with a wooden stick. The sign has the text "SEA LEVELS ARE RISING" in black and "SO ARE WE!" in red.

SEA LEVELS ARE  
RISING  
SO ARE WE!

# 5 Vulnerability, Adaptation, and Gender

Gender is an important determinant of our level of vulnerability and capacity to adapt to Climate Change issues.

## Crop failure

Recent studies show that roughly half of the women in the world are active in agriculture. Gender roles in agriculture can see serious impacts from climate change including role reversal and child labour. Role reversal is linked to increased rates of domestic and gender-based violence.

## Fuel shortage

As less firewood becomes available women spend more time in search of wood for fuel. This can adversely affect other activities including education, and care work.

## Water scarcity

Droughts, desertification and saltwater intrusion are linked to increasing rates of childhood and maternal mortality. In times of drought a greater work load is placed on women's shoulders as some spend up to eight hours a day in search of water.





## Natural disasters

Men and women, boys and girls are affected differently from disaster, even if they live in the same household. Studies show that women, boys and girls are 14 times more likely than men to die during a disaster. Following a disaster, it is more likely that women will be victims of domestic and sexual violence.

## Disease

Climate disasters result in heightened levels of food and water-borne illnesses, bronchial ailments, and preventable diseases (e.g. diabetes), as well as increased rates of prenatal and early childhood malnutrition.

## Displacement

Displacement stresses existing social systems and often creates heightened vulnerability to gender-based violence. In disaster situations, women and LGBTQI+ people may obtain relevant information differently, and have distinct needs and differing access to resources that aid recovery due to gender-based divisions of labour, patterns of mobility and socially-expected behaviour patterns.

## Conflict

The inability to meet basic needs increases women's burden of care in the home. Increased social and economic disparities result in higher incidents of domestic and gender-based violence, which disproportionately affects women, children, and LGBTQI+ people.



## 6

# Sexual & Reproductive Health & Rights

- For girls and women displaced by Climate Change and forced to live in refugee or aid camps, inadequate access to sexual and reproductive health services is a leading cause of death.
- Poor maternal and neonatal health are increasingly associated with extreme heat, air pollution, and saltwater intrusion i.e. saline contamination of drinking water because of rising sea levels.
- Women and girls must travel further distances to secure food and water when resources become scarce. This can result in increased rates of gender-based violence including sexual violence, forced survival sex, and sex trafficking.
- Increased incidents of early, forced, and child marriage. Families may marry off their girl children to relieve some of the financial burden caused by climate disasters.
- Sexual and gender minorities (including LGBTQI+ people and sex workers) are often left out of disaster risk reduction and preparedness policies. The lack of protection for LGBTQI+ people and the criminalization of same-sex sexual activity and sex work further hinders access to sexual rights and resources.



# 7 Global Responses to Climate Change

- The Paris Agreement. A legally binding international treaty on climate change adopted by 196 nations and stakeholders. 2016.
- Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement). 2018.
- Debt for Climate swaps. A form of debt relief where debtor nations use monies owed to external creditors to finance domestic climate change mitigation projects on agreed upon terms.
- COP 27, Dedicated fund for loss and damage. 2022.
- The Bonn Challenge. 2011. A global goal to bring 350 million hectares of degraded and deforested landscapes into restoration by 2030.



## 8 Caribbean Vulnerability to Climate Change

- IDB Report - Building Resilience to Climate Change in Small Island Developing States: <https://www.iadb.org/en/ove/climate-change-caribbean-small-island-states>
- Puerto Rico Syllabus - Aftermath of Hurricane Maria: <https://puertoricosyllabus.com/syllabus/hurricane-maria/the-aftermath/>
- Caribbean Environmental News Network: <https://www.caribois.org/industry/climate-change/>
- The UWI Climate Action Portal: <https://uwi.edu/climateaction/>
- 10 urgent takeaways for the Caribbean from IPCC's latest global climate assessment report: <https://uwi.edu/10ipcc.php>

# On Climate Change, Development & Migration



But no one in paradise is supposed to talk about the ugly truths of exploitation, environmental destruction for development, competition over scarce resources, the limited supply of fresh water, or the diversion of resources (water and electricity) to hotels and foreign-owned wealthy homes. Nor are we supposed to talk about the ways limited jobs in “development projects” turn us against each other, or the horrifying untold stories of migrants fleeing one set of unlivable conditions only to find themselves abused and exploited.

Angelique V. Nixon, "What Does it Mean to Survive After Dorian? On Caribbean Disasters, Development and Climate Crisis." Stabroek News. <http://bit.ly/3E8eGH9>

We must understand that the most vulnerable or marginalised communities before the disaster (poor and working class folks, persons living with disabilities and severe health conditions, elderly, migrants, and those caring for others) will be the most in need in the aftermath. This is how disasters work. They are not the great equalizer as some say. All they do is unearth and exacerbate existing inequalities and vulnerabilities. The most vulnerable are made more vulnerable.

Angelique V. Nixon, "When the Apocalypse is Now: Climate Crisis, Small Island Disasters and Migration in the Aftermath of Dorian." Stabroek News: <http://bit.ly/3k4CswV>

## 9 Get Involved

- Breadfruit Collective (Gender and Environmental Justice NGO in Guyana): <https://www.thebreadfruitcollectivegy.com/>
- Cari-Bois, Environmental News Agency - sign up for their newsletter: <https://www.caribois.org/>
- GirlsCARE, a mentorship programme for female climate activists in the Caribbean: <https://girlscareja.org/>
- Feminist Action for Climate Justice Action Coalition: <http://bit.ly/3jYXpCL>
- Feminist Action Nexus for Economic and Climate Justice: <http://bit.ly/3xj5rA2>
- Feminist Organizing for Climate Justice in the Caribbean <https://www.globalfundforwomen.org/movements/climate-justice-in-caribbean/>
- Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action (GAGGA): <https://gaggaalliance.org/>
- Our Climate Voices: <https://www.ourclimatevoices.org/>
- Puerto Rico, Aftermath Hurricane Maria, Syllabus: <https://puertoricosyllabus.com>
- The Cropper Foundation: <http://thecropperfoundation.org/>
- Women Engage for a Common Future: <https://www.wecf.org/>
- Women's Environment and Development Organization: <https://wedo.org/>



# 10 Useful Resources

- Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction:  
<https://canari.org/climate-change-and-disaster-risk-reduction/>
- Climate Change and Sexual & Reproductive Health & Rights:  
<https://napglobalnetwork.org/srhr/>
- Climate Justice And Natural Resource Governance (FEMNET):  
<https://femnet.org/>
- Climate Justice and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights:  
<http://bit.ly/3EsLNpB>
- Climate Smart Agriculture Sourcebook:  
<https://www.fao.org/climate-smart-agriculture-sourcebook/en/>
- Gender Responsive Climate Actions in Small Island Developing States (SIDS): <http://bit.ly/3RVx3ES>
- Inter-American Development Bank:  
<https://blogs.iadb.org/sostenibilidad/en/>
- IPCC Gender Policy and Implementation Plan:  
<http://bit.ly/3EsMdwb>
- UN Climate Change: <https://unfccc.int/gender>
- Women and Gender Constituency:  
<https://womengenderclimate.org/>



