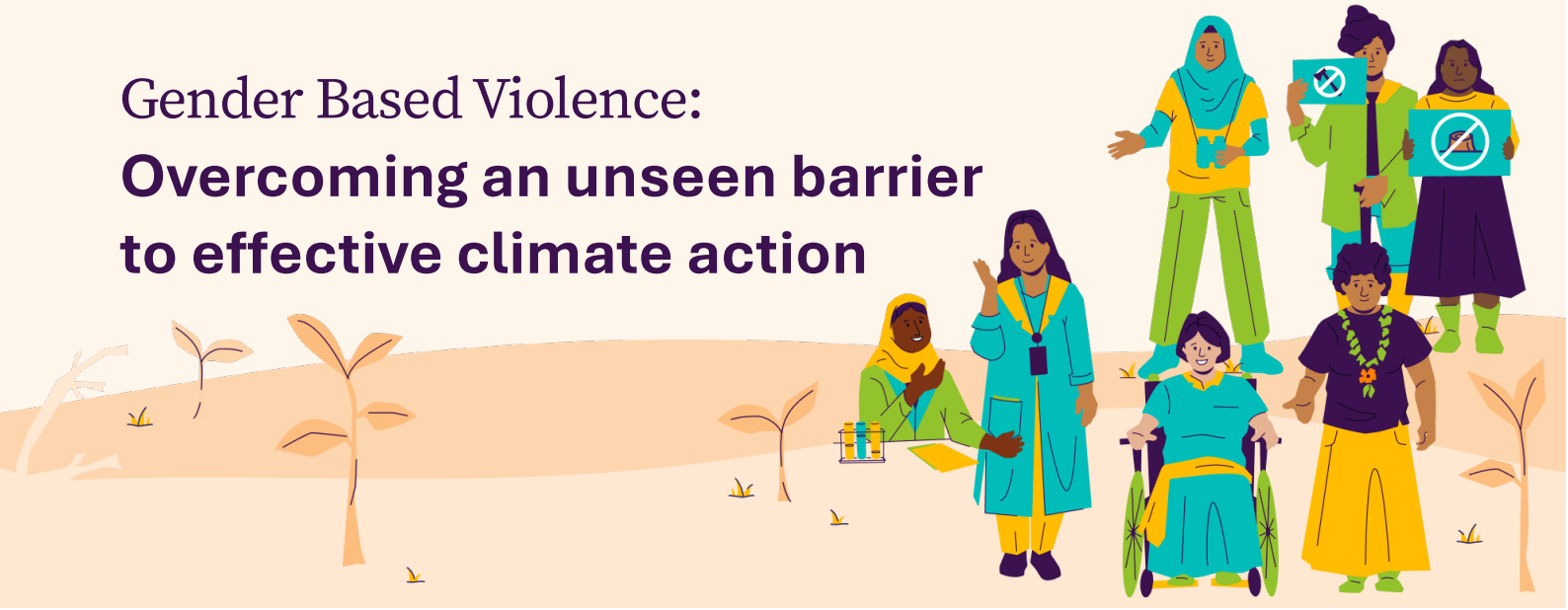
POLICY BRIEF – NOVEMBER 2024

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



Introduction

Addressing GBV is a crucial component of effective climate action. Creating safe, supportive environments enables climate policies and programmes to benefit from the diverse expertise and perspectives of women, girls and gender-diverse people[1] as leaders, decision-makers and participants. This supports communities to be better equipped to adapt to climate impacts, build resilience and move away from environmentally damaging practices. It is also crucial so that women, girls and gender- diverse people can engage with climate activism and the green economy without fear or intimidation. During climate emergencies, addressing GBV is also a crucial part of keeping communities safe.

Despite this, GBV is often overlooked when designing effective climate action and, to date, few climate programmes have incorporated measures to prevent and respond to GBV. However, there is growing international evidence that GBV can be prevented, with some interventions successfully halving violence within only a few years by addressing the root causes.[2]

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The policy brief was written by Francesca Rhodes of Care International UK, Naomi Clugston of Social Development Direct and Erika Fraser of Social Development Direct. It builds on an accompanying report that details contributions by practitioners and experts working at the intersection between climate change and GBV.

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 for information about support services available in your area.

This brief aims to help policymakers and practitioners understand how addressing GBV supports the effectiveness of climate change programmes and policies. It presents examples of emerging good practice and provides recommendations for all stakeholders to more comprehensively address GBV. This brief draws on evidence from across the world, reflecting the breadth of the challenge faced. However, given the Pacific and South East Asia is one of the most climate affected regions with a high prevalence of GBV, key informants from this region were prioritised. It draws on a literature review of existing evidence and practice on GBV and climate change, and interviews with climate and GBV stakeholders. An accompanying report provides further details of the research findings and case studies.

The examples in this policy brief reflect the immense contribution of women-led organisations working at the frontline of the climate crisis. They report that perpetrators are committing GBV with impunity, that this is affecting the ability of staff and communities to engage in crucial climate work, and that it must be stopped. These organisations have limited resources, yet promising practice-based lessons are emerging from their work, showing that it is possible to address GBV and create safer, more resilient communities.

"Research in three South Asian countries found a 1-degree increase in average annual temperatures results in a 4.5% rise in patterns of physical and sexual domestic violence."[3]

"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)

Terminology used in this policy brief

Efforts to prevent and address the impacts of climate change are diverse in nature. This policy brief uses the term **"climate action"** to refer to some or all of the following initiatives.

- **Climate change adaptation and resilience initiatives:** programming and projects that support communities on the frontlines of climate change adapt and improve resilience in the face of its impacts.
- **Climate change-induced disaster preparedness and response:** programming and projects which support communities vulnerable to climate change-induced disasters to prepare, respond and rebuild following these crises.
- **Climate change and environmental activism:** the work activists and environmental human rights defenders do to raise the alarm on climate change and pressure duty bearers to stop climate change and protect communities.
- **A 'just transition' to a low-carbon economy:** initiatives focused on transitioning economies away from reliance on fossil fuels and onto low-carbon alternatives, and climate mitigation activities.

This policy brief uses the term **gender-based violence (GBV)** to refer to any violence committed against women, girls or gender-diverse people based on their sex or gender presentation. It uses the term **sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (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.

Addressing GBV contributes to 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. For example, one initiative in the Pacific sought to move communities away from areas of coastal erosion, but when women experienced an increase in GBV in the new settlement, the programme lost the trust and buy-in that was needed to expand to other communities.

Addressing GBV also supports communities to move away from environmentally damaging practices. For example, interviews with practitioners in Uganda working to protect wetlands by stopping communities from farming this land revealed that the alternative livelihoods provided put female participants at risk of various forms of GBV. This led many to return 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's equal decision-making and leadership in **adaptation and resilience**

GBV poses a significant barrier to women and gender-diverse people's leadership and decision-making in climate programmes, as those facing or recovering from violence cannot or choose not to engage in activities, while others may be reluctant to engage in activities that will increase their risk of facing violence. Interviews with climate practitioners and WROs in Cambodia and Laos explained 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 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.[4] 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.[5] 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.[6]

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.[7] 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 meet 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. Addressing the increased GBV and SEAH risks experienced by women, girls and gender-diverse people during climate emergencies will lead to safer and more effective emergency responses.

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 activists. 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.[8] Online abuse against women and girl activists has also been found to increase self-censorship, limiting participation in activism and public life.[9] 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.[10] 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.[11]

Supporting a **'just transition'**

Addressing Sexual Exploitation Abuse and Harassment (SEAH) and GBV helps ensure the transition to a low-carbon economy does no harm, builds community trust in the transition, and enables effors 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.[12] 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 clean energy 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.[13] 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.[14] 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 GBV 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 industries poses a significant barrier to their engagement. Women working in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) experience high rates of sexual harassment, with research finding 43% of female STEM graduates, 50% of women in science, and 58% of women in academia reported having experienced sexual harassment.[15] A 2022 survey found 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.[16] 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.[17]

Types and drivers of GBV to address through climate action

Understanding the types of GBV linked to climate change and climate action is an essential starting point for practitioners and policymakers committed to improving their impact and effectiveness.[18] Context-specific analysis is needed to understand how particular climate interventions can most effectively address GBV risks and impacts.

Types of GBV linked to climate change and climate action identified through this research include but are not limited to:

Intimate partner violence (IPV): Climate change can exacerbate the drivers of intimate partner violence, for example, by increasing poverty and vulnerability. Men also sometimes commit IPV as a form of backlash when women participate in climate programmes. 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, putting the women at risk and undermining the aims of the programme.

Non-partner sexual violence: Non-partner sexual violence often increases after climate change-induced disasters. Following the 2018 floods in Lao PDR, 27% of people had heard of someone who had been raped.[19] The often severe and long-term impacts of this violence can substantially hinder the ability of survivors and their families to recover from disasters.

Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH): When Cyclone Freddy hit Malawi in 2023, women in Internally Displaced People (IDP) camps reported they were sexually harassed by aid workers and asked to perform sexual acts in exchange for aid.[20] There are also risks of SEAH associated with large renewable energy and green infrastructure projects, including remote locations, security personnel, transient male workers, and male workers on temporary contracts.[21] 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) who called for the World Bank to address cases of SEAH against teenage girls by construction workers.[22]

Child marriage: In East Africa,[23] Malawi,[24] and Bangladesh,[25] child marriage rates rose after floods destroyed crops and worsened economic conditions. In Ethiopia, child marriage, increased by 119% in 2022 compared to 2021 in areas worst affected by drought and food shortages, which can be exacerbated by climate change.[26] In Bangladesh, 45% of respondents linked early marriage to climate change-induced disasters, while post-disaster contexts also exposed girls to higher levels of violence due to unpaid dowries. Child marriage has severe consequences, including increased IPV, sexual violence, restrictions on educational and economic opportunities, isolation and removal of agency. Child marriage drives poverty and insecurity, restricting the safety and ability of adolescent girls and their families to adapt to climate change.

Online harassment, disinformation, and threats of violence: A survey of 485 women human rights defenders across 67 countries found that 1 in 3 had faced false accusations and disinformation, threatening their reputation and ability to continue their work.[27] UN research found that young women and girl activists, including those in environmental activism, are at particular risk of online harassment, blackmail, and deepfake attacks.[28]

Trafficking for sexual exploitation, forced and bonded labour: Climate change is multiplying the factors that can drive trafficking, including loss of livelihoods and poverty.[29] Further, a growing body of evidence highlights the role of climate change as a threat multiplier for child labour, particularly in the agriculture sector. Trafficking and forced labour are compounding challenges for communities trying to remain resilient to climate change.

BOX

GBV as a form of loss and damage

Loss and damage are the 'negative effects of climate change that occur despite mitigation and adaptation efforts.'[30] 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.'[31]
- Non-economic - 'negative impacts that are not easily traded in markets, and typically harder to measure in monetary terms, such as loss of culture, displacement and way of life. These tend to be more irreparable and irreversible.'[32]

The impact of climate change in driving higher levels of GBV has been highlighted by women's rights advocates as a form of non-economic loss and damage.[33] A study on how women and girls experienced loss and damage 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.[34]

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.[35] As this form of finance grows in prominence and scale, it will be important for donors and governments to incorporate the collection of data on gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI), including GBV, in accounting for what is considered loss and damage.

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.

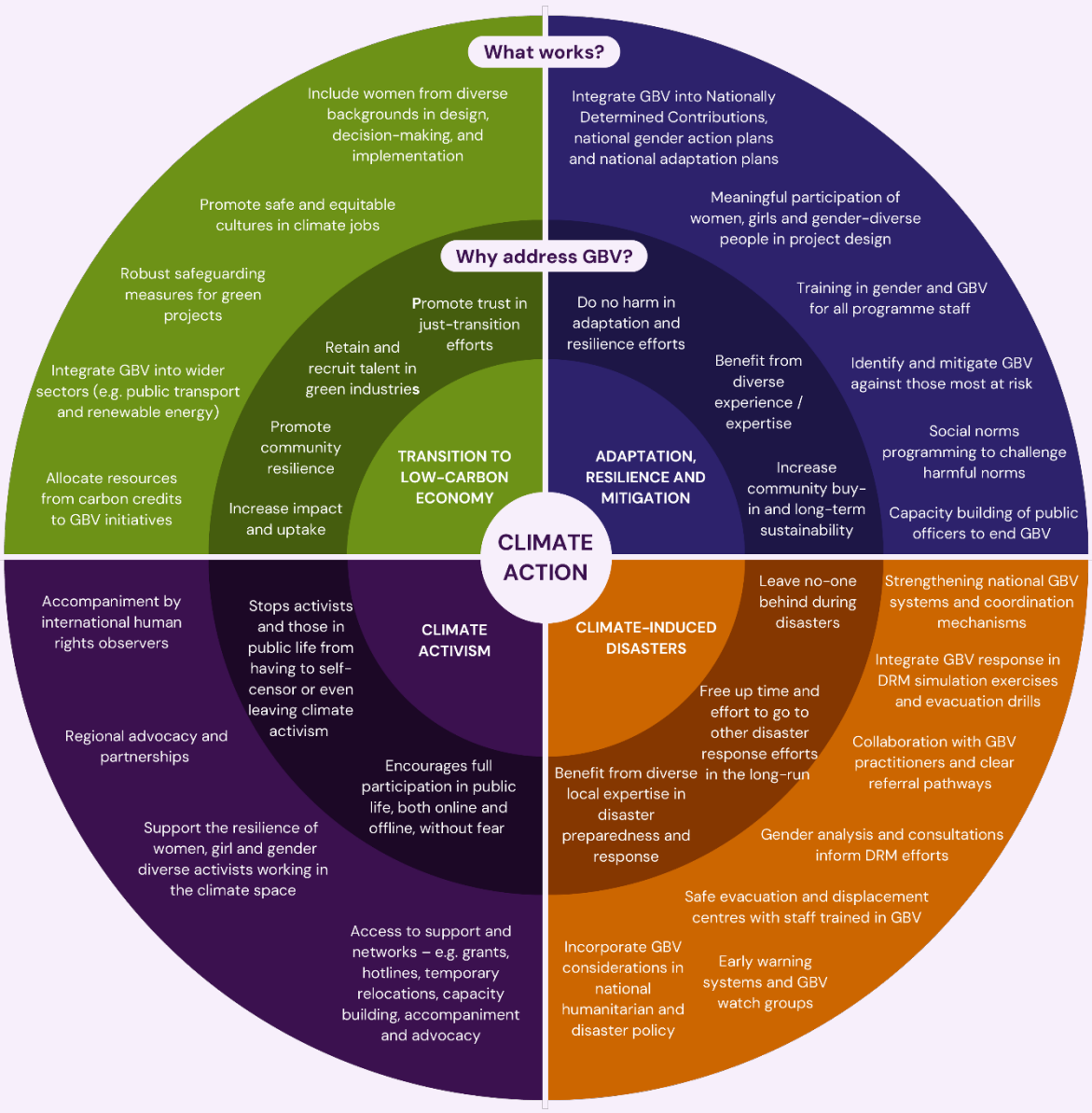
What works to address GBV in climate action

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.

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



Through key informant interviews and a literature review, we found the following examples of emerging promising practices to prevent and respond to GBV in 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.36 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.[37] 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.

Current estimates suggest that addressing GBV 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.[38]

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.39 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.40 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.

CASE STUDY

Addressing GBV to improve the participation of women in the protection of Indonesian Mangrove Forests.

In Indonesia, women in communities affected by environmental degradation experience GBV, including intimate partner violence, trafficking and violence from multinational organisations including death threats. The Srikandi Lestari Foundation works to advocate against environmental degradation, and support livelihoods and women's participation in conservation efforts.

HOW GBV IMPACTS THEIR WORK:

Within the community, GBV prevents many women from participating in programme activities, by impeding their ability to build resilience to environmental degradation, and contribute to restoration activities, making the programmes less effective. In addition, GBV against staff and activists strains the organisation's ability to function effectively.

HOW THE PROGRAMME ADDRESSES GBV:

- **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:** The Foundation organises 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:** The Foundation offers mental health first aid to survivors of GBV along with solidarity through connecting survivors with similar experiences.
- **Shelter:** Previously, the Foundation offered shelter to women who were working with them who had also been subjected to GBV and needed a safe space to stay.
- **Engagement with international human rights organisations:** The Foundation is in touch with international human rights organisations who monitor the GBV risks they are facing so that they can respond if any of the Foundation staff are harmed.

CHALLENGES:

- Safety concerns: The Foundation faces significant threats to staff safety, and needs increased support from other organisations and internal bodies 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.

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

Working with local and Indigenous GBV experts, survivor groups, and women's rights organisations.[41] 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.42 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.[43]

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.[44] 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.[45] 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.

CASE STUDY

Addressing GBV through disaster risk reduction efforts in the Philippines

The Philippines is a disaster-prone country experiencing an average of 20 typhoons annually, which are becoming more destructive due to climate change.[46]

HOW GBV IMPACTS THEIR WORK:

Most DRM programmes in the region focus on clean-up and skills training but often overlook GBV, which limits women's and girls' participation and safety in response efforts. When women and girls are unable to participate in DRM programmes, this reduces their opportunities to build the skills and knowledge needed to keep themselves and their families safe during disasters.

HOW THE PROGRAMME ADDRESSES GBV:

In 2020, the Indigenous-led organisation "Young Women Initiatives (YouWIn)" established a GBV Watch Group Campaign to address this gap. Each group consists of 15-20 women of different ages, from the LGBTQIA+ community, women with disabilities, and both Indigenous and non-Indigenous women. These GBV Watch Groups identify women at risk, help document violence, refer survivors to support services, provide psychological first aid, and assist survivors in reporting abuse. They also advocate for women's rights, collaborate with under-resourced local services, and are active in evacuation centres, where GBV and SEAH risks are high. The organisation has faced backlash from some men who resist their wives' participation in the groups. To address this, they work closely with communities to challenge harmful norms.

KEY LEARNINGS:

Stories of change show that women feel a greater sense of agency through their participation in the GBV Watch Groups, and men are better equipped to advocate for women's rights. In addition, organisations engaged in DRM now have a stronger understanding of the needs of women and girls in crises and are better equipped to support

GBV survivors, ensuring they are safe and have access to essential services during climate-induced disasters.

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

Training and capacity building on preventing and responding to GBV. For climate programming, whether adaptation, 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.[47] 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,[48] organise visits from international journalists,[49] 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 also 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.

BOX

Using Climate Finance to address GBV

Climate finance has the potential to create transformative action by integrating GBV prevention into broader sector-based climate projects, and targeted use of programme resources for specific activities designed to address GBV. 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.[50] However, the amount of finance specifically targeted at gender equality remained much smaller, and women's rights organisations are not able to access finance at scale.[51] 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.[52]

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.[53] 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.[54]

Recommendations

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

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.[55] 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 FUNDERS

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,[56] 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[57] 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.[58]
   - → **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, 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.

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.[59]

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.** 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 Enhanced Lima Work Programme and Gender Action Plan[60] are fully implemented at the national level,

including through appointing and supporting National Gender Focal Points to engage with climate policy decision-making and 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.[61]

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[62] 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.

Endnotes

[1] 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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