

# Gender Based Violence: Overcoming an unseen barrier to effective climate action

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Australian Government



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We hope that the evidence in this report will support donors, practitioners and researchers to accelerate efforts to address GBV within climate change efforts globally.

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# About the What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls programme

What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls: Impact at Scale is a seven-year programme (2021-2028) funded by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to scale up global evidence-based and practice-informed efforts to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG).

As part of it, the Ending Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) Helpdesk is a high-quality, tailored research and programming advice service that feeds learning from research and practice, including from our project partners, directly to FCDO and other government departments. Helpdesk staff support UK Government colleagues to use evidence and practice-based lessons to design and implement cutting-edge violence prevention policy and programming. The Ending VAWC Helpdesk is delivered by Social Development Direct.

This report contains reference to and descriptions of gender-based violence. If you or someone you know needs support, please contact your local gender-based violence support service. Visit [lila.help](https://lila.help) for information about support services available in your area.

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# Executive summary





↑ 1°C

increase in average  
annual temperature

↑ 4.5%

rise in domestic violence, including  
physical and sexual abuse

A study across three South Asian countries found that a 1°C increase in average annual temperature leads to a 4.5% rise in domestic violence, including physical and sexual abuse.

Addressing Gender Based Violence (GBV) is a crucial component of effective climate action. It is key to enhancing the participation of women, girls and gender-diverse people<sup>2</sup> in climate programmes, activism and the green economy. Creating safe, supportive environments enables communities and economies to benefit from the diverse expertise and perspectives of women, girls and gender diverse people as advocates, scientists, technical experts, frontline responders and community leaders, better equipping them to adapt to climate impacts and move away from environmentally damaging practices. During climate emergencies, addressing GBV is also a crucial part of keeping communities safe.

However, GBV, which is rooted in gender inequality, continues to hinder their full participation. Women, girls and gender-diverse people are less likely to engage in climate programmes, activism or work in the green economy when this puts them at an increased risk of GBV or if they are already facing or recovering from GBV. Addressing GBV through climate action enables these efforts to benefit from the crucial expertise and perspectives of women, girls and gender diverse people (including survivors) by supporting them to engage in climate action as leaders, decision-makers, programme participants, and agents of change. Addressing GBV helps maximise the potential for truly effective climate action – a fact recognised by international climate agreements. For example, the Paris Agreement acknowledges that climate adaptation efforts should be gender-responsive,<sup>3</sup> while the Enhanced Lima Work Programme and its Gender Action Plan call for the full, equal and meaningful participation of women throughout the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) processes. As part of our research, one interviewee noted that they had seen climate-related livelihood initiatives “totally fail” when participants withdrew due to safety concerns linked to unaddressed GBV risks, eroding community trust and engagement for the project. Addressing GBV supports climate action to enable the participation of women, girls and gender diverse people and to keep whole communities safe.

The climate crisis is one of the greatest challenges of our time, threatening economic, environmental and social security, particularly for groups experiencing marginalisation and those in the Global South, where these impacts are most strongly felt. Climate change is threatening the ability of present and future generations to effectively enjoy all human rights. A human rights-based approach to climate action does no harm and ensures whole communities are included.

Women, girls and gender-diverse people experience the impacts of climate change disproportionately, with those who face marginalisation due to poverty, ethnicity, disability or sexuality facing some of the highest risks. Climate change exacerbates the conditions and pre-existing discriminatory social norms (the informal rules that govern behaviour in communities) that can drive GBV. In Ethiopia, child marriage, a form of GBV, increased by 119% in 2022 compared to 2021 in areas worst affected by drought and food shortages.<sup>4</sup> Research in three South Asian countries found that a 1°C increase in average annual temperatures has been associated with a 4.5% rise in patterns of physical and sexual domestic violence.<sup>5</sup>

*“Climate change actors should assume that GBV is happening and ask the question, ‘what are we going to do to mitigate, address and prevent GBV?’. This should be considered within the scope for environmental programmes.”*

Jamie Wen-Besson, Senior Gender Programme Manager, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

Drawing on the findings of a literature review and key informant interviews (KIIs), this report presents evidence of how addressing GBV is crucial for developing effective action. Our findings show that this is true across the spectrum of climate change action, including adaptation, mitigation and resilience, climate change-induced disaster management, climate mitigation, the just transition, and activism. This report draws on evidence from across the world, reflecting the breadth of the challenge faced. However, given the Pacific and Southeast Asia is one of the most climate affected regions with a high prevalence of GBV, key informants from this region were prioritised, with 14 interviewed. The report presents examples of emerging good practices and promising approaches to prevent and respond to GBV within climate action. It provides recommendations for all stakeholders to ensure GBV is more comprehensively addressed and climate action is more effective.

Our research confirmed a shared experience between climate and GBV practitioners that GBV severely impacts the ability of women, girls and gender-diverse people to effectively engage in climate action, but the urgency of this challenge is not reflected in current policies and programmes. Climate change practitioners and environmental activists highlighted the continued lack of action to tackle the climate crisis on the scale that is needed and restrictions on their rights to protest environmental harms without fear of violence, while GBV practitioners, women’s rights organisations (WROs) and women-led climate organisations spoke of the constant need to prove that GBV is occurring and undermining the safety of women, girls and gender-diverse people, despite clear evidence. This shared experience demonstrates an opportunity to work together to develop holistic programming that addresses climate change and GBV together, advancing more effective policies and programmes that increase the safety, resilience and security of whole communities.

This report aims to help policymakers and practitioners understand how addressing GBV supports the effectiveness of climate change programmes and policies and presents examples of emerging good practice. It also provides recommendations for all stakeholders to more comprehensively address GBV. It draws on a literature review of existing evidence and practice on GBV and climate change, and interviews with climate and GBV stakeholders.

This report brings together the expertise of climate practitioners, researchers, donors and WROs working on the front lines of climate change, at the intersection between climate change and GBV. It highlights the often unseen but indisputable role that GBV plays in preventing the participation of women, girls and gender-diverse people as leaders, decision-makers, participants and agents of change in climate action. In doing so, this report makes the case for greater investment and commitment to holistic climate change programming that includes addressing GBV within the scope of its work. This is crucial for ensuring climate action is informed by a diverse set of expertise, perspectives and priorities, maximising its reach and impact. It is also essential for ensuring climate action does no harm, and reaches whole communities.



This report uses the term **GBV** to refer to any violence committed against women, girls or gender-diverse people based on their sex or gender presentation. This includes but is not limited to intimate partner violence (IPV), non-partner violence, sexual violence, economic violence, technology-facilitated violence, child marriage and female genital mutilation/ cutting, among others.

## Addressing GBV enables effective climate action through:

### **Enabling women to adapt and build resilience to climate change and move away from environmentally damaging practices.**

Efforts that support communities to effectively adapt and build resilience to climate change require the participation of all community members. GBV can drive the exclusion of women, girls and gender-diverse people from these efforts. Addressing GBV through climate action helps to maximise their effectiveness by removing one of the barriers that women, girls and gender diverse people face to engaging in opportunities to build assets and access the

technology needed to adapt and improve community livelihoods and resilience.

Addressing GBV also supports programmes to do no harm and can build community trust and engagement in initiatives. For example, one initiative in the Pacific sought to move communities away from areas of coastal erosion to keep them safe. However, because the programme did not integrate GBV mitigation and response into their efforts, women were exposed to an increase in GBV in the new settlement, which reduced

community trust in the programme and led other communities to resist relocation efforts. In response, the programme has started to work closely with communities to identify and mitigate GBV risks to ensure relocation does not lead to further harm and reflects the needs of women and girls.

Addressing GBV is also crucial for supporting communities to move from environmentally damaging practices. Interviews with practitioners working to protect Ugandan wetlands by stopping communities from

farming this land revealed that when the alternative livelihoods provided put female participants at risk of GBV, many returned to farming the wetlands where they felt safer. In turn, this reduced the resilience of the community, and contributed to the environmental degradation the programme sought to end. Practitioners agreed that had the programme better identified and addressed the risks of GBV, it would have been in a stronger position to achieve its aims of reducing environmental degradation and building the resilience and safety of communities.

*“Experiencing GBV or living with the ever-present threat of GBV means that women and families are making complex decisions and managing multiple risks and needs; they may not always put environmental sustainability first ahead of their immediate safety.”*

Anik Gevers, Specialist Technical Advisor, Independent Consultant

**Supporting women and gender diverse people’s equal decision-making and leadership in adaptation, mitigation and resilience.** GBV poses a significant barrier to women and gender-diverse people’s leadership and decision-making in climate programmes. Those facing or recovering from violence cannot or may choose not to engage in activities, while others may be reluctant to engage in activities that increase their risk of facing violence. Interviews with climate practitioners and WROs in Cambodia and Laos explained that many women avoid public meetings aimed at developing community approaches to climate shocks due to threats of violence from male community members and husbands. Similarly, in Indonesia, interviewees shared that women leaders have been subjected to threats of murder and

lethal violence, which has prevented them from working with their communities to build resilience against climate change. GBV is often perpetrated by partners, community members or others as a form of backlash against women’s decision-making power.

Community-based programming with gender-equal decision-making results in better climate outcomes, because it better reflects diverse needs across communities.<sup>6</sup> For example, a survey of 440 forest users in Indonesia, Peru and Tanzania found that when at least half of decision-makers were women, more trees were conserved.<sup>7</sup> Addressing the risks of GBV experienced by climate decision-makers and leaders is therefore essential to ensure gender-equal participation, and increase the effectiveness of climate outcomes.

42% of women environmental human rights defenders surveyed in Cambodia and Lao PDR cited safety concerns as the greatest barrier to their participation in natural resource management.<sup>8</sup>

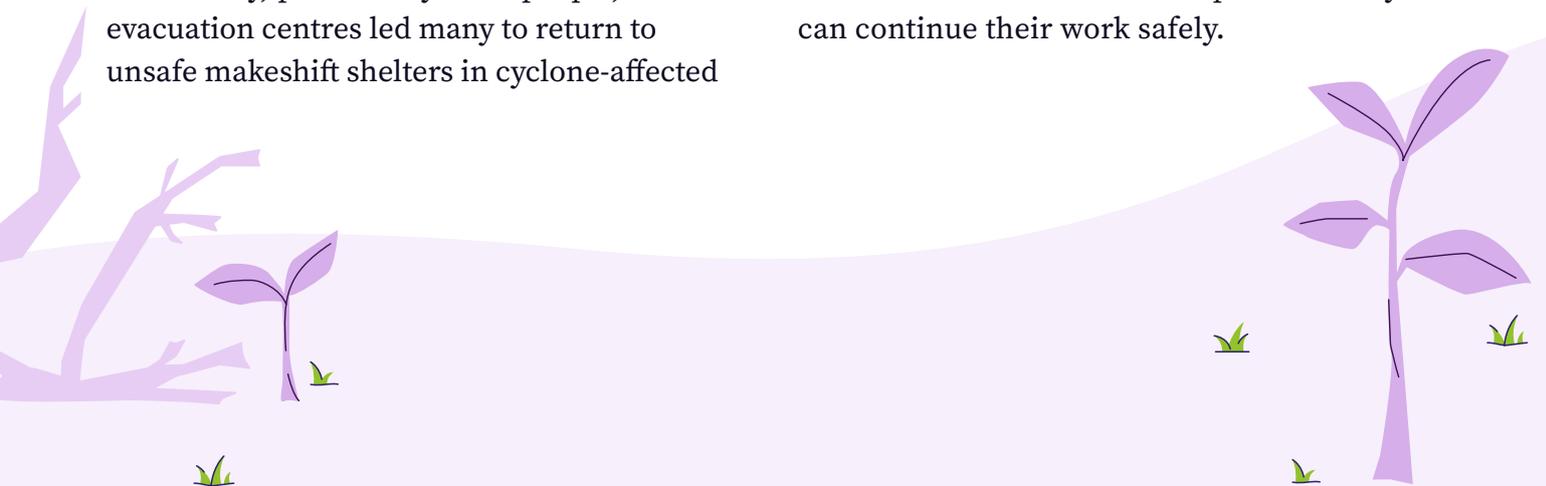
### **Preventing harm to individuals and communities during climate emergencies.**

Climate-induced disasters expose women, girls and gender-diverse people to increased risks of GBV, including sexual exploitation abuse and harassment (SEAH) perpetrated by intimate partners, non-partners, community members, human traffickers, emergency responders and humanitarian personnel, among others.<sup>9</sup> GBV and SEAH can have harmful and long-term impacts on survivors and communities. In climate emergencies, survivors of GBV/SEAH can also face significant barriers to engaging in disaster preparedness activities due to safety concerns, injury, stigma, and risk of discrimination and backlash. This can exclude them from activities such as evacuation drills and prevent them from receiving information and resources essential to their survival in a crisis. Integrating GBV and SEAH mitigation and response into climate emergency preparedness and response efforts, will lead to safer and more effective action that engages more women, girls and gender-diverse people and better meets their needs. Practitioners supporting cyclone-affected Pacific communities explained that failure to address GBV risks against members of the LGBTQIA+ community, particularly trans people, in evacuation centres led many to return to unsafe makeshift shelters in cyclone-affected

locations. They agreed that by integrating GBV and SEAH mitigation and response into their efforts, these programmes would have been better equipped to keep communities safe.

### **Enabling climate activists to work without fear or intimidation.**

Addressing GBV is crucial to supporting climate activists and Environmental Human Rights Defenders (EHRDs) to continue their work since it is consistently used as a tactic to silence them. A San Indigenous leader and EHRD from Namibia reports that she is afraid to walk on her own as a result of the abuse she is subjected to, and that she is at greater risk of violence from authorities because she is Indigenous.<sup>10</sup> Online abuse against women and girl activists has also been found to increase self-censorship, limiting participation in activism and public life.<sup>11</sup> Family and community members can also be impacted and put at risk due to their relationship to an activist. For example, an Indigenous environmental defender in Honduras, sent her children away after threats of retaliatory violence before she was killed in 2016.<sup>12</sup> Providing support to climate activists and EHRDs to anticipate and deal with the threat of GBV can help ensure they can continue their work safely.





A global survey of over 1000 girl activists, including climate and environmental activists, found that only 50% felt comfortable speaking out about their activism within their communities for fear of abuse, harassment or ostracism.<sup>13</sup>

**Supporting a ‘just transition’.** Addressing SEAH and GBV helps ensure the transition to a low-carbon economy does no harm, builds community trust in the transition, and enables efforts to benefit from the expertise and talent of women, girls and gender-diverse people.) GBV and SEAH have extremely harmful and long-term impacts on survivors and communities. Emerging evidence shows SEAH risks in some clean energy industries, which are often male-dominated or require large-scale construction. Mining for natural resources used in renewable energy production, such as lithium, cobalt, manganese, platinum, aluminium and copper, has been linked to human rights abuses,

including instances of GBV.<sup>14</sup> In the transition to a low-carbon economy, the power dynamics that drive this violence must be addressed to ensure these efforts ‘do no harm’ Otherwise, GBV and SEAH risk undermining community trust and engagement in these industries, and therefore the implementation and sustainability of climate objectives.

The transition to a green economy is also likely to result in job losses within sectors that have adverse environmental impacts, many of which are male-dominated. Evidence globally finds that unemployment and financial stress increase the risk of violence perpetrated by men who are unable to find or

keep a job.<sup>15</sup> In coal-mining communities in Zambia's 'Old Copperbelt', the U.S., Poland, and the U.K., research found that mine closures and unemployment led to financial stress, household tensions, and increased intimate-partner violence.<sup>16</sup> Careful consideration and mitigation of these dynamics and how they increase risks of GBV are an essential step to achieving a 'just transition' that supports human rights. If transitions to a low-carbon economy are associated with increases in gender-based violence and SEAH within communities, this can severely undermine community support of and engagement in 'just transition' initiatives.

The just transition also creates new opportunities in the green economy, which would benefit from the crucial expertise of

women and gender-diverse people working across different sectors. However, the risk of GBV and SEAH within these 'green industries' poses a significant barrier to their engagement. Women working in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) experience high rates of sexual harassment, a 2022 survey found that 43% of female STEM graduates, 50% of women in science, and 58% of women in academia reported having experienced sexual harassment.<sup>17</sup> 58% of female climate scientists who had been subjected to online abuse and harassment experienced a loss of productivity at work, with 25% dreading work.<sup>17F</sup><sup>18</sup> Addressing GBV and SEAH within green industries is essential for enabling talented women and gender-diverse people to contribute to this work.

Due to online abuse and harassment, 41% of female climate scientists said they were less likely to post on social media, 33% were less likely to contribute to the media, and 27% were less likely to speak in public about climate issues.<sup>19</sup>

## What works to address GBV in climate action?

Although there is increasing attention on the links between GBV and climate change, namely through the expansion of evidence that climate change increases the severity and frequency of GBV,<sup>20</sup> our research found that many climate programmes and policies are not yet addressing GBV. Through key informant interviews and a literature review, we found a number of examples of emerging promising practice to prevent and respond to GBV in climate action, based on practice-based knowledge.<sup>21</sup> This research identified a significant gap in rigorously evaluated, long-term climate action programmes that were designed to address GBV as part of their scope. This is a key area for future exploration and investment, essential for the development of more evidence-based and inclusive climate action.

### **Integrating GBV prevention and response into climate change policies and finance.**

International and national policies can be used to identify how climate change can drive GBV, and how GBV can undermine climate action, and set out recommendations and objectives to help drive policy coherence and resources towards preventing and responding to it. For example, the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) prioritised GBV prevention as part of its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) to the Paris Agreement.<sup>22</sup> Suriname's National Adaptation Plan (NAP) calls for training on GBV for volunteers responding to disasters, and Kiribati's NAP seeks to improve the evidence base on the links between GBV and climate change.<sup>23</sup> GBV can also be integrated into climate finance, for adaptation, mitigation and

loss and damage, but current estimates suggest that this is a tiny fraction of total climate finance so far. For example, an analysis of the US\$12.7 billion of climate finance allocated to Rwanda between 2013 and 2022 shows that only 0.01% of interventions incorporate the GBV purpose code.<sup>24</sup>

### **Integrating gender equality, disability and social inclusion analysis, in the design and evaluation of programmes and projects.**

Climate adaptation, mitigation, disaster preparedness and response, and loss and damage interventions are safer and more effective when based on a context-specific understanding of GBV risks and impacts, ensuring they are shaped in a way that anticipates and responds to these challenges. For example, Oxfam Cambodia's Disaster Risk Management (DRM) work with communities at risk of flooding includes integrating GBV planning and response into DRM simulation exercises.<sup>25</sup> In Nepal, the Hariyo Ban programme focused on supporting women's leadership in sustainable natural resource management. It identified GBV as a significant barrier to women's participation and sought to address this by engaging men and boys as equality and social inclusion champions.<sup>26</sup> Addressing GBV should also be incorporated into monitoring, evaluation and learning frameworks to support accountability and best practice. Integrating GBV response into climate interventions, reduces the risk of the impacts of GBV undermining the goals of the activity.

**Working with local and Indigenous GBV experts, survivor groups, and women's rights organisations.**<sup>27</sup> Local groups can help ensure policies and programmes are context-specific, and have buy-in and ownership in communities towards both GBV and climate objectives. For example, in Somalia, Action for Women and Children Concern (AWCC), partnered with women's groups to integrate GBV prevention into community climate

resilience plans.<sup>28</sup> Women were supported to engage in the design and planning through committees and discussions, and in the implementation and evaluation of activities. The programme prioritised women's safety and well-being, and put measures in place to reduce GBV risks associated with participating.

Considering the specific needs of groups experiencing multiple forms of marginalisation. Marginalised groups face additional and more complex risks of GBV and need context-specific interventions to ensure effective GBV responses. This includes people with disabilities, gender-diverse and LGBTQIA+ people, Indigenous groups, ethnic minority groups, people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, older women, and adolescent girls. Interviews with practitioners from the Young Women Initiative (YouWIn) in the Philippines, highlighted that their GBV Watch Groups which aim to strengthen GBV response mechanisms, train groups of women and girls, including members of the LGBTQIA+ community, those with disabilities, and those who are both Indigenous and non-Indigenous to ensure their efforts are tailored to the needs of diverse people within communities. In Vietnam, the Centre for Rural Development established groups for children with disabilities to make sure that these children and their carers have access to information about climate impacts, since they are often excluded from mainstream community groups due to taboo and resistance from fathers/husbands.<sup>29</sup>

Challenging harmful social norms that normalise violence. In Cambodia, the Regional Community Forestry Training Centre (RECOFTC) and Gender and Development for Cambodia (GADC) support women's participation in community-protected areas and forest management by addressing harmful social norms that drive men to perpetrate violence. This project engages men and boys to challenge harmful attitudes around women's

engagement in environmental protection and transform social norms and harmful behaviour from husbands and male leaders. In Kenya, the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association ([KWCA](#)) and the Taita Taveta Wildlife Conservancies Association ([TTWCA](#)) are working together to support women to meaningfully and safely participate in conservation and environmental initiatives. Their programme challenges harmful social norms and improves the capacity of partners to address GBV within their programmes and conservation efforts.<sup>30</sup> This includes efforts to prevent intimate partner violence, and non-partner physical and psychological GBV that is increasingly faced by women rangers working to manage and protect conservation areas. It also includes efforts to support male allies (men in the community who are committed to supporting gender equality), who are often confronted with verbal abuse for supporting women's participation in these spaces. Reducing barriers to women's participation in climate action can support greater climate outcomes through their increased engagement and decision making in interventions.

**Ensuring GBV services are provided alongside disaster response efforts.** Interviews with climate and GBV practitioners highlighted the importance of not siloing GBV and disaster response efforts. GBV practitioners are well placed to identify and help link climate actors to existing services (including healthcare, psychosocial support, law enforcement and justice) and to support climate actors in developing effective and survivor-centred services to fill gaps. For example, International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) worked with agencies and organisations involved in disaster response in Fiji to conduct a Sexual Reproductive Health (SRH) simulation exercise for emergencies, which included GBV response.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, climate change practitioners can support GBV practitioners in integrating climate change

risks and opportunities into their work. GBV practitioners should ensure that GBV response efforts in climate-induced disaster contexts are in line with the 16 Interagency Minimum Standards for GBV in Emergencies Programming.

**Training and capacity building on preventing and responding to GBV.** For climate programming, whether adaptation, mitigation, resilience or disaster response, it is important to develop a shared understanding of what constitutes GBV in communities and among staff members, and how instances should be responded to, including developing referral pathways for when it does occur. The World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) in Laos has implemented a policy where any fieldwork, data collection or work with local authorities includes gender training with sessions on GBV prevention and response, including access to justice.<sup>32</sup> In the green economy, and just transition, addressing harmful attitudes, harassment and abuse through supporting positive organisational cultures can help challenge gender stereotypes. This helps in building a diverse talent pool and retention of women workers within sectors responding to climate change.

**Supporting climate and environmental activists to continue their work without fear of harm.** Providing funding to support resilience, security, and accompaniment by international human rights observers can help reduce GBV risks and impacts for activists. Peace Brigades International (PBI) deploy human rights observers to accompany Environmental Human Rights Defenders (EHRDs) to reduce the risk of attacks against them. They also highlight the work of women activists in reports,<sup>33</sup> organise visits from international journalists,<sup>34</sup> request investigations into threats from governments, and support women EHRDs to speak at international conferences such as the

Conference of the Parties (COP) of the UNFCCC. These measures are designed to help women activists be safer and, therefore, more able to pursue their activism without fear.

**Establishing robust safeguarding mechanisms.** Instances of SEAH can cause severe harm to survivors and communities and put climate programmes at risk through the loss of community, donor and staff engagement. Organisations can help mitigate the risk of SEAH by developing robust policies and codes of conduct, grievance mechanisms, investigation procedures, and referral pathways

to report SEAH in a safe and confidential way. Coordination with other sectors and agencies can also help to ensure survivors have access to necessary support, such as healthcare, psychosocial support, and legal support. Organisations working with contractors and suppliers can mitigate risks of SEAH through robust procurement processes, careful contract selection, providing training and awareness-raising, and maintaining regular engagement along the supply chain. More information about how to strengthen efforts to prevent and respond to SEAH can be found at the [Safeguarding Resource Support Hub](#).



## Recommendations summary

The following recommendations are based on the reflections from interviewees and trends identified through the literature review. They are split by intended audience with further detail in Section 4:



### FOR CLIMATE CHANGE PRACTITIONERS

- 1. Conduct a gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI) analysis when designing programmes and their Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) frameworks, informed by consultation with local organisations representing women, girls and gender-diverse people from diverse backgrounds.**<sup>35</sup> Assume GBV is happening in communities affected by climate change, identify the types of GBV that could affect participants and undermine programme objectives, and find culturally-appropriate, survivor-centred ways to address it. Using this analysis, establish a gender action plan with sufficient budget to address GBV risks throughout the project cycle.
- 2. Prioritise risk mitigation and ‘do no harm’ in climate programmes by integrating GBV prevention, mitigation and response measures to protect participants and staff, and to support full community participation, ensuring more effective climate action.** These measures could include training for staff and communities, identifying or developing clear referral pathways to survivor support services, implementing prevention initiatives to support social norms change, and self- and collective-care efforts such as the provision of counselling and psychosocial support for survivors.
- 3. Work with all community members to build community trust and engagement to reduce the risk of backlash against women’s participation in climate action and GBV prevention and response measures.** Programmes should work with women, girls, local leaders, men and boys, and religious leaders to articulate the benefits of supporting women’s participation in climate initiatives and efforts to end GBV. This will help build the trust of communities, promote the sustainability of initiatives, and reduce the backlash against programme participants and staff.
- 4. Secure adequate funding for prevention and response to GBV within programme design and implementation.** Like climate change programming, effective GBV programming is long-term, sustained and multicomponent. It is important to include an adequate budget in programme proposals to fund GBV prevention, mitigation and response measures and advocate with donors for their necessity in meeting the goals of the programme. It requires drawing on expertise, including from local women’s organisations, to help inform approaches and support responses when cases arise.



## FOR DONORS

1. **Build on and invest in promising approaches that bring co-benefits for tackling GBV and improving climate outcomes.** This should be accompanied by efforts to document, share and learn from best practice. Areas to consider include risk mitigation and the need to ‘do no harm’ in all climate programmes, by identifying and addressing all forms of GBV. Key to this is providing funding and guidance to implementing partners by:
  - **Providing small innovation grants and technical assistance** to test and evaluate approaches that prevent GBV, particularly in climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience. The Resilient, Inclusive and Sustainable Environments (RISE) grants,<sup>36</sup> which focus on GBV in the context of environmental conservation, resource use in climate-vulnerable settings, and the protection of Indigenous women environmental human rights defenders, are a good example. Further pilots and evaluations are needed to understand how to adapt successful GBV approaches to communities affected by climate change.
  - **Build on emerging promising practices in integrating GBV into large-scale climate programmes and other relevant sectors, such as food security, climate-smart agriculture, renewable energy, green transport and humanitarian programmes.** For example, the What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls: Impact at Scale programme is supporting the International Water Management Institute’s work to tackle climate change and reverse environmental degradation by designing four gender-transformative GBV prevention pilots to support communities to cope with climate shocks and build water and food security in Jordan, Lebanon, Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs), and Egypt.<sup>37</sup>
  - **Providing flexible funding and accompanying research.** This helps programmes to adapt, recognising that these approaches may be innovative and based on emerging evidence. For example, the What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls: Impact at Scale programme is supporting the Center for Domestic Violence Prevention’s (CEDOVIP) work in Uganda to integrate GBV prevention and response into climate change mitigation efforts aligned with wetland restoration programmes, while robustly evaluating the programme and generating practice-based learning on what works.
  - **Providing sustained, flexible and multi-year funding for interventions that address GBV in the context of climate change.** This could include early warning systems and anticipatory action. Funding should support effective monitoring, evaluation and adaptive learning processes. Sustained financial support is crucial for addressing both climate change and GBV, as these are deeply rooted crises that require at least a few years to see meaningful change.



## ↓ FOR DONORS

2. **Work with other donors to direct climate finance toward gender-responsive and transformative approaches that prevent and respond to GBV.** Advocate for increased climate finance that supports gender equality and addresses GBV. Use climate funds to directly fund GBV projects where appropriate or integrate GBV prevention and response into broader climate change initiatives.<sup>38</sup>
3. **Support activists and practitioners working on climate change and GBV to continue their work by providing long-term, flexible funding to WROs, women's climate change groups, activists and local networks at the intersection of climate and GBV.** This could include supporting partnership building between climate and GBV specialist organisations, covering costs like staff salaries and support for resilience for those at risk of GBV, facilitating conversations between activists/ practitioners and duty bearers they are seeking to influence or engage, supporting them to showcase their work on global platforms and international conferences in order to influence others, and encouraging technology companies to address online abuse and harassment to help build a safer and more enabling environment for their work.



## FOR GOVERNMENTS

1. **Integrate gender equality, and the prevention of GBV, into national climate policy including Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs).** Analyse the impact of climate change on gender equality and GBV in the development of these policies. Develop and fund initiatives that seek to address climate change and GBV, informed by consultations with diverse WROs (inclusive of Indigenous communities, LGBTQIA+ people and people with disabilities) and experts. Invest in women's leadership and decision-making in the development of NAPs and share learning with local governments in order to support these actions at all levels nationally.
2. **Integrate gender equality and the prevention of GBV into programmes supporting communities to address climate change.** Support communities affected by the gendered impacts of climate change by funding specific programmes focused on addressing climate change and GBV together and mainstreaming gender equality and GBV prevention into broader climate change programming.
3. **Champion gender equality, and the prevention of GBV in global policy spaces on climate change including the UNFCCC.** Support the agreement of language on gender equality in negotiations on climate finance adaptation, loss and damage and the just transition. Ensure the Lima Work Programme and Gender Action Plan are fully implemented at the national level, including through appointing and supporting National Gender Focal Points to engage with climate policy decision-making and



## ↓ FOR GOVERNMENTS

funding activities associated with the implementation of these frameworks. Promote the gender-transformative implementation of the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction and monitor reports on indicators through the Sendai Framework and Sendai GAP.

4. **Support climate, environmental and human rights defenders, particularly in hostile environments, through funding protective measures such as accompaniment programmes, and the use of diplomatic influence.** Create an enabling environment for human rights defenders to exercise their support or opposition to environmentally harmful activities, including by removing legal restrictions on these activities. Work with technology companies to address online abuse and harassment.

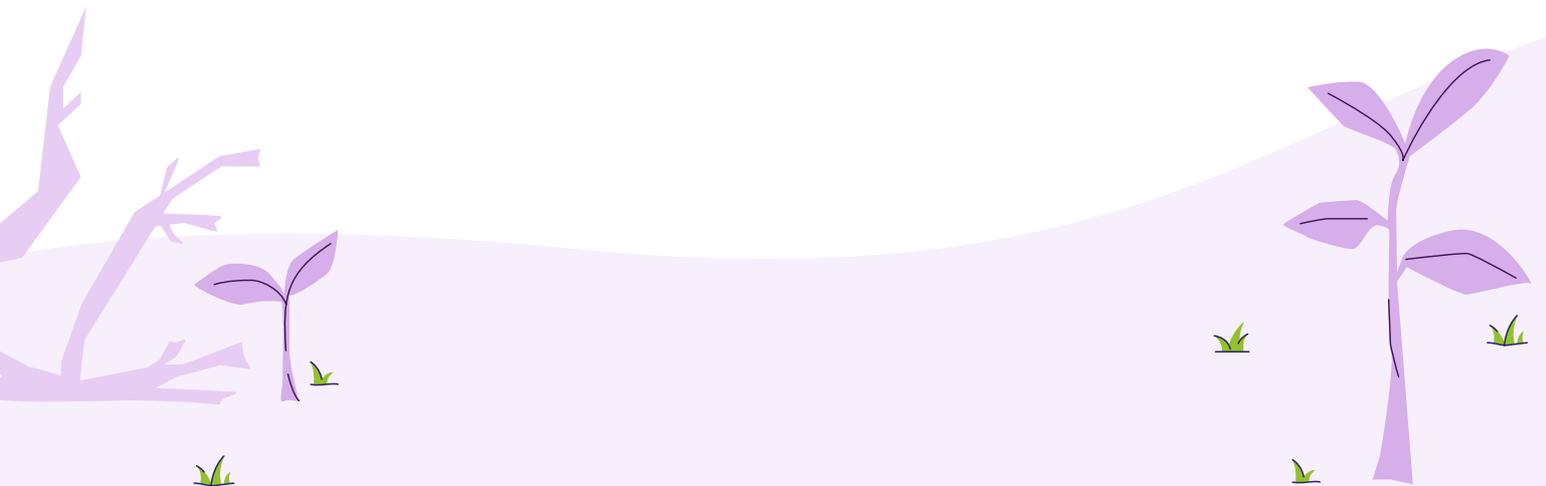


## FOR GBV PREVENTION PRACTITIONERS

1. **Pilot different GBV prevention approaches that can be integrated into large-scale climate programmes, and track their impact on both GBV and climate change outcomes.** For example, in Uganda, the What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls: Impact at Scale programme is funding an innovation grant for integrating GBV prevention into a wetland restoration programme.<sup>39</sup>
2. **Work with climate practitioners to adapt existing good practices to climate-induced disasters and displacement.** There are several examples of good practices for GBV prevention and response in humanitarian emergencies, such as providing clear referral pathways for survivors, mobile or online GBV services, safe spaces for women and girls, and access to psychosocial support, that can be adapted to climate disasters in line with the [Interagency Minimum Standards for GBV in Emergencies Programming](#).

**FOR ALL ACTORS**

- 1. Engage in cross-sectoral efforts to end GBV and address climate change.** Collaborate with diverse stakeholders, including climate change practitioners, policymakers, civil society, researchers, private investors, government, donors and UN agencies to increase awareness and understanding of the risks and drivers of GBV, and culturally appropriate best practice prevention and response approaches.
- 2. Include women, girls and gender-diverse people from diverse backgrounds<sup>40</sup> in the design, decision-making, implementation and monitoring of climate initiatives to better reflect their priorities and needs.** Work with organisations representing women, girls and gender-diverse people from diverse backgrounds. Remember that women, girls and gender-diverse people are not a homogenous group and include individuals with a range of experiences and needs to maximise the diversity of the perspectives and ideas informing the programme.
- 3. Document practice-based learning and generate evidence on what works to prevent GBV in climate initiatives to promote learning and strengthen GBV and climate action.** This evidence should document the impact that addressing GBV has on objectives related to climate action, resilience, gender equality, effective disaster response, multi-hazard early warning, anticipatory action, disaster response, and the transition to a low-carbon economy.
- 4. Ensure all programmes, organisations and institutions have robust safeguarding measures in place to prevent and respond to SEAH.** Safeguarding measures should include codes of conduct, reporting and grievance mechanisms and investigation procedures to allow survivors to report SEAH in an accessible, culturally appropriate, safe and confidential way. Organisations working with contractors and suppliers can mitigate SEAH risks through procurement processes, contract selection, training and awareness-raising and regular engagement along the supply chain.



# 1. Introduction



The climate crisis is one of the greatest challenges of our time, threatening economic, environmental, and social security, particularly for countries in the Global South, where the impacts are most strongly felt. For women, girls and gender-diverse people, the climate crisis threatens to further deepen the inequalities they experience. In the face of climate change, women, girls and gender-diverse people often suffer a reduction in safety and security, including through increased perpetration of Gender Based Violence (GBV) against them. This is especially the case for those experiencing multiple forms of marginalisation, including those linked to disability, sexuality, ethnicity, and age, among others. The increasing frequency and intensity of droughts, floods and extreme weather events create conditions that enable perpetrators to commit GBV more often, with greater severity, and with impunity. Research in three South Asian countries found that a 1°C increase in average annual temperatures results in a 4.5% rise in patterns of physical and sexual domestic violence.<sup>41</sup>

Analysis of the US\$12.7 billion of climate finance allocated to Rwanda between 2013 and 2022 shows that only 0.01% of interventions incorporated the GBV purpose code.<sup>42</sup>

In Ethiopia, rates of child marriage increased by 119% in 2022 compared to 2021 in areas worst affected by drought and food shortages; while in Bangladesh, girls aged 11-14 are twice as likely to marry in years following extreme heat.<sup>43</sup>

The impacts of GBV on survivors can be severe and long-term, including mental and physical health issues, financial stress due to economic abuse or job loss, and challenges accessing justice. These impacts can severely limit survivors' ability to engage in climate action as leaders, decision-makers, participants and agents of change. Addressing GBV enables sectors responding to climate change to harness the crucial expertise and perspectives of those working in this field, and also supports communities most affected by climate change to access the tools and resources needed to adapt to climate impacts, move away from environmentally damaging practices, and keep themselves safe in climate emergencies. Addressing GBV within climate action is essential for supporting women, girls, and gender-diverse people in continuing their critical work and developing solutions to help communities enhance their resilience to the impacts of climate change. It also ensures climate action does no harm. However, addressing both climate change and GBV requires sustained political commitment and investment to drive transformative change. Current estimates suggest that addressing GBV within climate action remains a tiny fraction of total climate finance. For example, an analysis of the US\$12.7 billion of climate finance allocated to Rwanda between 2013 and 2022 shows that only 0.01% of interventions incorporate the GBV purpose code.<sup>44</sup> Tracking how much climate finance is spent on GBV globally is challenging due to the inconsistent use of gender markers by major climate funds and differing methodologies across institutions.<sup>45</sup> Nevertheless, there remains considerable potential to leverage climate financing to tackle the interconnected crises of GBV and climate change.

Drawing on the findings of a literature review and KII, this report presents evidence of how failing to respond to GBV undermines the response to the climate crisis. It also presents a consensus across the climate change and GBV practitioners that we interviewed that addressing GBV is crucial for maximising the effectiveness of this response. Our findings show that this is true across the spectrum of climate change action, including adaptation, mitigation and resilience, climate change-induced disaster management, climate mitigation, the just transition and activism. This report draws on evidence from across the world, reflecting the breadth of the challenge faced. However, given the Pacific and Southeast Asia is one of the most climate affected regions with a high prevalence of GBV, key informants from this region were prioritised, with 14 interviewed. The report presents examples of emerging good practices and promising approaches to prevent and respond to GBV within climate action. It provides recommendations for all stakeholders to ensure GBV is more comprehensively addressed.

Our research confirmed that climate and GBV practitioners recognise that GBV severely impacts the ability of women, girls, and gender-diverse people to effectively engage in climate action, but the urgency of this challenge is not reflected in current policies and programmes. Climate change practitioners and environmental activists highlighted the continued lack of action to tackle the climate crisis on the scale that is needed and restrictions on their rights to protest environmental harms without fear of violence, while GBV practitioners, WROs, and women-led climate organisations spoke of the constant need to prove that GBV is occurring and undermining the safety of women, girls, and gender-diverse people, despite clear evidence. This shared experience demonstrates an opportunity to work together to develop holistic programming that addresses climate change and GBV together, advancing more effective policies and programmes that increase the safety, resilience, and security of whole communities.

## GBV AND SEAH

GBV and SEAH are closely related but distinct forms of violence that disproportionately impact women, girls, and gender-diverse people, and which are rooted in inequitable social norms.

This report uses the term **GBV** to refer to any violence committed against women, girls, or gender-diverse people based on their sex or gender presentation. This includes but is not limited to IPV, non-partner violence, sexual violence, economic violence, technology-facilitated violence, child marriage and female genital cutting, among others.

This report uses the term **SEAH** to refer to violence committed against staff or community members by perpetrators in positions of power working in or with development and humanitarian organisations, including private sector companies.

In Cambodia and Lao PDR, a study of 153 environmental human rights defenders found 42% said safety concerns were their greatest barrier to participating in natural resource management.<sup>46</sup>

Women, girls, and gender-diverse people have the right to live in a world free from violence, and all sectors must act against GBV to achieve this goal. Tackling GBV is not only a human rights issue, it also enhances the effectiveness of climate action. This report will explore the interconnectedness of addressing GBV within climate action and how doing so improves the effectiveness of this work. It brings together the expertise of climate practitioners, researchers, donors and WROs working on the front lines of climate change, at the intersection between climate change and GBV. This report highlights the often unseen but indisputable role that GBV plays in preventing the participation of women, girls, and gender-diverse people as leaders, decision-makers, participants and agents of change in climate action. In doing so, it makes the case for greater investment and commitment to holistic climate change programming that includes addressing GBV within the scope of its work. This is crucial for ensuring climate action is informed by a diverse set of expertise, perspectives, and priorities, maximising its reach and impact. It is also essential for ensuring climate action does no harm, and leaves no one behind.



## 2. The impact of GBV on effective climate action



This section explores the impact of GBV across four key areas of climate action: 1) adaptation, mitigation and resilience; 2) response to climate change-induced disasters; 3) climate and environmental activism; and 4) transition to a low-carbon economy. It highlights the critical role that addressing GBV plays in advancing effective and inclusive climate solutions.

## TERMINOLOGY USED IN THIS REPORT

Efforts to prevent and address the impacts of climate change are multiple and diverse in nature. This report focuses on four broad categories of this work. The definitions draw on those from the IPCC glossary.<sup>47</sup>

- **Climate change adaptation, mitigation, and resilience initiatives**, which refers to programming and projects that support communities to adapt and build resilience to the impacts of climate change. It can include activities such as livelihoods initiatives, education and training, and community reforestation and environmental protection activities, among others.
- **Climate change-induced DRM**, which refers to programming and projects which support communities at risk of climate change-induced disasters to understand and reduce current and future disaster risk, and improve disaster preparedness, prevention, and protection, and response, and recovery practices. The primary aim of these efforts is sustainable development and to improve human security, wellbeing and quality of life. These efforts can include early warning systems, the distribution of resources and tools needed to survive, and the provision of temporary housing especially in protracted crises, among others.
- **Climate change activism**, which refers to the diverse work of climate change activists and environmental human rights defenders. The aims of these activists are varied and include but are not limited to drawing attention to climate change and environmental degradation, and advocating for governments and duty bearers to mitigate climate change and environmental degradation, protect communities and equip them with the tools and resources needed to stay safe.
- **A just transition to a low-carbon economy**, which refers to initiatives focused on transitioning countries away from high-carbon to low-carbon economies. The principles of a just transition stress the need for targeted and proactive measures from duty bearers to minimise any negative social, environmental, or economic impacts of a transition and ensure benefits are maximised. Respect and dignity for marginalised groups is a key principle of the just transition. Efforts contributing to this include the construction of green infrastructure projects, the development of green industry and products, and carbon credits, among others.

This report uses the term climate action to refer to some or all of the above initiatives.

## Addressing GBV in Climate Action: Why and How?

This diagram highlights why it is important to address GBV in climate action and outlines some key strategies that might work to achieve this. The four key areas of climate action covered are:

1. **Adaptation, mitigation and resilience**
2. **Response to climate change-induced disasters**
3. **Transition to a low-carbon economy**
4. **Climate and environmental activism**



## 2.1 How GBV impacts climate change adaptation, mitigation and resilience initiatives



Climate change exacerbates existing gender inequalities. This means women, girls, and gender-diverse people often have less access to the resources and skills needed to adapt and build resilience in the face of climate change. Climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience initiatives need to integrate gender equality to avoid the replication of underlying inequalities. They also need to challenge these inequalities to enable women and men to benefit equally from climate action. There is growing buy-in for integrating gender considerations into adaptation programming<sup>48</sup> – for example, supporting women to participate in decision-making spaces – and there are examples of efforts to work at the intersection of GBV and climate change described in this report.<sup>49</sup> However, there is less evidence of comprehensive efforts to prevent and respond to GBV across climate action. Not doing so risks undermining the effectiveness of this work, with one interviewee noting that they had seen climate-related livelihood initiatives “totally fail” when participants withdrew due to safety concerns linked to unaddressed GBV risks, eroding community trust and engagement for the project. On the other hand, integrating GBV prevention and response into programming and policy can support greater impacts, with longer-term sustainability.

### Addressing GBV supports the effectiveness of climate change adaptation, mitigation, and resilience initiatives by:

1. **Ensuring climate action initiatives ‘do no harm’ and enable whole communities to adapt to climate change.** Efforts to support communities to effectively adapt and build resilience to climate change require the participation of all community members. The exclusion of women, girls, and gender-diverse people from these efforts reduces the effectiveness of the activities. Those who are excluded from training about how to adapt to climate change are more likely to continue with environmentally harmful practices or be left out of opportunities to build assets and access the technology needed to improve community livelihoods and resilience. One livelihoods project

in Uganda aimed to move women away from environmentally harmful wetland agriculture by providing them with poultry and cattle for alternative livelihoods in new locations. However, many of the women who tried to engage in these alternative livelihoods were subjected to violence linked to the programme. This included sexual exploitation by male landowners who owned the land needed for these livelihoods, and IPV, including economic violence by husbands who stole their cattle. As a result of these GBV risks, many women chose to disengage from the project and return to the wetlands, where they had previously felt safer.

*“GBV creates additional barriers for women and marginalised groups, including Indigenous peoples and those with disabilities, making it more difficult for them to participate in climate change programmes. The overlap of their gender, disability and Indigenous status exacerbates these challenges. Tackling GBV is crucial for considering all these intersecting issues and ensuring more inclusive and effective climate action.”*

Michelle Chic Gudo, Oxfam

**2. Ensuring resilience, mitigation and adaptation programmes benefit from the expertise of women, girls, and gender-diverse people by including them as decision-makers and leaders in the design and implementation of interventions.**

Women’s inclusion in decision-making and project design has been shown to improve outcomes on natural resource governance, conservation, and adaptation outcomes,<sup>50</sup> as it means the needs and priorities of both women and men are better integrated into interventions. GBV in the form of backlash from partners or community members, along with pre-existing GBV such as IPV, can pose a significant barrier to women’s engagement in leadership and decision-making.<sup>51</sup> Interviews with climate practitioners and WROs in Cambodia and Lao PDR revealed that many women avoided public meetings aimed at developing community approaches to climate shocks due to threats of violence from male community members and husbands. Similarly, in Indonesia, interviewees observed that threats of violence and murder against women leaders was a key barrier to their continued work of building community resilience. Climate programmes seeking

to diversify leadership and decision-making roles in resilience, mitigation and adaptation initiatives should ensure GBV risk mitigation processes are in place and survivors are supported to engage in these roles. These efforts should address the needs of all women, girls, and gender-diverse people, including those who experience other forms of marginalisation, including those with disabilities, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and Indigenous people.

- 3. Supporting community buy-in and long-term sustainability of climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience initiatives.** When communities experience increased risks of GBV due to adaptation, mitigation, and resilience initiatives, it reduces trust and harms the ability of these programmes to continue and sustain impact in the long term. One woman climate activist described how communities do not compartmentalise harms to their safety and security in the same way that a practitioner may see ‘climate change’ and ‘GBV’ as two separate issues. People experience these risks holistically across their lives and may be unwilling to engage in an activity designed to reduce their climate risk if it

puts them at risk of violence. One WRO we spoke to highlighted an initiative in the Pacific focused on moving communities away from areas of coastal erosion, which lost the trust and buy-in of the community when women from the community experienced an increase in GBV from young men based near the new settlement. Efforts to scale up this initiative to other communities were met with resistance from community leaders who had heard of the increased GBV risks women from the initial community had faced following their participation.

4. As with other forms of GBV, SEAH associated with climate interventions can have severe and long-lasting impacts on survivors and their families. These impacts can lead to community distrust, withdrawal of cooperation, and the collapse of projects.<sup>52</sup> The reputation of organisations involved can also be damaged beyond those

communities, reducing their ability to work in other contexts. Although there is limited available data on SEAH committed by project staff in climate programming,<sup>53</sup> these risks have materialised in other contexts. For example, in 2015, a World-Bank funded Uganda Transport Sector Development Project (TSDP) lost its funding following a campaign by the Bigodi community in Uganda (bolstered by international media coverage) which called for the World Bank to address cases of SEAH against teenage girls by construction workers.<sup>54</sup> Programmes should anticipate these risks and put in place accessible and inclusive mechanisms for reporting GBV and referral pathways for survivors, and train staff on how to respond in a survivor-centred way. Programmes should expect that staff may also be victims and survivors of GBV and support them appropriately as they respond.

*“Experiencing GBV or living with the ever-present threat of GBV means that women and families are making complex decisions and managing multiple risks and needs; they may not always put environmental sustainability ahead of their immediate safety”*

Anik Gevers, Specialist Technical Advisor, Independent Consultant



## Climate change, conflict, displacement and GBV

Climate change is a threat multiplier, inflaming underlying drivers of violent conflict such as poverty, food insecurity and inequitable access to resources. In turn, violent conflict reduces communities' capacity to adapt and respond to climate change. The complex links between displacement, climate change and conflict often create cycles of risk, where climate-induced displacement intensifies conflict, and conflict in turn heightens displacement, exacerbating the impact of climate change and environmental degradation.<sup>55</sup> Climate change, violent conflict and displacement all have deeply gendered implications, placing women, girls, and gender-diverse people at increased risk of GBV. Social norms and barriers, including GBV, consistently lead to the exclusion of women, girls and gender-diverse people from male-dominated natural resource management, climate action and conflict mediation platforms, groups and spaces.<sup>56</sup> This exclusion reinforces the risks they face and reduces the likelihood that these risks will be addressed effectively. The climate change-conflict-GBV nexus exists globally.

- In Uganda, drought has caused changes in the migration patterns of pastoral communities seeking food and fresh water for their animals.<sup>57</sup> This displacement drives deadly conflicts between pastoralist communities and landowners, and in some cases has led to increases in cattle raiding between communities. Cattle raiding contributes to cross-border conflict. In some of the most violent conflicts of this nature, cattle raiders rape women and girls from rival communities and may kidnap them and force them into marriage.<sup>58</sup> Where cattle are used for a bride price and climate change drives their scarcity, this may also reinforce harmful norms and lead to men raping girls and forcing them to marry, to avoid needing to pay for bride price.<sup>59</sup>
- In Syria, the impacts of climate change are contributing to instability and conflict. Between 2006 and 2011, there was an extreme drought. The government response,<sup>60</sup> coupled with mass displacement,<sup>61</sup> compounded existing ethnic division and state grievances. Since this period, Syrian women and girls have been subjected to an increase in multiple forms of GBV, including domestic and community violence and conflict-related sexual violence, and face greater barriers to accessing services.<sup>62</sup> Communities trying to recover from conflict were later less able to adapt to the extreme drought in 2020, which subjected over 12 million people to food insecurity, driving further grievances that contributed to violence.<sup>63</sup>
- In Papua New Guinea, around 1.5 million women and girls experience GBV each year linked to intercommunal conflict, political intimidation, IPV, and sorcery accusation-related violence.<sup>64</sup> The country faces threats from climate change, including food insecurity, increased droughts, cyclone severity and other extreme weather events. These are all potential stressors for increased conflict and social tension, and subsequent increases in various forms of GBV as populations compete for diminishing resources and are forced to migrate.<sup>65</sup>



## ↓ BOX 1

Efforts to address climate change, conflict and displacement should involve local women and include strategies to reduce the increased risk of GBV in these situations. Local women, girls, and gender-diverse people are in the strongest position to understand their needs and identify the measures that will be most effective in meeting these.

## 2.2 The impact of GBV on climate-induced disaster risk management



Climate-induced disasters expose women, girls, and gender-diverse people to increased risks of violence perpetrated by intimate partners, non-partners, community members, human traffickers and disaster relief actors, among others.<sup>66</sup> Disaster risk management (DRM), including preparedness and response, aims to keep communities safe. Without considering the protection needs of all community members and the heightened risk women, girls, and gender-diverse people face of GBV, these efforts are not equipped to keep whole communities safe.

The Gender Action Plan<sup>67</sup> to support implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (Sendai GAP) seeks to ensure access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive and rights, and prevention of and response to GBV in the context of disasters. There are also several resources on GBV in DRM that could equally be applied to climate-induced disaster contexts. For example, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action<sup>68</sup> provides significant resources. The Global Protection Cluster's Handbook for Coordinating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Emergencies<sup>68F69</sup> is another useful resource for practitioners.

### Addressing GBV supports climate-induced DRM by:

1. **Supporting existing policy priorities and best practice in DRM focused on 'do no harm' and including whole communities.**

DRM includes a range of activities such as evacuation drills and distribution of key information and resources to support community members in times of crisis. When women, girls, and gender-diverse people are unable to participate in decision-making about these activities or access these resources, they are left

without the tools and resources needed to keep themselves and their families safe. A member of a climate-focused WRO from Indonesia highlighted that survivors of GBV often face significant barriers to participation in disaster preparedness and response activities due to physical injury, stigma and risk of discrimination and backlash. This puts survivors of GBV at particular risk in times of crisis.

In the Pacific Islands, one practitioner reflected that threats of GBV within evacuation centres have been so severe that in some cases, women, girls and gender-diverse people have felt safer facing a category five cyclone in makeshift shelters near the affected area than staying in the formal centres themselves.

In addition, women, girls, and gender-diverse people may be reluctant to participate in disaster response initiatives if these are not deemed safe. Two climate practitioners working in the Pacific recounted stories in which members of the LGBTQIA+ community and sex workers would not go to evacuation centres following cyclones because they faced discrimination and violence from community members and staff. Instead, they remained in unsafe makeshift shelters near the areas they were supposed to be evacuating, putting them in physical danger. One practitioner reflected that the group felt safer facing a category five cyclone than going to an evacuation centre, reflecting the severity of the risks faced. Another practitioner working with communities at risk of landslides in Uganda reported that children with disabilities and their mothers sometimes prefer to stay in locations at risk of disasters than to relocate to unknown

host communities for fear of violence linked to discriminatory norms and beliefs, including those involving sorcery.

Climate change-induced disasters can become protracted crises, especially when communities are recovering from multiple emergencies. In these contexts, communities may be required to stay in temporary housing and internally displaced person (IDP) camps for extended periods of time. Research from other contexts shows that protracted displacement increases the opportunities for men to perpetrate GBV against women and girls with impunity.<sup>70</sup> Interviews with climate practitioners from Uganda, Indonesia and the Pacific highlighted that the experience and risk of GBV can act as a significant barrier to women's and girls' participation in activities that help build and maintain resilience for themselves and their families in the aftermath of a climate-induced disaster.

*“We know that GBV is already happening and is prevalent. When it comes to a crisis like a climate change-induced disaster, the risk is being increased.”*

Dati Fatimah, Gender Consultant, SRI Institute

2. **Freeing up time and effort to go towards other disaster response efforts.** Interviews with Women’s Fund Asia, which partners with multiple WROs across the region, outlined that GBV is so prevalent in the contexts in which they work that allocating funds, time, and effort to support their staff and programme participants who are subjected to this violence is essential. Similar sentiments were raised by a climate practitioner engaged in community DRM in Cambodia. She explained that the cost of supporting survivors of GBV is high, and the prevalence is so great that to protect and support survivors of GBV, scarce resources need to be allocated towards these efforts. Both funder and practitioner argued that preventing GBV is key to reducing the time, money and energy being used to respond to this violence and, in the long-term, will help ensure maximum resources and capacity can be spent tackling other issues associated with DRM.
3. **Enabling local women, girls, and gender-diverse people to contribute to the design and decision-making of climate-disaster management initiatives.** In many

patriarchal contexts, women, girls, and gender-diverse people are already excluded from decision-making and leadership in the design of disaster preparedness and response efforts, meaning these efforts do not benefit from their expertise and perspectives. Practitioners and WRO representatives from Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam and Fiji explained that survivors of GBV face even greater barriers engaging as decision-makers and leaders due to physical injuries, social stigma, and risk of backlash. For survivors who experience other forms of discrimination, such as those with disabilities, older women, widows, Indigenous peoples, people living with HIV and members of the LGBTQIA+ community, these barriers are intensified. Disaster preparedness and response initiatives are most effective when they can draw on the expertise and experiences of diverse community members. Initiatives committed to including diverse members of communities in the design and implementation of these efforts should ensure that GBV (including as a form of backlash) is recognised as a barrier and addressed.

### GBV as a form of loss and damage

Loss and damage are the ‘negative effects of climate change that occur despite mitigation, adaptation and resilience efforts.’<sup>71</sup> There are two main forms of loss and damage that are generally conceptualised:

- Economic: ‘Negative impacts where the costs are quantifiable, such as damage to infrastructure or reduced crop yields.’<sup>72</sup>
- Non-economic: ‘Negative impacts that are not easily traded in markets, and typically harder to measure in monetary terms, such as loss of culture, ecosystem services, and displacement. These tend to be more irreparable and irreversible.’<sup>73</sup>

The impact of climate change in intensifying levels of GBV has been highlighted by women’s rights advocates as a form of non-economic loss and damage.<sup>74</sup> A study on how



## ↓ BOX 2

women and girls experienced loss and damage due to GBV in Bangladesh, Fiji and Vanuatu found women's and children's mental health was negatively impacted, their mobility constrained, and their experiences of sexual violence, domestic abuse, exploitation and trafficking increased due to climate impacts.<sup>75</sup> Research conducted in Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda and Zambia found that women faced heightened risks of sexual violence due to climate change increasing conflicts over resources.<sup>76</sup>

At COP28 in 2023, the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage was operationalised to provide finance to developing countries (as defined by the UNFCCC) particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change. As this form of finance is relatively new, our research did not uncover examples of existing loss and damage programming that incorporates GBV. But as it grows in prominence and scale, it will be important for donors and governments to consider this element to ensure the impact of climate change on women, girls and gender-diverse people is properly accounted and compensated for. For example, loss and damage should include the collection of GEDSI data. The same will apply to activities to address loss and damage through the Pacific Resilience Facility (PRF), once established.

Climate change as a driver of GBV is a key form of non-economic loss and damage, that has not been captured in loss and damage negotiations to date.



## 2.3 How GBV affects activists' efforts to address climate change and environmental degradation

GBV is used to silence and intimidate climate and environmental activists, and human rights defenders working for the environment. While there is limited prevalence data on GBV against these activists, there is extensive anecdotal evidence from interviews globally. Reports highlight that violence against women and girl activists is likely to be severely underestimated due to underreporting and risks of violent retaliation.<sup>77</sup> Violence against climate and environmental activists is highly gendered and often intersects with other forms of discrimination such as racism,<sup>78</sup> ableism<sup>79</sup> and ageism,<sup>80</sup> among others.

## Addressing GBV supports climate and environmental activists to continue their work by reducing risk of harm and backlash

The impact of GBV on climate and environmental activists and defenders can be significant, often leading to self-censorship and, in extreme cases, to leaving climate activism entirely. A global study by Plan International examining the experiences of 1,000 girl activists, including climate and environmental activists, found that the risk of self-censorship among young activists was substantial, both online and offline. Survey results showed that only 50% of girl activists felt comfortable speaking about their activism within their communities for fear of abuse, harassment or ostracism.<sup>81</sup>

GBV can also lead to the breakdown of online networks used by climate and environmental activists to mobilise and communicate. Climate and environmental activists often use online platforms as a primary method of communicating and mobilising locally, regionally, and globally. Where online abuse and harassment causes women and girl activists to feel unsafe online, key online communication and mobilisation channels are at risk of breaking down because activists stop using them. This poses a significant barrier to mobilisation, especially across borders.<sup>82</sup>

There are a variety of reasons why risk and exposure to GBV might cause climate and environmental activists to leave this work or to self-censor. These include but are not limited to:

- **Safety fears** linked to abuse and harassment, including threats of violence (including sexual violence), criminalisation and jailing can reduce the extent to which they engage in activism. These findings are echoed among environmental activists. For example, a San Indigenous Leader and environmental human rights defender from Namibia explained to Amnesty International that she is afraid to walk on her own due to the abuse she is subjected to.<sup>83</sup> She also identifies greater risks of violence because she is Indigenous and so the authorities see her as inferior. She said: “They don’t see me as human as I am a ‘Bushman woman.’” Fears can also extend to the impact on family and community members, who can be threatened due to their relationship to the activist.

In January 2024, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders noted that the impact of intimidation and harassment in online spaces and the media against child activists can be particularly acute, since they may not yet have built up the same levels of resilience, established the same support networks, or had exposure to the same capability building opportunities as their older counterparts.<sup>84</sup> This can cause young women and girl activists to leave online spaces or engage in self-censorship.

- **Ostracism from families and communities** is one factor that can cause women and girls to reduce their engagement in climate and environmental activism. The global study by Plan International also found that fear of ostracism by families and communities posed a significant barrier to girl activists’ continued work.<sup>85</sup> Of the girl activists surveyed, 27% reported that community members expressing negativity towards their activism posed a significant barrier to their continued efforts. In addition, many Indigenous women environmental human rights defenders are

subjected to highly gendered abuse claiming they are bad mothers and threats of having their children taken away.<sup>86</sup> The risk of ostracism from families and communities was echoed by Global Witness's work with women environmentalists.<sup>87</sup>

- **Health-related issues** are another key impact of GBV against climate and environmental activists which may also increase the risk of them stepping away from their work for periods of time. Interviews with women activists working on climate action repeatedly highlighted the emotional and physical toll of abuse and harassment, including threats of physical violence. This toll is so great that some funders such as the Women's Fund Asia have allocated distinct budget lines for self-care to help activists address and remain resilient in the face of this violence, danger, psychological stress and trauma.



## 2.4 How GBV impacts the transition to a low-carbon economy

The transition to a low-carbon economy is essential to addressing climate change, and slowing and reducing its impacts. The outcomes of this transition are not gender neutral. There are opportunities to address GBV, and there are also risks of increased GBV. Only through addressing these risks can we ensure that the transition to a low-carbon economy is a 'just transition' that both benefits and ensures the safety and rights of whole communities.

### Addressing GBV supports efforts to transition to a low-carbon economy by:

- Promoting trust in transition efforts:** SEAH perpetrated by those working on green initiatives such as infrastructure projects or carbon credit projects against members of communities can have severe and long-term impacts on survivors and severely undermine trust in transition efforts. A forest conservation project that generates carbon credits by protecting dryland forests in Kenya exposed community members to severe violence, as highlighted by allegations of extensive SEAH perpetrated by senior members of the company.<sup>88</sup> These allegations were based on testimonies from 31 members of staff and the community, both female and male. In addition to the harm caused to communities, these allegations undermined community trust in the project and generated substantial negative press for the company. A smooth transition to a low-carbon economy relies on the buy-in and support of communities. Abuses of power such as SEAH can have long-term negative impacts on survivors and severely undermine community trust in these efforts, putting the support they need to succeed at risk.
- Improving access to and retention of talent in green industries:** Recent data shows that women working in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) experience high rates of sexual harassment, with 43% of female STEM graduates, 50% of women in science, and 58% of women in academia reporting having experienced sexual harassment.<sup>89</sup> A 2022 survey found

that 58% of female climate scientists who had been subjected to online abuse and harassment experienced a loss of productivity at work, with 25% dreading work.<sup>89F90</sup> Of those who had experienced online abuse, including threats of sexual violence and rape, 21% reported stress-related physical illness, 32% had sleeping problems,<sup>91</sup> 28% experienced depression,

and 62% suffered from anxiety as a result of online abuse.<sup>92</sup> The risk of GBV may discourage talented women with invaluable expertise from entering or remaining in green industry jobs, making it crucial to address GBV to ensure climate initiatives benefit from their diverse experience and expertise and meet the needs of entire populations, including women and girls.

*“Climate change actors should assume that GBV is happening and ask the question, what are we going to do to mitigate, address and prevent GBV? This should be considered within the scope for environmental programmes.”*

Jamie Wen-Besson, Senior Gender Programme Manager, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

### 3. Increasing effectiveness and uptake of green initiatives and infrastructure:

Green initiatives aimed at supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy should consider the potential risks of GBV to ensure women and girls can safely access them. For example, promoting public transport over private cars needs to account for the specific GBV risks women face while travelling – whether from other passengers or staff, or while walking home from transit stops. These risks can discourage women from using public transport, limiting their effectiveness. In Bhopal, India, 88% of 1,988 surveyed women commuters experienced harassment on public transport (40% on a regular basis), yet 100% of the 257 drivers and conductors interviewed believed that harassment on public transport was not a prevalent issue.<sup>93</sup> To promote the safe uptake of green initiatives and infrastructure such as public transport, programmes must work with women and girls in communities to identify the risks and develop appropriate and effective mitigation measures.

### 4. Mitigating the risks of violence associated with the transition and promoting community resilience:

Emerging evidence shows SEAH risks in some clean energy industries, which are often male-dominated or require large-scale construction. Mining for natural resources used in renewable energy production, such as lithium, cobalt, manganese, platinum, aluminium and copper, has been linked to human rights abuses, including instances of GBV.<sup>94</sup>

The transition to a green economy is also likely to result in job losses within sectors that have adverse environmental impacts. Many of these sectors, including coal mining, transport, automotive engineering and power production are male dominated. Evidence globally finds that unemployment and financial instability increase the risk of intimate partner violence (IPV) perpetrated by men who are unable to find or keep a job. For example, research in Bangalore, India found that women whose partners went from stable employment to difficulties finding employment were 1.7 times more

likely to experience IPV than women whose husbands maintained stable employment.<sup>95</sup>

Identifying and mitigating the risks of GBV associated with the transition to a low-carbon economy is essential for supporting whole communities to build resilience and recover from changes that may negatively impact them.

### GBV within polluting and environmentally damaging industries

There are well-documented links between polluting or environmentally damaging industries and GBV. Unfortunately, emerging evidence also shows that similar risks apply in some clean energy industries, which are often male-dominated or require large-scale construction – such as harassment of Indigenous women in Guatemala protesting the construction of a large hydropower project.<sup>96</sup> In the transition to a low-carbon economy, the dynamics that drive this violence must be addressed to ensure these efforts ‘do no harm’. Examples environmentally damaging industries with links to GBV include:

**Natural resource mining:** Research with 21 female and two male leaders of IndustriALL-affiliated unions in South Africa, Colombia and Canada found that sexual harassment and sexual violence are pervasive in the mining industry.<sup>97</sup> This is linked to the isolated remoteness of mining sites, which makes it easier for male colleagues, managers, and supervisors to perpetrate GBV against women workers with impunity. These findings are echoed by global research which highlights that women in mining areas are often subjected to violence both in the workplace and at home by intimate partners, with harmful social norms among some mining communities contributing to the continuity of violence.<sup>98</sup> Mining and extractive industries are also associated with increases in other forms of GBV. In Kédougou, Senegal, over 1,000 women and girls were trafficked into forced prostitution near gold mines, having been deceived by promises of work in Europe.<sup>99</sup> Mining for natural resources used in renewable energy production, such as lithium, cobalt, manganese, platinum, aluminium, and copper, has been linked to human rights abuses, including instances of GBV.<sup>100</sup>

**Fossil fuel extraction:** Fossil fuel extraction projects have been associated with a surge in sexual and physical violence against women and gender minorities, especially against Indigenous women. The arrival of transient male workers living in temporary settlements on oil and gas fields along with other fossil fuel infrastructure is often associated with increased allegations of rape, sexual assault, human trafficking and other violent crimes. For example, Greenpeace reports that during North Dakota’s Bakken oil boom, an influx of temporary male workers was associated with 125 cases of missing Indigenous women.<sup>101</sup>

**Industrial agriculture:** Industrial agriculture is a leading cause of air pollution, water pollution, soil contamination and pesticide toxicity.<sup>102</sup> Women make up almost half of the agricultural labour force globally and – and as much as 70% in regions such as Sub-Saharan Africa. Workplace GBV is systemic in the agricultural sector, with research showing that female agricultural workers worldwide are exposed to high levels of GBV perpetrated by supervisors and colleagues in the fields, plantations and greenhouses of agribusiness. In Ethiopia, 86% of female horticultural workers have been subjected to some form of sexual

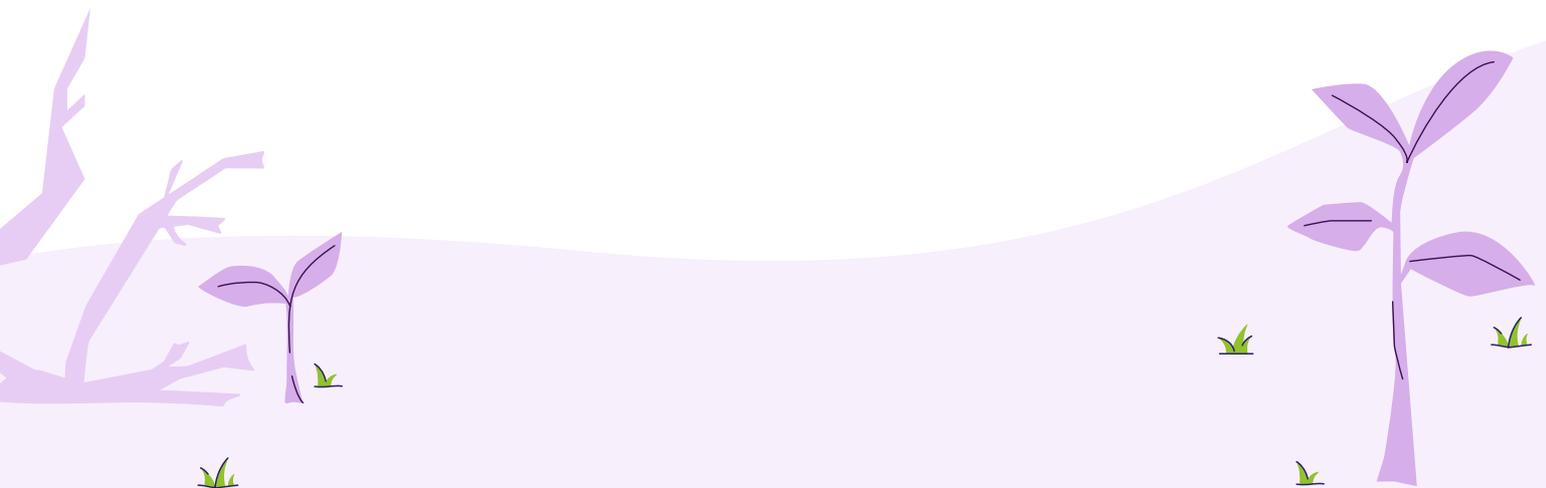


## ↓ BOX 3

harassment on farms. In addition to workplace harassment, research in Nepal, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mali, and Tanzania found that domestic violence is widespread on small family farms.<sup>103</sup>

**Garment manufacture:** The textile industry is responsible for 10% of annual global carbon emissions, and contributes considerably to the production of plastic microfibres, half a million tons of which end up in the ocean each year.<sup>104</sup> Testimonies collected from 90 women working in 30 factories across three major garment-producing areas in India, which supply at least 12 global fashion brands and retailers, found that 100% of these garment workers had witnessed or been subjected to GBV in their workplaces.<sup>105</sup> This violence was perpetrated by male supervisors and managers. Similar trends are found in Bangladesh, where one study highlighted that 60% of garment and textile workers had been subjected to violence, harassment and abusive behaviours in the previous 12 months. In addition, garment workers reported that 34% and 43% had experienced physical and sexual domestic violence respectively in the past year.<sup>106</sup>

**Construction:** The construction sector is the largest emitter of greenhouse gasses, accounting for 37% of global emissions.<sup>107</sup> Construction of major infrastructure projects is known to increase the risk of GBV, including SEAH against women community members and female workers, often by temporary workers who come without their families and have large disposable incomes relative to the local community, making it easier for them to perpetrate sexual violence and exploitative transactional relationships against local women. In addition, female construction workers are at high risk of GBV by colleagues and supervisors. Research in India found that one in three construction workers were women and 74% of these had been subjected to sexual harassment in the workplace including from supervisors, contractors and site owners. Women who were heads of households and had children were at particular risk of sexual and economic exploitation.<sup>108</sup>

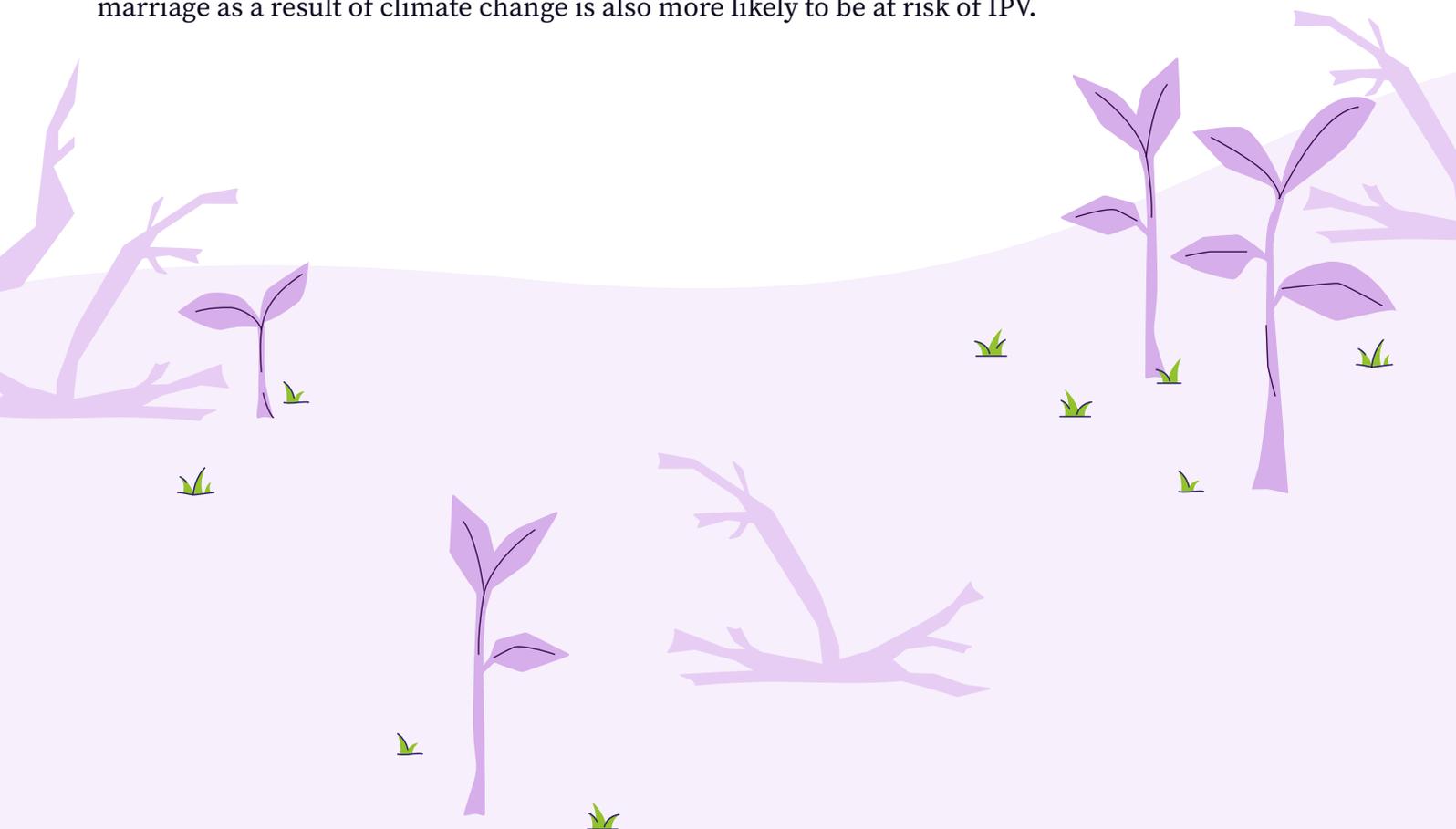


## 2.5 Types and drivers of GBV linked to climate change and climate action



Climate change is a threat multiplier, exacerbating the conditions that enable perpetrators to commit GBV, often with impunity. When designed without consideration of the needs and priorities of women, girls, and gender-diverse people, climate action in all its forms has the potential to increase the risk of more frequent, severe and additional forms of GBV. This report identified a gap in documented evidence around the specific risks and prevalence of GBV against women and girls who experience multiple forms of marginalisation, including those with disabilities and those from the LGBTQIA+ and Indigenous communities. The evidence gathered for this report is broadly anecdotal. However, evidence from other contexts demonstrates that the risks of GBV are more extreme for women, girls, and gender-diverse people with disabilities,<sup>109</sup> Indigenous communities,<sup>110</sup> the LGBTQIA+ community,<sup>111</sup> widows, older women,<sup>112</sup> people living with HIV, those in rural locations<sup>113</sup> and adolescents,<sup>114</sup> among others. Investing in research on the specific risks faced by women, girls, and gender-diverse people who experience multiple forms of marginalisation is essential for informed, inclusive climate action.

The following table summarises examples of different types of GBV linked to various types of climate action. Please note these examples are not exhaustive, and there may be instances of forms of GBV occurring in relation to types of climate action where we have not identified specific examples, as each context is different. There is also often overlap between different forms of GBV, and cases may not fit neatly into one category. For example, an adolescent girl experiencing child marriage as a result of climate change is also more likely to be at risk of IPV.



## IPV and domestic violence

### CLIMATE ADAPTATION, MITIGATION AND RESILIENCE INITIATIVES<sup>115</sup>

- Climate change and environmental degradation can increase economic instability, leading to a heightened risk of IPV as traditional roles and power dynamics are disrupted.<sup>116</sup>
- Analysis of nearly one million assault incidents in New South Wales in Australia (2006-2018) revealed that violence, particularly domestic violence, increased with warmer temperatures. The impact of extreme heat on domestic violence was more pronounced than on other types of violent crime.<sup>117</sup>
- When women and gender-diverse people engage in climate programming, shifts in leadership and economic roles may also increase the risk of IPV, particularly in communities with rigid gender norms.
- Culturally insensitive adaptation, mitigation and resilience programmes can also increase the risk of IPV. For example, in Uganda, a livelihoods programme provided cows to women as an alternative livelihood to farming on the wetlands. However, cultural norms that view cows as men's property for paying dowries led many husbands to steal the cows and use them to marry additional wives.

### PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE-INDUCED DISASTERS

- IPV and domestic violence often increase following climate change-induced disasters. In the Philippines, 15% of respondents in a post-Typhoon Haiyan survey reported knowing someone who sustained injuries from domestic violence.<sup>118</sup>
- Disasters also heighten IPV risks due to family displacement, economic stress and social tensions, as seen in post-disaster surveys in Tonga<sup>119</sup> and Samoa.<sup>120</sup>
- In Fiji, one WRO explained that cyclones reduce fish stocks, meaning that women must spend longer in the water to collect enough fish. This has caused some husbands to accuse women of promiscuity, and to use this as a justification for committing IPV against them.<sup>121</sup>
- In a study on men's health and safety in Mongolia, rural men reported extreme climate events (deep freezes killing livestock) were a primary trigger of IPV.<sup>122</sup>

## ↓ IPV AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

## ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM

- When activism is seen as defying social norms, activists can face violence and abuse from partners and family members.
- According to a survey of Women Human Rights Defenders in Central America, 5% of all attacks against women human rights defenders were committed by actors within their immediate environment, particularly family members.<sup>123</sup>

## TRANSITION TO A LOW-CARBON ECONOMY

- The transition to low-carbon economies can increase IPV and domestic violence due to job losses in polluting industries, as seen in coal-mining communities in Zambia's 'Old Copperbelt',<sup>124</sup> the US, Poland and the UK<sup>125</sup>, where unemployment led to financial stress, household tensions and increased violence.
- When women take on new roles in the transition to a low-carbon economy, and in doing so challenge traditional gender stereotypes, the risk of GBV may increase. The data around this remains limited and is likely to be highly context-specific, depending on norms and stereotypes around women's roles. It is also possible that there could be reductions in IPV due to women's employment in these sectors, particularly over the longer term. For example, 'solar mamas' in India and 'wonder women' in Indonesia have used roles in renewable energy to transform oppressive social practices such as dowries, child marriage and domestic violence. In Indonesia, surveys conducted after 12 months of the 'wonder women' programme found that 21% of women who had participated felt more empowered within their families and were taking on a greater role in household decision-making.<sup>126</sup>

## Non-partner sexual violence

## CLIMATE ADAPTATION, MITIGATION AND RESILIENCE INITIATIVES

- Environmental degradation can significantly increase the risk of non-partner sexual violence. Interviews with practitioners working in the Pacific and South Asia highlighted that issues like water salination can force women and girls to walk longer distances to collect fresh water, often in the dark, which may increase their risk of attack.<sup>127</sup>



## ↓ NON-PARTNER SEXUAL VIOLENCE

- In displacement settings, women are at greater risk of violence from host communities who view them as outsiders. People with disabilities are particularly at risk; for example, one interviewee told us that in Vietnam, they knew of a situation where a man raped a girl who was deaf while she collected firewood. This man used the fact she was unable to call for help or identify him to commit this crime with impunity.
- When climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience initiatives fail to accommodate the needs of women, girls, and gender-diverse people with disabilities, they are put at greater risk of being subjected to GBV.<sup>128</sup>

## PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE-INDUCED DISASTERS

- Non-partner sexual violence often increases after climate-induced disasters. For example, after the 2013 floods in Fiji, there was a rise in sexual violence, particularly against unaccompanied women.<sup>129</sup>
- Similar risks were reported following the 2018 floods in Lao PDR, where family separations and overcrowding led to higher rates of sexual violence.<sup>130</sup> Surveys found that 27% of people had heard of someone who had been raped following the floods.<sup>131</sup>
- Children make up a high proportion of displaced people and are at particular risk of sexual violence and exploitation following disasters. This was seen after the Pidie Jaya earthquake and Bima floods in Indonesia in 2016,<sup>132</sup> when adolescent girls and boys reported they were subjected to increases in sexual harassment due to unsafe temporary housing arrangements.<sup>133</sup>
- Two climate practitioners working in the Pacific recounted stories in which members of the LGBTQIA+ community and sex workers would not go to evacuation centres following cyclones because they faced discrimination and violence from community members and staff.

## ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM

- Women climate and environmental activists worldwide face sexual violence, particularly by armed groups and security forces. For example, soldiers in Nigeria raped and killed members of the Escravos Women's Coalition,<sup>134</sup> and in the Philippines, sexual assault was common during police raids on women activists.<sup>135</sup> In Latin America and the Caribbean, environmental defenders have faced sexual abuse during violent evictions.<sup>136</sup> In some cases, women human rights defenders working



## ↓ NON-PARTNER SEXUAL VIOLENCE

for the environment were physically and sexually assaulted by special police forces or paramilitary groups contracted by extractive companies. In addition, anecdotal evidence highlights how girl climate activists as young as 11 years old have been spammed with pornography and hateful messages, and had their accounts hacked.<sup>137</sup>

- There is growing evidence that activists are at significant risk of violence from their communities, especially highly patriarchal ones, when they challenge social expectations about how a woman should behave.<sup>138</sup> In some cases, community violence also involves threats towards the families of women and girl activists.

### TRANSITION TO A LOW-CARBON ECONOMY

- Risks of non-partner sexual violence can also increase through initiatives to support communities' transition to clean energy.
- For example, while solar lamps are often promoted to enhance safety<sup>139</sup> and reduce GBV risks, their impact is mixed. In Haiti, an evaluation found that women's perceptions of safety either stayed the same or worsened due to broader security issues.<sup>140</sup> Solar lamps also increased activities outside the home after dark, raising concerns about possible unintended GBV risks.<sup>141</sup>

## Trafficking for sexual exploitation, forced and bonded labour

### CLIMATE ADAPTATION, MITIGATION AND RESILIENCE INITIATIVES

- Climate change is multiplying the factors that can drive trafficking, including loss of livelihoods and poverty. For example, in Bangladesh and Indonesia, traffickers exploit women and girls from communities affected by rising sea levels, luring them with false job promises, only to trap them in bonded labour abroad where they face increased risks of sexual and physical violence.<sup>142</sup>
- Further, a growing body of evidence highlights the role of climate change as a threat multiplier for child labour, particularly in the agriculture sector where 70% of all child labour is located.<sup>143</sup> Research from Cambodia found that child labour is often used as a buffer against shocks such as drought, flood, and crop failure. Child labour that keeps children out of school is likely to exacerbate the risks of violence faced by children, including GBV.



↓ TRAFFICKING FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, FORCED AND BONDED LABOUR

PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE-INDUCED DISASTERS

- The destruction caused by climate change-induced disasters, such as typhoons, hurricanes and tsunamis, destroys assets, leads to mass displacement and causes economic hardship. It also exacerbates inequalities, leaving women and girls at much higher risk of enslavement and trafficking for sexual exploitation and bonded labour.<sup>144</sup> These risks are further heightened for those staying in temporary shelters.<sup>145</sup> After Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, reports of trafficking for sexual exploitation involving adolescent girls and boys rose significantly.<sup>146</sup>

TRANSITION TO A LOW-CARBON ECONOMY

- The Clean Energy Council reports increased risks of modern slavery in the supply chains that support the renewable energy sector, particularly solar, wind and lithium-ion battery production.<sup>147</sup> Modern slavery is often associated with GBV.

**Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment**

CLIMATE ADAPTATION, MITIGATION AND RESILIENCE INITIATIVES

- SEAH can occur when power imbalances and unequal access to resources are not addressed in climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience programmes. In Uganda, one interviewee observed that women and girls may be forced to exchange sex for food when environmental degradation destroys livelihoods, while field staff and communities can also face SEAH risks from those implementing climate initiatives.<sup>148</sup>

PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE-INDUCED DISASTERS

- SEAH often increases in climate-induced disasters due to the power dynamics and resource scarcity that exist in complex emergency responses. In Fiji, SEAH increased during the 2012 floods as women tried to meet their basic needs.<sup>149</sup> When Cyclone Freddy hit Malawi in 2023, women in IDP camps reported they were sexually harassed by aid workers, and asked to perform sexual acts in exchange for aid.<sup>150</sup> Similar trends have been identified in Mozambique following Cyclone Idai, where local leaders demanded sex from women in exchange for having their names added to the aid distribution list.<sup>151</sup>



## ↓ SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, ABUSE AND HARASSMENT

## TRANSITION TO A LOW-CARBON ECONOMY

- There are risks of increased SEAH associated with large renewable energy and green infrastructure projects such as wind farms, hydropower stations and solar plants.<sup>152</sup> Some of the GBV risks associated with the construction phase for large renewable energy projects could include remote locations, security personnel, male workers transporting goods and workers on temporary contracts.

## Child marriage

## CLIMATE ADAPTATION, MITIGATION AND RESILIENCE INITIATIVES

- Loss of livelihoods and economic precarity associated with environmental degradation and climate change can lead to an increase in child marriage. During the 2010-2011 Horn of Africa droughts, families struggling to survive exchanged underage girls for livestock and so there was 'one less mouth to feed'. This activity was fuelled by harmful gender social norms that intersect with experiences of poverty.<sup>153</sup> Child marriage, often involving much older men, significantly raises the risk of IPV, with girls married before 15 nearly twice as likely to experience IPV.<sup>154</sup>

## PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE-INDUCED DISASTERS

- In East Africa,<sup>155</sup> Malawi<sup>156</sup> and Bangladesh,<sup>157</sup> child marriage rates rose after floods destroyed crops and worsened economic hardship. Families often use child marriage as a coping strategy to reduce financial burdens or secure a bride price. In Bangladesh, 45% of respondents linked early marriage to climate-induced disasters as a way to address poverty,<sup>158</sup> while post-disaster contexts also exposed girls to higher levels of violence due to unpaid dowries.



## Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C)

### PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE-INDUCED DISASTERS

- The link between female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) and climate change is context-dependent. An interview with a practitioner working to end FGM/C highlighted that in some contexts, FGM/C increases following climate change-induced disasters, as schools and other protective mechanisms that monitor and prevent FGM/C are closed. In contexts of forced displacement, FGM/C may come to represent a link to a community's roots and thus increase in prevalence. In other contexts, displacement can lead to a reduction in FGM/C, either because displaced communities are trying to better fit in with host communities or because it stops being a priority.
- The IUCN have received reports that in some contexts, girls who have avoided FGM/C have been ostracised and excluded from decision-making and opportunities associated with climate action.

## Online harassment, abuse, disinformation and smear campaigns

### ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM

- Women climate activists face significant online abuse. Young women and girl activists, including those in environmental activism, are at particular risk of online harassment, blackmail and deepfake attacks.<sup>159</sup> High-profile activists such as Greta Thunberg have been targeted by networks tied to the fossil fuel industry.<sup>160</sup> Environmental journalists from Ghana also report that online threats heighten fears of physical attacks, often forcing them to publish anonymously for safety.<sup>161</sup>
- Disinformation and smear campaigns are commonly used to silence women activists worldwide.<sup>162</sup> A survey of 485 women human rights defenders in 67 countries found that one in three had faced false accusations.<sup>163</sup> Although specific data for climate activists is lacking, high profile activists including Greta Thunberg have been the targets of smear campaigns.<sup>164</sup>

## Threats of violence and death

### ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM

- A global analysis of GBV against women environmental defenders found that many face risks of femicide and prolonged death threats, often sexually violent and racist, intended to stop their work challenging corporations.<sup>165</sup> Indonesian activists have received threats after protesting a coal plant, with dead mice and blood left at their headquarters as a warning. An Indigenous environmental defender in Honduras sent her children away after threats of retaliatory violence before she was killed in 2016.<sup>166</sup>

### TRANSITION TO A LOW-CARBON ECONOMY

- Large green infrastructure projects can increase violence against women leaders, particularly Indigenous activists. For example, in Guatemala, Indigenous women protesting a hydropower project in their role as ‘guardians of the land and water’<sup>167</sup> reported harassment and threats from the dam’s construction workers due to their opposition.<sup>168</sup>

## Killing

### PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE TO CLIMATE CHANGE-INDUCED DISASTERS

- There is some evidence to suggest extreme heat can lead to instances of intimate partner femicide. For example, in Spain between 2008 and 2016, extreme heat was associated with increased IPV risk and intimate partner femicide one to three days following the event.<sup>169</sup>

### ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM

- A 2019 study found over 1,558 environmental defenders were killed between 2002 and 2017.<sup>170</sup> In 2021, Global Witness reported that one in 10 of those killed were women, with nearly two-thirds being Indigenous.<sup>171</sup> These numbers are likely underreported. Environmental journalism is also one of the most dangerous types of journalism (after war reporting), with 29 journalists murdered in the past decade, including Daphne Caruana Galizia in Malta and Maria Efigenia Vásquez Astudillo in Colombia.<sup>172</sup>

# 3. What works to address GBV in climate action



This report found limited documented evidence of what works to address GBV through climate action. However, interviews with WROs and other practitioners working to address GBV in these contexts helped identify practice-based learning, examples and recommendations of efforts that can be explored based on what already exists. This research identified a significant gap in rigorously evaluated, long-term climate action programmes that were designed to address GBV as part of their scope. This is a key area for future exploration and investment.

The following sections provide an overview of different types of initiatives that climate action could consider when seeking to address GBV. In practice, to ensure an initiative is tailored to the needs of communities and in line with best practice, it should be developed in collaboration with GBV practitioners and women, girls and gender-diverse people from a range of backgrounds in the local community. The examples shared are not exhaustive, but provide a starting point for climate practitioners exploring opportunities to integrate GBV programming into their work. The case studies showcase the work that WROs and other actors are doing to protect women, girls and gender-diverse people from increased risks of GBV and to support their participation in a range of climate action.



### 3.1 Integrating efforts to end GBV within climate change adaptation and resilience

Examples of ways to integrate GBV into climate change adaptation, mitigation and resilience efforts include:

#### **Integrating GBV into Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), national gender action plans and national adaptation plans.**

The Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) prioritised GBV prevention as part of its NDC to the Paris Agreement (2015).<sup>173</sup> The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) supported RMI to develop a gender action plan encompassing GBV prevention and response; improved access to sexual and reproductive health; and women's economic empowerment.<sup>174</sup> Putting in place cross-departmental national policies helps to drive policy coherence between GBV and climate change, and can therefore support better adaptation, mitigation and resilience outcomes through mitigating against the negative impacts of GBV on them. See [Box 4](#) for further examples of NDCs which refer to GBV.

#### **Ensuring the meaningful participation of women, girls and gender-diverse people throughout all stages of climate action.**

Involving women and girls, including through local women's groups and specialist GBV support services, in shaping the design and delivery of climate action can help integrate GBV prevention. For example, in Somalia, Action for Women and Children Concern (AWCC) partnered with women's groups to integrate GBV prevention into community climate resilience plans.<sup>175</sup> Women were supported to engage in the design and planning of the programme through committees and discussions, the implementation of activities, and evaluation. The project prioritised women's safety and wellbeing, and partnered with local women's rights groups to ensure that climate resilience plans included measures

to prevent and respond to GBV. Local groups are often best placed to anticipate and identify context specific GBV risks that could impede the project's effectiveness so they can be addressed. Supporting participation and leadership should include an analysis of how this could result in increased GBV risks, and put in place measures to mitigate against this, such as working with men and boys to challenge harmful norms (see below).

**Ensuring GBV expertise is embedded in implementation teams, and introducing training on gender and GBV prevention and response for all staff involved in implementing climate change programmes.**

Several interviewees mentioned that a challenge for integrating GBV into programmes can be that staff and communities do not always have a shared understanding of what constitutes GBV and where risk factors may emerge. Including GBV expertise in programmes, and building wider understanding among staff and communities, can help to reduce the risk that GBV will undermine adaptation, mitigation and resilience initiatives. This also supports the buy-in and participation of the whole community.

The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) in Lao PDR has implemented a policy where any fieldwork, data collection or work with local authorities includes gender training, with sessions on GBV prevention and response, including access to justice.<sup>176</sup> They have also created safe spaces where colleagues can ask questions about GBV. Challenges remain in implementation as not all settings have good referral mechanisms if GBV is reported, so approaches need to put these in place as well.

**Ensuring the specific needs of groups experiencing intersecting forms of marginalisation are considered.** Interviewees highlighted instances where women and girls who face multiple forms of discrimination due to factors such as sexuality, gender identity,

age and disability were particularly at risk of both GBV and being excluded from climate programming. Climate programmes should seek to identify and mitigate these different GBV risks.

In Vietnam, the Centre for Rural Development has developed parent-children groups for children with disabilities to make sure that these children and their carers have access to information about climate impacts.<sup>177</sup> They can be excluded from mainstream community groups where climate change adaptation, mitigation and resilience are discussed, due to taboos and fathers who do not want their wives or children with disabilities to participate in public spaces. GBV is included in these discussions, and the programme encourages fathers to engage with the disability-inclusive groups and understand their positive impact, including in supporting greater understanding of how to adapt and build resilience to climate change.

**Implementing social norms programming to challenge harmful norms that govern behaviour in communities and can drive and normalise GBV.**

These norms can prevent women, girls, and gender-diverse people from participating in conservation and environmental management. There are several examples of how challenging harmful social norms that contribute to GBV and gender inequality can help improve participation in climate action, which in turn has been shown to improve climate and environmental outcomes.<sup>178</sup> Analysis by CARE International found that climate interventions that engaged men and boys are effective, by encouraging them to support women taking up leadership roles.<sup>179</sup>

For example, the Hariyo Ban programme<sup>180</sup> focused on supporting women's leadership in sustainable natural resource management in Nepal. It identified GBV as a significant barrier

to women's participation and sought to address this by engaging men and boys as equality and social inclusion champions.<sup>181</sup> The interventions were found to be effective at increasing support for, and levels of, women and marginalised groups in decision-making on natural resource management, challenging harmful social norms and increasing action to prevent GBV through communities and local policies.

The key learnings from this programme were to use a Differential Impact Assessment and Response Planning framework<sup>182</sup> as a participatory approach to assess and plan for risks of GBV and inequality; to support 'male role models' approaches where men are trained to become activists and advocates for gender equality; and to institutionalise gender equality and social inclusion at multiple levels – with community members; with local, provincial and federal government decision-makers; and with the staff of partner organisations involved in programme delivery.

In Kenya, the Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association ([KWCA](#)) and the Taita Taveta Wildlife Conservancies Association ([TTWCA](#)) are working together to support women to meaningfully and safely participate in conservation and environmental management.

In 2023, they were awarded a [RISE grant](#) to develop a programme that challenges harmful social norms and improves the capacity of partners to address GBV within their programmes and conservation efforts.<sup>182F</sup>

This includes efforts to prevent IPV and non-partner physical and psychological GBV that is increasingly faced by women rangers working to manage and protect conservation areas. It also includes efforts to support male allies (men in the community who have committed

to support gender equality), who are often confronted with verbal abuse for supporting women's participation in these spaces.

In Cambodia, the Regional Community Forestry Training Centre ([RECOFTC](#)) and Gender and Development for Cambodia ([GADC](#)) received a RISE grant in 2023 to support women's participation in community-protected areas and forest management by addressing harmful social norms that lead to GBV. This project includes engaging men and boys to challenge negative attitudes around women's involvement in environmental protection and harmful behaviour from husbands and male leaders.

#### **Capacity building of public officers to end GBV against women working in eco-tourism.**

In 2023, Espacio de Encuentro de las Culturas Originarias ([EECO](#)) and [WWF Mexico](#) received a RISE grant to address high levels of GBV in coastal eco-tourism. This programme includes raising awareness of the linkages between GBV, environmental degradation and climate change, and building the capacities of public officers to prevent and respond to GBV in this context. During implementation, the project focused on working with local communities to develop community safety plans to address key issues, such as working with lifeguards in Beach Management Units to install panic buttons, and address the sexual exploitation of children and GBV challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ individuals.<sup>183</sup>

Addressing the links between GBV and environmental degradation helps communities to build resilience and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

## Responses to GBV and climate change in Mexico

Mexico's coastline is suffering the effects of climate change, such as the destruction of the coastline and coral reefs and impacts on local flora and fauna including sea turtles and birds. The eco-tourism sector fosters employment in communities impacted by climate change, including Indigenous and Afro-Mexican communities, building their resilience while protecting the environment and garnering support for environmental protection. Women working on climate change face persistent risks of GBV, which can limit their participation in the sector, reducing its potential to build the resilience of the whole community.



Espacio de Encuentro de las Culturas Originarias (EECO), a women's rights and environmental advocacy organisation in Mexico works in partnership with WWF to address GBV and strengthen resilience and participation of women in the local ecotourism sector affected by climate change. EECO-WWF Mexico currently works with 70 women, including Indigenous, Afro-descendant and LGBTQIA+ women in the coastal states of Oaxaca, Quintana Roo and Yucatan.

### HOW GBV AFFECTS WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN ECOTOURISM JOBS

- Some guides experience IPV and are forced to leave their jobs due to pressure from their partners who do not want them to work.
- Environmental degradation and climate change are fuelling high competition in the tourism sector as fewer locations become suitable. This increases pressures which



## ↓ CASE STUDY: RESPONSES TO GBV AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN MEXICO

drive some men in the sector to use defamation and harm against women they are competing with for work. Women guides experience harassment and discrimination, including from some tourists who prefer men as guides.

- Women guides are also at risk of sexual abuse and/or harassment from both tourists and others in the sector.
- Environmental degradation means that tourism service providers have to travel greater distances to increasingly isolated destinations to find animals such as turtles and whales, for birdwatching, and to see reefs, which increases women's vulnerability and the risk of GBV.

## HOW THE PROJECT ADDRESSES GBV

- **GBV risk assessment:** The project conducts GBV risk assessments for women guides and facilitates the design of security plans to address these risks. These plans include safety, awareness raising and training activities for tourism service providers.
- **Challenging harmful social norms:** The project works with different groups in the community to challenge harmful social norms through videos, radio broadcasts and discussions. For example, they work with men in the tourism sector to challenge harmful attitudes towards women colleagues. Their work also sensitises tourists on the importance of supporting women in their work as guides to enable their economic resilience. Finally, it trains women to recognise different types of violence, find safety, understand their rights, and know how to seek support and report incidents.
- **Collaboration with authorities:** The organisation collaborates with municipal authorities to organise accompaniment by security guards so that women guides are less exposed to the risk of violence in their work. The organisation used to work with groups that monitor and release turtles at night, which exposes them to risks from turtle egg looters, threatening the safety and integrity of the women guides. Now municipal authorities are being asked to support the women guides in carrying out their work.
- **Improved case management:** EECO also collaborates with the municipal authorities to provide psychological and legal care, first aid, and protection to women who have experienced violence. It promotes spaces for the care and support of women by other women.



 CASE STUDY: RESPONSES TO GBV AND CLIMATE CHANGE IN MEXICO

## RESULTS

The project has had initial success in raising the visibility of GBV in the coastal tourism sector, raising awareness, and empowering women to report cases. It has also contributed to creating networks of solidarity and support among the women guides, helping them to access safety in the face of GBV. Project leaders anticipate that GBV will enable more women to participate and sustain their engagement in the sector, widening the reach and impact of the work to reduce the environmental impact of the tourism industry.

Source: Interview with Tzinnia Carranza, representative of EECO and project coordinator.

### Supporting women's resilience by combating GBV in Bangladesh's mangrove forests

Rising sea levels and increased salinity in Bangladesh's mangrove forests are negatively impacting biodiversity and livelihoods, forcing many men to migrate to cities and leaving women as primary breadwinners. Women often work 12 to 14 hours daily in the salinated waters, and it is estimated that over 70% of these women face GBV, including child marriage, trafficking and risks of attack, while searching for fresh water. The polluted water also causes reproductive health issues, which can in turn increase instances of IPV.

The Badabon Sangho Mangrove Forest Initiative aims to support women's groups and Indigenous communities in building resilience to climate change and environmental degradation. GBV is a central part of how women and girls are experiencing the impacts of climate change, and building their resilience to the impacts will be ineffective if they fail to take this into account.

#### HOW THE PROGRAMME ADDRESSES GBV

A total of 129 women-led groups have been established, each involving around 35 women. The groups include women from remote areas, women with disabilities and Indigenous women, and the programme is currently working on strengthening the inclusivity of the programme. These women's groups meet weekly to discuss challenges and identify activities to overcome them. They also organise protests, rallies and press conferences together to raise issues of environmental degradation. Activities include:

- **Providing leadership training and organising women and girls into groups and federations.** These groups hold monthly or bimonthly meetings to strengthen their self-organisation, decision-making and collective action. They provide leadership training and coaching to improve members' public speaking skills.



### ↓ CASE STUDY: SUPPORTING WOMEN'S RESILIENCE BY COMBATING GBV IN BANGLADESH'S MANGROVE FORESTS

- **Installing over 200 freshwater tanks** in villages to reduce the need for women to travel long distances to collect water, during which they are at increased risk of GBV.
- **Skills training** in livelihoods, agriculture and leadership, as well as seed funding so that women can buy climate-tolerant seeds to grow food.
- **Awareness raising** on GBV among the women they work with, discussing the different types of GBV that women face, their rights, and the services available to support survivors.
- **Legal support to GBV survivors.** Every week a female lawyer joins the groups to provide training on reporting GBV and seeking justice. She is also available to support survivors to report instances of violence to government officials and the commissioner if they wish.

#### RESULTS

The programme enhances climate resilience by:

- **Increasing buy-in through community engagement**, including inviting partners to some of the meetings to discuss the wider issues faced by the community. This improves buy-in and understanding from husbands, who may otherwise be resistant to their wives participating in the programme. Engaging women in environmental work increases its reach and impact.
- **Improving disaster preparedness and response efforts.** This includes engaging youth groups and training them on how to support women in times of disaster, improve their safety and reduce the risk of GBV, such as by providing shelter with separate toilets for women. In addition, groups facilitate disaster risk assessment mapping at the village level considering the gender-based needs and constraints of women and girls. This improves the inclusivity and impact of disaster response work.
- **Advocating with local government and services** including the health department, fisheries department and local administrations to share women's experiences related to climate change and GBV, raise awareness of the challenges they face, and highlight the actions needed to improve their safety. Influencing decision-makers can result in further resources and measures to address GBV in the context of climate change.

## ↓ CASE STUDY: SUPPORTING WOMEN'S RESILIENCE BY COMBATING GBV IN BANGLADESH'S MANGROVE FORESTS

### CHALLENGES

- Further networking at global level. Being a national, women groups-based organisation, Badabon Sangho has limited networking globally. Increasing opportunities for this could enhance the learning, sharing and advocacy.

Source: Extract from interview with Lipi Rahman, Executive Director, and General Secretary, Badabon Sangho, a WRO in Bangladesh.

## GBV in national and international climate policy<sup>184</sup>

### National

#### NATIONALLY DETERMINED CONTRIBUTIONS

As part of their commitments in the Paris Agreement, countries submit Nationally Determined Contributions every five years to the UNFCCC, outlining at a national level their climate goals and targets. In 2022, according to the IUCN, 15 countries had submitted NDCs which included mention of the links between GBV and climate change.<sup>185</sup> Including analysis of the impacts of climate change on GBV, and of GBV on a country's ability to address climate change, and identifying appropriate actions can motivate governments to access climate finance for these issues, support policy coherence at the national level, and drive action and accountability.

#### CLIMATE CHANGE GENDER ACTION PLANS (CCGAP)

CcGAPs bring together multiple stakeholders from government and civil society at the national, regional or sub-national level to identify priorities and key actions for gender equality in climate change, complementing NDCs and NAPs. Analysis by the IUCN found 10 national and one sub-regional ccGAP that acknowledged the impact of climate change on GBV. For example, Nepal's ccGAP includes an activity on "orientation and training on gender and social violence, safeguarding and conflict management" to "avoid negative implications of reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries (REDD) initiatives and disaster hazards on women rights and Social Environment Standard (SES)".<sup>186</sup>

#### NATIONAL ADAPTATION PLANS (NAPS)

NAPs identify how a country aims to adapt to climate change and put in place plans to do so. Several countries have highlighted GBV, particularly in post-disaster contexts. For example, Suriname's NAP calls for training on GBV for volunteers responding to disasters and Kiribati's NAP seeks to improve the evidence base on the links between GBV and climate change.<sup>187</sup>



## ↓ BOX 4: GBV IN NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE POLICY

**NATIONAL ACTION PLANS ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY (WPS)**

National Action Plans on WPS outline a government's approach to implementing UNSCR 1325, with objectives and activities at the domestic and international level to: secure the rights of women and girls in conflict settings; prevent armed conflict and violence, including against women and girls; and ensure the meaningful participation of women in peace and security.<sup>188</sup> As climate change is a threat multiplier for both conflict and GBV, National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security should include gendered analysis of climate-related conflict and insecurity, developed with the participation of women and girls most affected by the climate crisis.

The UK's 2023-27 NAP includes climate change as a 'transnational threat' and recognises that "women and girls also face a heightened risk of GBV during and following disasters".<sup>189</sup> It includes commitments to ensure gender dimensions are considered when developing solutions to climate security.

**NATIONAL ACTION PLANS ON GBV**

Various governments have adopted national action plans and/or strategies on GBV or violence against women and girls. These generally aim at a cohesive approach across national ministries for the prevention of and response to GBV. The integration of analysis of climate change impacts on GBV into national action plans can help identify risks and support the allocation of resources towards addressing them. Fiji's National Action Plan identified disasters and loss and damage as stressors of GBV, and "survivor-centred and multi-sector coordination of services for survivors before, during and after emergencies" as a strategic priority.<sup>190</sup>

**DISASTER MANAGEMENT PLANS**

National disaster management plans should include analysis of GBV risks in disasters and pre-empt responses from different stakeholders. For example, Samoa's National Disaster Plan and National Policy on Gender Equality and Rights of Women and Girls integrate GBV risks.

**International****UNFCCC ENHANCED LIMA WORK PROGRAMME ON GENDER AND GENDER ACTION PLAN**

The Enhanced Lima Work Programme was agreed by Parties at COP25, focusing on the advancement of gender balance and integration of gender considerations into the UNFCCC and Paris Agreement, with the aim of achieving gender-responsive climate policy and action. The Enhanced Gender Action Plan sets out objectives and activities under five priority areas to mainstream gender-responsive climate action into the work of Parties, the UNFCCC Secretariat, UN entities and other stakeholders, and support women's full, equal and meaningful participation in the UNFCCC process.<sup>191</sup> In May 2024, as part of a review of implementation progress, the synthesis report of Parties' submissions cited "structural barriers to gender equality, such as persisting harmful



## ↓ BOX 4: GBV IN NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CLIMATE POLICY

gender norms, increasing gender-based violence, unequal access to and control of resources” as key obstacles to implementing the GAP.<sup>192</sup>

### CONVENTION ON BIODIVERSITY (CBD)'S GENDER PLAN OF ACTION

The CBD's Gender Plan of Action includes an objective to “identify and eliminate, prevent and respond, to all forms of gender-based discrimination and violence, in particular in relation to control, ownership and access to sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity, including protecting women environmental human rights defenders and park rangers”.<sup>193</sup>

### UN CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION'S UNCCD GENDER ACTION PLAN

The UNCCD's Gender Action Plan does not specifically reference GBV but supports gender equality and the increased participation of and decision-making by women and girls in the implementation of the Convention.<sup>194</sup>

### COP28 GENDER-RESPONSIVE JUST TRANSITIONS AND CLIMATE ACTION PARTNERSHIP

This Partnership was launched at COP28 and endorsed by 69 Parties. Its commitments to ensure a just transition include that specific actions be gender-responsive on finance, data and opportunities, and acknowledges that climate change is “exacerbating existing inequalities, as well as gender-based violence”, committing signatories to “fully incorporate the human rights of women and girls in just transition efforts” and “encourage gender-responsive strategies on mitigation and adaptation”.<sup>195</sup>

### COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN (CEDAW)

CEDAW was adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly and can be described as an international bill of rights for women. CEDAW's General recommendation No.37 (2018) on gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in a changing climate<sup>196</sup> includes a section on the “right to live free from gender-based violence against women and girls”. It recommends State Parties “develop policies and programmes to address existing and new risk factors for gender-based violence against women... in the context of disaster risk reduction and climate change, and promote the participation and leadership of women in their development”, as well as measures such as reporting mechanisms, training for disaster responders, and policies to address the root causes of GBV.

### THE SENDAI FRAMEWORK FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION 2015-2030 (SEDAI FRAMEWORK)

The Sendai Framework provides Member States with concrete actions to protect development gains from the risk of disaster.<sup>197</sup> Its guiding principles include: “Disaster risk reduction requires an all-of-society engagement and partnership” and that “A gender, age, disability and cultural perspective should be integrated in all policies and practices, and women and youth leadership should be promoted.”<sup>198</sup>

Box includes content adapted from IUCN and UN Women (2022) [‘Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls in the Context of Climate Crisis and Environmental Degradation’](#), plus other sources as referenced.

## 3.2 Integrating efforts to end GBV within climate-induced disaster preparedness and response



Examples of ways to integrate GBV into climate-induced disaster preparedness and response include:

**Incorporating GBV considerations in national and regional humanitarian and disaster policy.** Pacific islands’ disaster management and preparedness policies increasingly recognise gender issues, with some explicitly incorporating GBV considerations. Samoa’s National Disaster Plan and National Policy on Gender Equality and Rights of Women and Girls integrate GBV risks, and seek to increase the participation of women and girls in climate change and disaster preparedness and response, especially those facing multiple and intersecting discrimination.<sup>199</sup> In addition, the revitalised Pacific Leaders Gender Equality Declaration includes a commitment to “ensuring the safety and protection of all Pacific peoples, particularly women and girls, in all their diversity including climate security, and by taking measures to end all forms of human

exploitation including human trafficking”.<sup>200</sup> These measures could help to increase the effectiveness of disaster response by ensuring they are shaped by diverse perspectives and do not exclude community members.

**Strengthening national GBV systems and coordination mechanisms.** Fiji improved its GBV response system after Tropical Cyclone Yasa so it could better adapt and function before, during and after emergencies. This included the operationalisation of national and sub-national GBV coordination mechanisms and elevating the Ministry of Women’s role as a coordinating body. The improvements resulted in improved relationships between service providers and local governments, with referral pathways extended to the district level.<sup>201</sup>

*“Women disaster networks are a key way to disseminate information and ensure women survivors have support from other women. It can help them gain confidence to seek services when they know they are not alone but have a support network of other women around them.”*

Toan, from the Centre for Rural Development, Vietnam

**Ensuring DRM efforts are informed by consultation with WROs and a gender analysis that considers the needs of GBV survivors from diverse backgrounds.** For DRM efforts to reflect the needs of whole communities, be tailored to the local context and be culturally appropriate, they should be informed by consultation with local WROs and a gender analysis that considers the needs of GBV survivors from diverse backgrounds. This analysis will help identify the needs of women, girls, and gender-diverse people from different ethnicities, with disabilities, from the LGBTQIA+ community, and those who are widowed or heads of households, among others. By conducting an analysis and consultation of this nature, DRM efforts will be better placed to respond to the needs of whole communities because these needs will be better understood.

The Solomon Islands' National Disaster Management Plan 2018 includes a key principle of involving women in preparedness and response arrangements at all levels, including involvement in operational processes and decision-making. The plan makes it mandatory that at least two women are part of each committee, working group or team involved in operational processes for relief distribution, welfare, protection, and shelter. In Vanuatu, awareness of GBV and gender in disaster planning has been promoted through the training of women members of Community Disaster and Climate Change Committees and Provincial Disaster Committees.<sup>202</sup>

**Integrating GBV response into DRM simulation exercises and evacuation drills.** Oxfam Cambodia's DRM work with communities at risk of flooding includes integrating GBV planning and response into DRM simulation exercises. Through these efforts, community members come together to plan and practice how to respond in times

of flooding. As part of this, community groups identify where the nearest GBV response services are, develop referral pathways for GBV survivors, and identify groups whose responsibility it is to provide interim first aid to survivors until they can access official services. This support disaster response in effectively addressing GBV and responding to the needs of women, girls, and gender-diverse people.

In 2021, International Planned Parenthood (IPPF) worked with partners in Fiji to conduct a sexual reproductive health (SRH) simulation exercise for emergencies, which included GBV response.<sup>203</sup> This two-day event brought together agencies and organisations involved in disaster response to engage in problem-solving activities that reflected real emergency issues within the Fiji context. By doing so, the IPPF was able to support organisations to prepare to deliver and coordinate quality services for women related to SRH and GBV in the aftermath of a climate-induced disaster. This builds their capacity to coordinate more effectively and respond more efficiently during a crisis.

Establishing and training groups to provide first responder support to GBV survivors during climate disasters, and share disaster preparedness information among women and survivors within the community. The Indigenous-led organisation Young Women Initiatives (YouWIn) works in the Philippines to establish GBV watch groups across villages at risk of typhoons and severe flooding. These groups are made up of 15 to 20 women and girls from diverse backgrounds who identify women at risk, and help survivors access psychological first aid and other services during disasters. These groups continue their work in evacuation centres and help to ensure that survivors of GBV can access the support they need in times of crisis.

**Collaborating with GBV practitioners to ensure GBV services are provided alongside disaster response efforts and that there are clear referral pathways for survivors of GBV.**

Interviews with climate practitioners and GBV practitioners reinforced the importance of collaboration between GBV practitioners and climate change, DRM, and disaster response practitioners to ensure efforts are not siloed. GBV practitioners are well-placed to identify and help link climate actors to existing services, and to support climate actors to develop effective and survivor-centred services to fill gaps. GBV practitioners should ensure that GBV response efforts in climate-induced disaster contexts are in line with the [16 Interagency Minimum Standards for GBV in Emergencies Programming](#). Similarly, climate change practitioners can support GBV practitioners to integrate climate change risks and opportunities into their work. Interviewees were concerned that there were limited examples of GBV, and climate practitioners collaborating, and recommended that this be a key area for climate and GBV practitioners to focus on moving forward.

**Training staff in evacuation and displacement centres, along with community members supporting evacuation coordination to ensure they are equipped to handle cases of GBV.** In times of disaster, where communities are evacuated or displaced, they are likely to be relocated to centres or camps. It is essential that staff at these locations are trained on how to respond to cases of GBV in a survivor-centred way. This means that the safety, priorities, and agency of the victim-survivor is placed at the centre of the response. It is also essential that this training covers the needs and responses required for victims and survivors from diverse backgrounds, including those with disabilities and those from the LGBTQIA+ community.

**Designing evacuation centres and displacement camps that are accessible and provide safety and privacy for women, girls, and gender-diverse people from a range of backgrounds.** Evacuation centres and displacement camps are often sites where GBV is perpetrated due to a lack of safe toilets, sleeping areas and lighting, among other factors. The dangers that women, children (especially girls) and gender-diverse people face in these contexts can increase their resistance to using these shelters, opting instead to remain in locations where they are at danger of being harmed by the climate-induced disaster. To keep whole communities safe, the security needs of women, girls and gender-diverse people from a range of backgrounds including those with disabilities, should be considered in the design of these shelters.

**Ensure women have the information they need to respond in times of crisis.** ActionAid's Women's Weather Watch was established in 2015 as an early warning and response system for climate-related disasters. Local women were trained to read weather maps and to write warning messages to share with communities in their local languages and disseminate among their communities and outer islands. Since its inception, the initiative has established a network that women can use to share vital information in emergencies.<sup>204</sup> Initiatives like this can be used to share information about emergency GBV services and response mechanisms in advance of disasters, helping to ensure GBV survivors know where to go and how to access the support they need. It is important that this information is shared in accessible formats to enable people with diverse disabilities to receive it. Analysis of the Women's Weather Watch in Vanuatu by the Australia Pacific Climate Partnership highlights the economic benefit of including women in DRM efforts to ensure communities have access to early

warning messages and information about how to respond in crisis.<sup>205</sup> They estimate that for every \$1 invested, there is a corresponding benefit of \$4.40.

**Ensure robust safeguarding mechanisms are in place to prevent and respond to instances of SEAH perpetrated by disaster relief staff.** Organisations can help mitigate the risk of SEAH by developing robust policies and codes of conduct, rigorous screening and background check procedures, accessible grievance mechanisms, and investigation procedures to report SEAH in a safe and confidential way. More information about how to strengthen efforts to prevent and respond to SEAH can be found at the [Safeguarding Resource Support Hub](#).

### Addressing GBV through DRM efforts in the Philippines

The Philippines is a disaster-prone country experiencing an average of 20 typhoons annually. Due to climate change, these typhoons are becoming stronger and more destructive.<sup>206</sup> Most DRM programmes in the region focus on clean-up and skills training, often failing to recognise and address GBV, which is widespread following disasters and acts as a barrier to women and girls participating and staying safe during response efforts.

The Indigenous-led organisation Young Women Initiatives (YouWIn) established a GBV Watch Group Campaign to address this gap in 2020. The campaign aims to establish GBV Watch Groups and strengthen GBV response mechanisms. In each of the five villages it works, the organisation trains five to 10 groups, each consisting of 15 to 20 women. These groups include women of different ages, from the LGBTQIA+ community, with disabilities, and both Indigenous and non-Indigenous women.

#### HOW THE PROGRAMME ADDRESSES GBV

The GBV Watch Groups:

- Support survivors by identifying women at risk, supporting women to document instances of violence, referring survivors to support services, providing psychological first aid, and supporting survivors to report abuse if they wish to.
- Conduct community advocacy by engaging men to advocate for women's rights, combat sexist behaviour and educate others. They have so far engaged 30 men, including 10 from the LGBTQIA+ community.
- Support local services by working with local offices and service providers which lack resources and expertise to handle GBV cases effectively and in a culturally appropriate way.
- Provide disaster support by ensuring that these groups are active in evacuation centres where risks of GBV are exacerbated and risks of SEAH increase.



## ↓ CASE STUDY: ADDRESSING GBV THROUGH DRM EFFORTS IN THE PHILIPPINES

### RESULTS

The organisation collects stories of change to identify the impacts of the programme. Some of the trends identified through these stories include:

- Women feel a greater sense of agency through their participation in these efforts.
- Men are better equipped to advocate for the rights of women following their participation in the project.
- Organisations engaged in DRM have an improved understanding of the needs of women and girls in disasters and are better equipped to support survivors of GBV, ensuring they are safe and have access to the services they need in times of crisis.

### CHALLENGES

- Backlash from community members. Some men resist their wives' participation in these groups. The organisation works closely with communities to address the harmful social norms that prevent women's participation.

Source: Interview with Jade P Leung, Lead Convener at Young Women Initiatives (YouWIn)

### Supporting communities at risk of flooding in Cambodia by integrating GBV into DRM efforts

Oxfam Cambodia supports communities in managing water resources near flood-prone waterways along the Mekong River basin. The programme emphasises climate adaptation and resilience, with a strong focus on GEDSI and the 'do no harm' approach.

A comprehensive DRM simulation exercise was conducted in Kratie province, Cambodia, as part of the ongoing efforts to strengthen community resilience to climate-induced disasters. This exercise, led by Oxfam in collaboration with local authorities, NGOs and community groups, aimed to enhance the capacity of local communities to effectively respond to and manage the risks associated with climate-induced disasters such as floods.

### HOW THE PROGRAMME ADDRESSES GBV

The DRM simulation exercise aimed to address GBV through several activities:

- **Community mobilisation and awareness** on disaster preparedness and GBV services, with a focus on educating women and girls about their rights.



↓ CASE STUDY: SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES AT RISK OF FLOODING IN CAMBODIA  
BY INTEGRATING GBV INTO DRM EFFORTS

- **Gender-sensitive training and capacity building** for local disaster response teams to address gender-specific needs during emergencies.
- **Simulation scenarios and role-playing** of realistic disaster scenarios, including managing shelters, search and rescue operations, and supporting GBV survivors.
- **Setting up gender-sensitive facilities**, including establishing temporary shelters with facilities designed to ensure the safety and privacy of women and girls.
- **Feedback and evaluation** sessions to assess the exercise's effectiveness, incorporating input from participants to refine the disaster response plan and improve future efforts.

## RESULTS

The DRM simulation exercise resulted in:

- Improved awareness and preparedness. Community members, especially women and girls, reported a better understanding of disaster risks and the steps they can take to protect themselves and their families.
- Enhanced capacity to address GBV. The exercise strengthened the capacity of local disaster response teams to recognise and respond to GBV during disasters, contributing to a safer environment for women and girls.
- Increased participation of women in DRM planning. Women's active involvement in the exercise demonstrated their critical role in disaster management and the importance of their inclusion in decision-making processes.
- Strengthened community resilience by incorporating gender and GBV considerations into the DRM simulation. The exercise contributed to building a more resilient community that is better equipped to handle the challenges posed by climate-induced disasters.

## CHALLENGES

- Gaps in expertise in supporting people with disabilities limit the effectiveness of safety plans. Social norms and resistance can also hinder their inclusion in planning processes.



### ↓ CASE STUDY: SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES AT RISK OF FLOODING IN CAMBODIA BY INTEGRATING GBV INTO DRM EFFORTS

- Limited resources for accessible information and inadequate funding for disability-inclusive projects.
- Indigenous community engagement was limited due to difficulties in translating documents, low literacy rates and language barriers, which risk exacerbating their exclusion during disasters.
- Barriers for GBV survivors in participating in planning processes due to stigma and a lack of tailored support.

Source: Extract from interview with Michelle Chic Gudo from Oxfam Cambodia.



## 3.3 Integrating efforts to end GBV within support to climate and environmental activists

Women, girls, and gender-diverse climate and environmental activists face heightened risks of GBV, which can limit and restrict their work and the impact they have. This section includes examples of how GBV against activists can be addressed so that they can continue their work and impact.

**Accompaniment by international human rights observers.** Organisations such as [Peace Brigades International](#) (PBI) deploy international human rights observers to accompany EHRDs to increase their visibility and reduce the risk of attacks against them. Throughout 2022, Peace Brigades International worked with [Credhos](#), a human rights organisation based in the Magdalena Medio region in Colombia to support the ongoing work of women environmental defenders. In particular, they supported the work of women activists and leaders making visible and denouncing industrial pollution of rivers and confronting armed groups associated with the companies committing this pollution.<sup>207</sup>

Recent years have seen intensified attacks against women environmental defenders in the region.<sup>208</sup> As well as physical accompaniment,

PBI has conducted widespread international advocacy to raise the visibility of activists at risk to reduce the risk of them being attacked for their work. For example, PBI has contributed to the inclusion of these women's work in international reports, including the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA),<sup>209</sup> Global Witness,<sup>210</sup> and the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT).<sup>211</sup> They have also organised visits from journalists, leading to articles in media outlets such as *El País*,<sup>212</sup> requested investigations into the threats against women environmental defenders from international governments including the UK and Canada, and supported women environmental defenders to speak at international conferences such as COP. PBI believes that through these ongoing efforts, the risk of attacks against environmental defenders

in the Magdalena Medio region of Colombia has reduced, allowing them to continue their work.

Supporting and promoting access to support networks – for example, regional support offering grants, hotlines, and temporary relocations – and capacity building, accompaniment, and advocacy. The Protect Defenders project provides a range of services to support human rights defenders (HRDs). These are available to all HRDs and are not specific to survivors of GBV or EHRDs. However, some services may be relevant to survivors or those at risk. Protect Defenders funds a helpdesk with protection officers available 24/7, which EHRDs at immediate risk of violence can contact for support and advice. They also offer emergency grants to ensure that HRDs can access and implement urgent security measures to protect themselves, their families, and their work. They offer a temporary relocation programme, which provides financial support to a host organisation that supports an HRD to relocate. Finally, they provide training, capacity building and accompaniment to HRDs, as well as monitoring the situation of HRDs on the frontline to advocate for their protection locally, regionally, and internationally. These measures support activists to continue their work.

**Regional advocacy and partnerships between women environmental defenders, and coalition building for women’s movements working on climate action.** In 2023, Asia Indigenous Peoples Pact ([AIPP](#)), International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs ([IWGIA](#)), the Association of Indigenous Women of the Archipelago ([PEREMPUAN AMAN](#)) and the [BAI Indigenous Women’s Network](#) received a RISE grant to

work with Indigenous women environmental defenders across Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. This programme supports women environmental defenders to build self-determined networks; create a GBV emergency safety fund; and conduct regional advocacy to develop strategies to end GBV as a tactic to silence their work. Recently, AIPP conducted a GBV assessment which led to a revision of the organisation’s safety policy and plan.<sup>213</sup>

The Pacific Feminist Community of Practice ([PacFemCOP](#)) brought together 20 civil society organisations and around 80 activists to document and support feminist best practice from across the region.<sup>214</sup> Moderated by DIVA for Equality in Fiji, the forum produced good practice including on feminist approaches to gender, ecological and climate justice, and facilitated learning, dialogues and joint advocacy towards global processes including COP27. Working at the regional level supports activists to build a support network to advance the prevention and response to the GBV they face, and to continue their work.

**Funding initiatives to support the resilience of women activists working in the climate space.**

Women’s Fund Asia allocates specific budget lines for self- and collective-care as part of the grants it provides to WROs working to address climate change in their communities. These care budget lines help ensure grantees have dedicated funds that can be used to support their resilience and wellbeing in the face of GBV and threats of violence. This helps activists to stay engaged in their work advancing action on climate change.

## Addressing GBV to improve the participation of women in the protection of Indonesian mangrove forests

Many communities in Indonesia face significant environmental degradation, including the destruction of mangrove forests, which are being replaced by palm oil plantations, and the pollution of the sea and rivers by coal power plants and factories. This puts communities at risk of flooding and negatively impacts fishing livelihoods. It also increases the health risks experienced by communities. Women in these communities experience multiple forms of GBV, such as IPV, trafficking, and threats from multinational corporations. These are fuelled by harmful social norms, unequal power dynamics and the economic stress caused by environmental damage.



The Srikandi Lestari Foundation, established in 2016, has stepped in to address these issues. Their activities include conducting advocacy to government, protesting the destruction of the environment by corporations, and providing livelihoods training for women and girls, along with training to ensure communities know their rights. For example, the organisation collaborates with women in conservation efforts to restore mangrove forests. They also work to improve community resilience by working with women to make crafts out of recycled waste, sell chips and syrups made from mangrove resources, and sell t-shirts dyed with natural colours. The foundation holds community forums to discuss how environmental degradation impacts them and organises activities to address these impacts. They also advocate with local leaders to promote women's participation in decision-making bodies, resulting in some women associated with the Foundation being invited to join. The Foundation also works with women and men from the community to develop campaigns and organise protests environmental degradation and climate change.



## ↓ CASE STUDY: ADDRESSING GBV TO IMPROVE THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE PROTECTION OF INDONESIAN MANGROVE FORESTS

### HOW GBV IMPACTS THEIR WORK

Within the community, GBV prevents many women from participating in programme activities, meaning they are unable to build their resilience to environmental degradation or contribute to restoration activities, making the latter less effective. In addition, GBV against staff and activists strains the organisation's ability to function effectively. Core staff members and activists working with the Foundation have faced death threats, harassment, and disinformation campaigns. It takes immense bravery for these women to continue their work.

### HOW THE PROGRAMME ADDRESSES GBV

The Foundation enhances support for survivors of GBV to promote their participation in efforts to end environmental degradation, and improve the impact of the organisation's work through:

- **Legal and rights training:** The Foundation educates women, men and fishers about their legal rights in the face of environmental degradation, violence and GBV. They provide legal assistance to women who have experienced GBV, ensuring that their cases are appropriately handled.
- **Workshops** where women and lawyers come together to discuss GBV rights, climate change and health impacts. This training helps build awareness and equips participants with knowledge on navigating these issues, fostering, and strengthening resilience and leadership in their communities.
- **Mental health first aid** to survivors of GBV along with solidarity through connecting survivors with similar experiences.
- **Engagement with international human rights organisations** who monitor GBV risks so that they can respond if Foundation staff are harmed.

### RESULTS

- Worked with survivors of GBV to strengthen their agency and supported them to become campaigners against the national climate crisis in Indonesia.
- Mobilised national and international support for the release of five environmental human rights defenders from prison.
- Raised awareness of how the climate crisis affects the ability of women and survivors of GBV to advocate for their rights to a clean and healthy environment.



## ↓ CASE STUDY: ADDRESSING GBV TO IMPROVE THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE PROTECTION OF INDONESIAN MANGROVE FORESTS

### CHALLENGES

- **Safety concerns.** The Foundation faces significant threats to staff safety and needs increased support from other organisations to address these dangers.
- **Resistance from communities.** Occasionally, husbands oppose their wives participating in activities. In these instances, the Foundation engages directly with men, particularly through men's/community groups to explain the aims of the programme and how this will benefit the whole community and slowly works to build a culture of equal relationships so there is space for women to learn, gather and engage in training.

Source: Extract from interview with Dewi and Mimi from Srikandi Lestari Foundation, Indonesia.



## 3.4 Integrating efforts to end GBV within the transition to a low-carbon economy

To achieve a just transition to a low-carbon economy, it must benefit and reflect the needs of whole communities. It is therefore important that the GBV risks associated with the transition are eliminated. This section provides an overview of different types of initiatives to address and mitigate the risks of GBV associated with the transition, accompanied by details and examples (where available) of where this has happened in practice.

**Involve women from diverse backgrounds in the design, decision-making and implementation of efforts to close polluting sectors which may cause job losses.** Engaging with WROs early on can help identify and understand the potential impacts an intervention may have on GBV. For example, interventions which may result in male unemployment, underemployment and associated job losses could benefit from gender-responsive analysis and components to address drivers of GBV that may be exacerbated, including financial stress and harmful norms.<sup>215</sup> This will help to support community buy-in for the transition and avoid harm.

WROs played a key role in supporting women affected by domestic violence in former coal-mining areas in Silesia, Poland.<sup>216</sup> Examples of support include providing counselling, shelter and legal help for families affected by domestic violence, alcohol, and substance abuse issues, which increased during the job layoffs associated with the restructuring of the Polish coal sector.

**Promote safe and gender-equitable cultures in climate and green economy jobs.** Addressing organisational and working cultures can help address harmful attitudes, harassment and abuse against women taking on new roles in sectors responding to climate

change and green economy that challenge gender stereotypes. This is important to ensure a diverse talent pool and retention of women workers, which is good for gender equality and can improve a company's performance.<sup>217</sup> Developing safeguarding measures, such as policies, codes of conduct, reporting and investigation mechanisms, training and awareness-raising can be useful in mitigating violence and ensuring that staff are equipped to respond when it occurs.

In addition, organisations should conduct regular risk assessments that identify and mitigate the specific risks faced by women. These could include risk of GBV for women working in remote field locations, for example bringing off-grid renewable energy solutions to remote villages. As part of mitigation processes, it will be important to provide multiple channels for reporting risks and incidents along with security training and awareness-raising for all staff.

**Ensure robust safeguarding mechanisms are in place to prevent and respond to instances of SEAH perpetrated by those implementing green projects.** Instances of SEAH cause profound harm to individuals and communities, as well as reputational risks for organisations working in the sectors responding to climate change. Organisations can help mitigate the risk of SEAH by developing robust policies and codes of conduct, grievance mechanisms and investigation procedures to report SEAH in a safe and confidential way. In addition, organisations working with contractors and suppliers can mitigate risks of SEAH through thorough procurement processes, contract selection, training and awareness-raising and regular engagement along the supply chain. More information about how to strengthen efforts to prevent and respond to SEAH can be found at the [Safeguarding Resource Support Hub](#).

**Integrate GBV prevention and response into policies and programmes aimed at supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy, such as green transport and renewable energy.** There are opportunities to integrate GBV into sector-based policies and programmes linked to the transition to a low-carbon economy, such as public transport and renewable energy.

In the Marshall Islands, the National Action Plan on Climate Change established a National Electricity Roadmap, with a target of 100% renewable energy production by 2050. Among trained electricians, at least 20% had to be women by 2030. The Island Eco Project is a gender-responsive approach to increasing solar-powered light use, training women to be part of installation and operation.<sup>218</sup> This gender-responsive project addresses both climate challenges and gender stereotypes in STEM, which could, in turn, dismantle harmful stereotypes that contribute to GBV, fostering a more inclusive environment that benefits the entire community. The use of solar powered lights can also, in some cases, reduce the risk of GBV where women no longer need to travel to access fuel.

Investments in public transport can reduce reliance on cars and fossil fuels and improve movement within cities, increasing access to job opportunities and services. However, without considering women's safety, it can increase the risk of GBV. An example of how GBV prevention and response was integrated into Karachi's green bus transport system is shown in Box 5 below.

Include women from diverse backgrounds in decision-making around emerging practices such as the use of carbon credit revenues. Carbon credit projects have the potential to support efforts to end GBV through the distribution of carbon credit revenues to communities. Through this research, we spoke

to a practitioner working on integrating gender perspectives into carbon credit markers. They explained that the revenues from carbon credits are often used for community projects which communities identify as priorities. Women from diverse backgrounds often have unique insights into the environmental and social challenges their communities face. By including them in decisions around how these carbon credit project revenues are used, projects are more likely to address the specific needs of communities at the frontline of climate change.

Other practitioners noted that carbon credit projects can create higher risks of GBV, for example when they exacerbate existing inequalities related to lack of land tenure. The drive to use land for carbon credits can result in land grabs and disputes, with GBV used against women to secure control over land and resources. A new RISE grant in Kenya will pilot using a land rights app to identify GBV hotspots and help the project launch psychosocial and legal support.<sup>219</sup>

### Using climate finance to address GBV

Climate finance has huge potential to create transformative action, particularly in broader sector-based climate projects. The latest figures show that average annual climate finance flows reached almost US\$1.3 trillion in 2021/2022, nearly doubling 2019/2020 levels. Most of this growth is due to an increase in mitigation finance, with the largest increase in the renewable energy and transport sectors.<sup>220</sup>

An analysis of bilateral climate finance from OECD DAC members shows a positive trend in mainstreaming gender equality aims, with this type of finance quadrupling between 2011-12 and 2019-20.<sup>221</sup> However, the amount of finance specifically targeted at gender equality remained much smaller, with WROs unable to access finance at scale.<sup>222</sup> At a country level, an analysis of the climate finance that Rwanda receives showed that just 0.01% was assigned the GBV purpose code, suggesting a lack of systematic integration of GBV with climate finance.<sup>223</sup>

Climate funds play an important role in distributing climate finance, and there are examples of these funds aiming to integrate GBV. A promising case is the integration of GBV prevention into the [Green Bus Rapid Transit \(BRT\) system in Karachi, Pakistan](#), funded by the Green Climate Fund. Informed by data from a rapid assessment of sexual harassment in public transport, the project's gender action plan includes preventive initiatives such as public awareness campaigns, improved lighting and visible CCTV cameras, while also establishing mechanisms for reporting harassment, all aiming to create safer, green transport for women.

There are currently limited examples of climate finance projects that directly address GBV, but there are increasing efforts to integrate gender and GBV considerations into investments. For example, WWF produced a [Guidance Note on Addressing GBV and Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment](#) for implementing projects from the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and Global Environment Facility. GCF's gender policy also requires that all projects assess the levels of violence against women in countries and identify interventions to address them.<sup>224</sup> 2X Global have published a brief on 'Addressing gender-based violence and harassment (GBVH) at the intersection of climate and gender finance' and the Criterion Institute have due diligence guides for GBV risk in climate investments.<sup>225</sup>

## Salimar Solar Plant: A model for GBV prevention in renewable energy<sup>226</sup>

The Salimar Solar Plant, constructed on the southwestern shores of Lake Malawi between 2018 and 2021, provides an example of how the renewable energy sector can integrate robust GBV prevention and response measures.

During the construction phase, an allegation of GBV prompted JCM Power, the project developer, to take immediate action. A rapid GBV assessment conducted with the support of an external consultant led to the establishment of a comprehensive gender action plan. Central to this was the recruitment of a local gender inclusion specialist to drive prevention efforts, support survivors and conduct research.

### LESSONS LEARNT AND HOW THE PROGRAMME ADDRESSES GBV

Key strategies implemented at Salimar Solar Plant included:

- **Early integration of GBV considerations.** Embedding gender issues and GBV prevention into the project's early stages, including feasibility studies.
- **Tailored gender action plans.** Developing comprehensive plans to address gender-related risks and opportunities, focusing on both prevention and response.
- **Local expertise.** Hiring local gender experts to build trust, increase reporting and strengthen community engagement.
- **Survivor support.** Providing essential support services for survivors on and around the project site.

The Salimar Solar Plant provides a useful lesson for the renewable energy sector, that proactive planning and implementation is needed to mitigate GBV risks and create a safer working environment for all. By addressing the risks of GBV and effectively responding to any instances, women are more likely to be interested in working in this environment, increasing the talent pool available to the company.

## Resilient, Inclusive and Sustainable Environments (RISE) Grants

RISE is a grants challenge funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), and managed by the IUCN. It is focused on filling knowledge, cooperation, and investment gaps at the GBV, climate and environment nexus, emphasising intersectional approaches that include or emphasise groups experiencing marginalisation. The grants challenge supports initiatives and promising interventions, seeking to build evidence and cross-sector collaborations in three primary ways, by investing in:

- a.** Existing environmental projects that leverage RISE funding and technical support to embed gender-based violence prevention, mitigation and/or response in an integrated manner to environmental work.
- b.** Existing GBV and environment programming that aims to continue, scale up or replicate an intervention.
- c.** New projects that address gender-based violence and environment linkages at the global policy level.<sup>227</sup>

The IUCN also manages the Gender-based Violence and Environment Linkages Center (GBV-ENV Center), which brings together resources and tools, mobilises learning, provides tailored technical support and forges collective action to build knowledge, capacities, and improved policies.



# 4. Recommendations





Climate initiatives aimed at keeping communities safe and building resilience in the face of climate change are more likely to be effective if they include women and girls from diverse backgrounds at all levels of design, development, and implementation. This is essential for guaranteeing these initiatives meet the needs of entire communities. In addition, climate actors have a responsibility to ensure their initiatives ‘do no harm’ – including by exacerbating the risks linked to GBV. Developing people-centred climate initiatives that address GBV reduces risks of harm, improves climate action outcomes, increases access and retention of skills and talent, helps build trusted relationships with local populations, and ensures whole communities are well-equipped to adapt and respond to climate change.

The following recommendations are based on reflections from interviewees and trends identified through literature review. They are split by intended audience.



### FOR CLIMATE CHANGE PRACTITIONERS

1. **Conduct a GEDSI analysis when designing programmes and MEL frameworks.** Assume GBV is happening in communities affected by climate change; identify the types that could affect participants and undermine programme objectives; and find culturally appropriate, survivor-centred ways to address it. As part of the GEDSI analysis, consult with local organisations representing women, girls, and gender-diverse people, considering the specific risks faced by those with disabilities, Indigenous women and girls, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community, among others. Using this analysis, put in place a gender action plan with sufficient budget to address GBV risks throughout the project cycle.
2. **Prioritise risk mitigation and ‘do no harm’ in climate programmes** by integrating GBV prevention, mitigation, and response measures to protect programme participants and staff and support the participation of whole communities. These measures could include training for staff and communities, identifying or developing clear referral pathways to survivor support services, and implementing prevention initiatives to support social norms change. They could also include self- and collective-care efforts such as the provision of counselling and psychosocial support for survivors.
3. **Work with all community members to build trust and buy-in to reduce the risk of backlash against women’s participation in climate action and GBV prevention and response.** Programmes should work with women, girls, local leaders, men and boys, and religious leaders to articulate the benefits of supporting women’s participation in climate action and efforts to end GBV. This will help build the trust of communities, promote the sustainability of initiatives, and reduce the backlash against programme participants and staff.
4. **Secure adequate funding for prevention and response to GBV within programme design and implementation.** Like climate change programming, effective GBV programming is long-term, sustained, and multi-component. It is important to include an adequate budget



 FOR CLIMATE CHANGE PRACTITIONERS

in programme proposals to fund GBV prevention, mitigation and response measures and advocate with donors for their necessity in meeting the goals of the programme. It requires drawing on expertise, including from local women's organisations, to help inform approaches and support responses when cases arise.



## FOR DONORS

1. **Build on and invest in approaches that prevent and respond to GBV and improve climate outcomes.** There is promising work emerging that donors should consider investing in, accompanied by efforts to document, share and learn from practice.
  - **Consider risk mitigation and 'do no harm' in all climate programmes** to identify and address all forms of GBV. Encourage programmes to include funded measures to prevent, address and respond to potential GBV risks, enabling communities, staff and volunteers to participate safely in climate interventions. For example, some funders, such as Women's Fund Asia, have allocated distinct budget lines for self-care to support activists in addressing and remaining resilient in the face of violence. Donors can also support climate interventions, including those working on DRM and climate action, with guidance and tools to ensure they are underpinned by robust survivor-centred complaints and accountability mechanisms – such as reporting pathways and allocated budgets to address GBV risks.
  - **Consider providing small grants to innovate and evaluate approaches to understand what works to prevent various forms of GBV,** particularly in climate adaptation, mitigation and resilience efforts where there is less evidence. A growing number of GBV approaches have successfully halved violence within a few years by addressing its root causes.<sup>228</sup> For example, when designed and implemented well, social norms programming has proven effective in tackling the harmful norms that perpetuate violence.<sup>229</sup> These approaches are now being applied to the climate sector, such as a RISE grant in Kenya which addresses the violence faced by women rangers that limit their participation in conservation.<sup>230</sup> Further pilots and evaluations are needed to understand how these GBV approaches can be adapted to the needs of communities, especially those populations most vulnerable to climate change. Donors should be prepared to innovate and test approaches and learn if they do not achieve the expected results.
  - **Build on emerging practices in integrating GBV prevention into large-scale climate programmes and other relevant sectors,** such as food security, climate-smart agriculture, renewable energy, green transport and humanitarian



## ↓ FOR DONORS

programmes. Various investments are being made to understand how to prevent violence by integrating activities in these diverse sectors. For example, as mentioned in the Executive Summary, What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls: Impact at Scale programme is supporting the International Water Management Institute's work to tackle climate change and reverse environmental degradation by designing four gender-transformative GBV prevention pilots to integrate with climate change adaptation efforts in Jordan, Lebanon, Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs) and Egypt. These pilots form part of the seven-year Impact at Scale programme, which aims to increase action to tackle climate change and reverse environmental degradation in the Middle East and North Africa. These GBV prevention approaches, and their integration into ongoing projects, need to be flexible and innovative, partially due to the limited investment in this field and region to date.

→ **Support longer-term, proactive interventions with multi-year, flexible funding** for effective monitoring, evaluation and adaptive learning. Sustained financial support is crucial for addressing both climate change and GBV, as these are deeply rooted crises that require several years to address and see meaningful change. As part of this, consider investing in early warning initiatives to shift to a proactive approach. Through policy and legislative frameworks, anticipatory action and social protection mechanisms can also tackle emerging issues to better cope with the impact of a climate-induced disaster.

2. **Work with other donors to direct climate finance toward gender-responsive and transformative approaches that prevent and respond to GBV.** Use climate funds to directly fund GBV projects where appropriate or integrate GBV prevention and response into broader climate change initiatives. Advocate within multilateral spaces where climate finance is spent for specific measures to mitigate GBV risks, including the adoption of minimum standards. There is also significant potential to use climate funds to directly fund GBV projects or integrate GBV prevention into broader sector-based projects, as seen in preventative measures that aim to create safer transport for women in Karachi's Green Line bus rapid transit project, funded by the Green Climate Fund.<sup>231</sup>
3. **Support activists and practitioners working on climate change and GBV** by providing long-term, flexible funding to WROs, climate change groups, activists and local networks at the intersection of climate and GBV. This funding can support partnerships between climate and GBV specialist organisations as well as cover costs such as staff salaries and building resilience of activists who often face acute GBV risks. Donors and other funders can also help by showcasing their work on global platforms and international conferences, as well as supporting opportunities for building networks and regional advocacy. This could include inviting and funding international accompaniment for climate and GBV activists and practitioners to speak on panels at international



 FOR DONORS

conferences, sharing reports, and facilitating conversations between activists/practitioners and duty bearers that they are seeking to influence or engage. Donors can play a supportive role in creating a safe, enabling environment for activists and practitioners working to address climate and GBV – for example, regulating technology companies to address online abuse and harassment.



## FOR GOVERNMENTS

- 1. Integrate gender equality and the prevention of GBV into national climate policy including NDCs and NAPs.** Ensure that the impact of climate change on gender equality and GBV is analysed in the development of these policies, and develop and fund initiatives to address it. Conduct meaningful consultations with diverse WROs (inclusive of Indigenous communities, LGBTQIA+ people and people with disabilities) and experts to support the development of these policies. Develop guidance and share learning with local governments to support these actions at all levels nationally. Invest in women's leadership in the development and implementation of all decision-making processes related to the development of NAPs, recognising that this is essential for effective and sustainable results for DRM and addressing climate change.
- 2. Champion gender equality, and the prevention of GBV in global policy spaces on climate change including the UNFCCC.** Include agreed language on gender equality in negotiations on climate finance adaptation, loss and damage and the just transition. Highlight GBV as a key form of non-economic loss and damage. Ensure the Lima Work Programme and Gender Action Plan are fully implemented at the national level, including through appointing and supporting National Gender Focal Points to engage with climate policy decision-making and providing finance for activities associated with the implementation of these frameworks. Promote the gender-transformative implementation of the Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction and monitor report on indicators through the Sendai Framework and Sendai GAP.
- 3. Support climate, environmental and human rights defenders particularly in hostile environments,** using diplomatic influence and funding protective measures such as accompaniment programmes. Create an enabling environment for human rights defenders to exercise their opposition to environmentally harmful activities, including by removing legal restrictions on these activities. Work with technology companies to address online abuse and harassment.



## FOR GBV PREVENTION PRACTITIONERS

1. **Pilot different GBV prevention approaches that can be integrated into large-scale climate programmes and track their impact on both GBV and climate change outcomes.** For example, in Uganda, the [What Works to Prevent Violence](#) Against Women and Girls: Impact at Scale programme is funding an innovation grant for integrating GBV prevention into a wetland restoration programme. By bringing together experts from both the climate and GBV sectors, including government officials, activists and environmentalists, the initiative seeks to develop comprehensive strategies that address GBV within the context of climate change adaptation, resilience and mitigation.<sup>232</sup>
2. **Work with climate practitioners to adapt existing good practices to climate-induced disasters and displacement.** There are several examples of good practices for GBV prevention and response in humanitarian emergencies, such as providing clear referral pathways for survivors, mobile or online GBV services, safe spaces for women and girls, and access to psychosocial support, that can be adapted to climate disasters in line with the [Interagency Minimum Standards for GBV in Emergencies Programming](#). When doing so, it is important to tailor responses to each context and be aware that violence can manifest differently in rapid-onset emergencies versus prolonged climate crises such as droughts. Collaboration with climate change and DRM practitioners is essential to avoid siloed efforts, yet few examples exist, making it a key area for future focus.



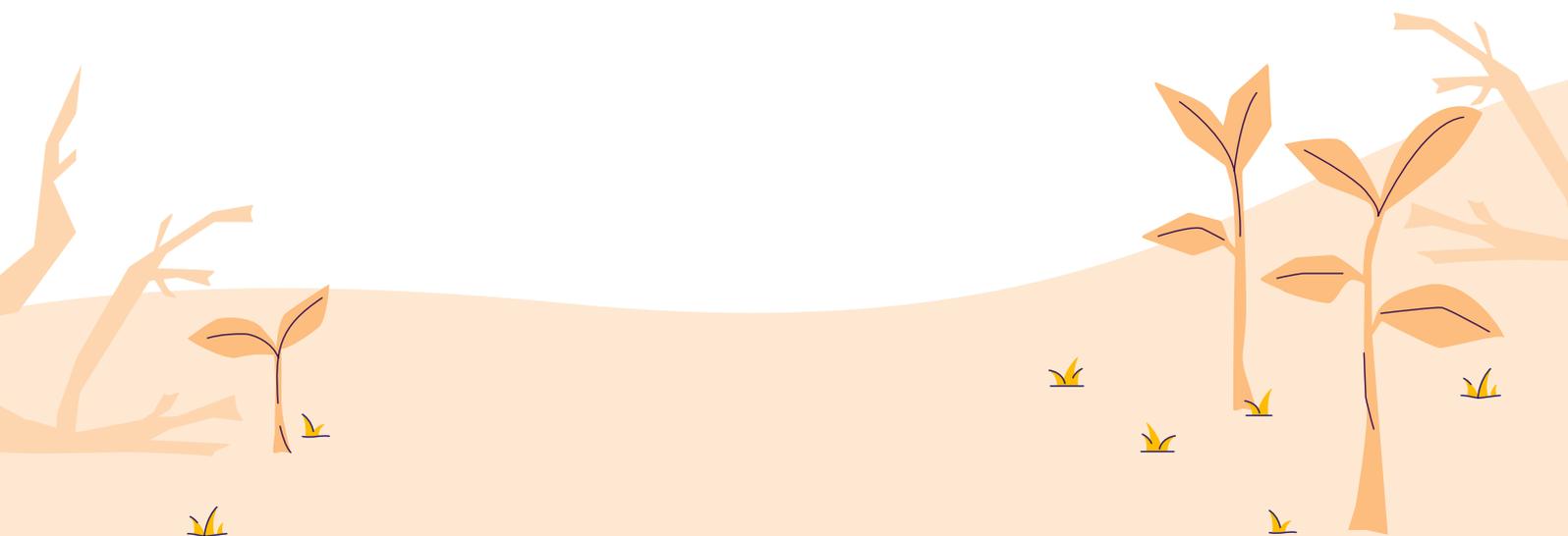
## FOR ALL ACTORS

1. **Engage in cross-sectoral efforts to end GBV and address climate change.** Efforts to end GBV and address climate change require collaboration across a range of stakeholders including climate change practitioners, policy makers, civil society, researchers, private investors, government, donors, and UN agencies. Collaborate with diverse stakeholders to increase awareness and understanding of the risks and drivers of GBV, and culturally appropriate best practice prevention and response approaches. Support climate adaptation, resilience, mitigation, DRM, and humanitarian actors to integrate GBV prevention into interventions, policies, and programmes.
2. **Include women, girls and gender-diverse people from diverse backgrounds in the design, decision-making, implementation, and monitoring of climate initiatives.** Women, girls, and gender-diverse people are best placed to identify how programmes can be effective and reflective of their needs. Remember that women, girls and gender-diverse people are not a homogenous group, and ensure individuals with a range of experiences and needs are included to maximise the diversity of the perspectives and ideas informing the programme. Partner with and support the leadership of civil society organisations, WROs, organisations of people with disabilities, women-led groups, LGBTQIA+ rights organisations and organisations led by people experiencing other forms of marginalisation.



## ↓ FOR ALL ACTORS

3. **Document practice-based learning and generate evidence on what works to prevent GBV in climate initiatives.** Generating evidence and documenting and sharing practice-based learning is essential for promoting learning and for strengthening GBV and climate action. This evidence should document the impact that addressing GBV has on objectives related to climate action, resilience, gender equality, effective disaster response, multi-hazard early warning, anticipatory action, disaster response and the transition to a low-carbon economy.
4. **Ensure all programmes, organisations and institutions have robust safeguarding measures in place to prevent and respond to SEAH.** Safeguarding measures are essential for preventing and responding to SEAH perpetrated against programme participants and teams by employees and leaders abusing power. These measures should include codes of conduct, accessible grievance and inclusive reporting, and grievance mechanisms and investigation procedures to allow survivors to report SEAH in an accessible, culturally appropriate, safe, and confidential way. In addition, organisations working with contractors and suppliers can mitigate risks of SEAH through procurement processes, contract selection, training, and awareness-raising, and regular engagement along the supply chain. More information about how to strengthen efforts to prevent and respond to SEAH can be found at the [Safeguarding Resource Support Hub](#).



# Annex 1: Methodology

The insights in this report are based on interviews with 28 individuals working at the intersection between climate change and GBV. Of these, 11 interviewees represented the experiences of WROs, three represented the experiences of funders, six represented the experiences of INGOs working to implement climate change programmes, one a regional organisation, and seven practitioners and consultants who have worked on various programmes with experience of the links between climate action and GBV. Their work was spread across Lao PDR, Cambodia, South Pacific Islands, Vietnam, the Philippines, Indonesia, Mexico and Uganda. It also draws on four specially commissioned rapid evidence reviews, produced by the Ending Violence Against Women and Children Helpdesk, plus an additional desk review to identify additional material.

# Endnotes

- 1 Zhu Y, He C, Bell M, et al. (2023) Association of Ambient Temperature with the Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence Among Partnered Women in Low- and Middle-Income South Asian Countries. *JAMA Psychiatry*. 80(9): 952-961.
- 2 This report uses the term 'gender-diverse people' to refer to the experiences of trans men, trans women, non-binary people and intersex people, who face substantial risks of GBV because of their gender identity and expression. As with the terms 'women' and 'girls', the term 'gender-diverse people' does not denote a homogenous group or experience. Instead, it is a term that (while imperfect) seeks to recognise the particular experiences and risks of GBV faced by those who do not conform to traditional expectations around sex and gender.
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- 4 Save the Children (2023) ['Global Girlhood Report 2023: Girls at the Centre of the Storm – Her planet, her future, her solutions'](#).
- 5 Zhu Y., He C., Bell M., et al (2023) ['Association of Ambient Temperature With the Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence Among Partnered Women in Low- and Middle-Income South Asian Countries'](#). *JAMA Psychiatry*. 202380(9):952-961. doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2023.1958.
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