

Link between Gender and Climate Change



Women and disadvantaged groups tend to be more affected by climate change across various dimensions, including health and livelihoods. The impacts of climate change are profoundly unequal: women and other vulnerable groups tend to be more affected by climate shocks and stressors, including those arising from extreme weather events, droughts, floods, rising sea levels, and warmer temperatures. These shocks reverberate in unequal ways because women face systemic disadvantages in access to jobs, income, resources, finance, and information. These barriers reduce their adaptive capacity, as well as their participation in mitigation solutions and disaster preparedness and response. Gender gaps are increasingly seen as barriers to effective mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Nevertheless, women are also at the forefront of solutions and should never be underestimated as a catalyst for change. Globally, women have taken lead on various climate mitigation and adaptation strategies such as adopting new agricultural methods and techniques, responding first and swiftly in emergencies, and making critical decisions on energy use and waste management within their households. Sustainable climate action therefore hinges on their active involvement and leadership. However, the negative impacts of climate change permeate all aspects of women’s lives—socio-economic, gender-based violence, health, and education.

THEMES	NEGATIVE IMPACTS
<p>Socio-Economic Impacts and Vulnerabilities</p>	<p>Pre-existing socio-economic factors, laws and regulations, and social norms create conditions that weaken women’s social, financial, and economic outcomes following climate stresses and shocks.</p> <p>Women are overrepresented in employment in natural resource-based and climate-vulnerable sectors, including agriculture, fisheries, and forestry, often in poorly remunerated, low-status, and insecure positions. The physical impacts of climate change, such as droughts, desertification, ocean acidification, and flooding, reduce the income-generating potential of these sectors, undermining women’s livelihoods, community food security, and adaptive capacity. Droughts, extreme rainfall, and floods reduce women’s employment, especially in households where parents have less education.</p> <p>Women and children are more likely to suffer from climate-induced food shortages and malnutrition, while exposure to household air pollution is estimated to be around 40 percent higher for women due to the gendered distribution of household activities. The evidence for gender-differentiated mortality rates following climate disasters is mixed, although women’s responses to such disasters are typically more constrained due to social disadvantages.</p> <p>Climate change can exacerbate women’s time poverty, reducing the time women and girls must learn, work, and earn. Water and solid fuel collection, and other household chores, are primarily carried out by women and girls, creating dependence on natural resources. Depletion of these resources because of deforestation, land degradation, and drought forces women and girls to walk longer distances in search of water or cooking fuel which increases their time poverty.</p>



THEMES	NEGATIVE IMPACTS
<p>Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Exploitation</p>	<p>Women and girls are at the highest risk of GBV from climate-related issues and disasters. For example, women and girls are primarily responsible for food production and water collection globally. As these key resources become scarcer and unaffordable, violence against women and girls increases. Socio-economic pressures drive sexual exploitation and abuse, early and forced marriage, and intimate partner and domestic violence, among other forms of GBV.</p> <p>Girls are vulnerable to child marriages, especially in climate-induced poverty-stricken environments, as they are viewed as a source of income (i.e., bride price) by their parents. Child marriages are further instigated by a need for families to sustain their livelihoods and children dropping out of school due to scarcity of school fees. Girls are consequently exposed to gender-based violence and teenage pregnancies and related risks such as fistula and maternal death.</p> <p>Following adverse climate change events like famine and drought, girls and women move longer distances from home to look for resources like water, food, and firewood in fulfilment of their gender roles. Unfortunately, this exposes them to unsafe environments, increasing the risk of gender-based violence, including rape and defilement.</p>
<p>Health and Education Impacts</p>	<p>Water scarcity significantly affects girls' menstrual hygiene to the point of causing school absenteeism during their menstruation periods.</p> <p>In the wake of disaster or drought, girls may be removed from school or spend less time on schooling, either as a household coping strategy or to perform household chores, such as water or fuel collection, which become more time-consuming in settings of climate-induced resource scarcity.</p> <p>Girls and women who experience higher levels of poverty are more vulnerable to engaging in transactional sex, which correlates with an increased risk of sexually transmitted diseases.</p>

Call to Action

The negative impacts of climate change disproportionately affect women, girls, and other vulnerable groups due to pre-existing socio-economic factors, laws, and social norms that weaken their social, financial, and economic outcomes following climate stressors and shocks. Addressing these challenges requires integrating gender-responsive approaches into climate adaptation and mitigation strategies, empowering women economically, improving access to education and healthcare, and promoting gender

equality in decision-making processes. Governments and policymakers; international organizations like United Nations, World Bank, and regional bodies; research institutions and academia; civil society organizations; the private sector; and community leaders, among other gender and climate change actors, must prioritize these actions to foster resilience and ensure sustainable development in climate-affected communities.



The full research report is available at:

<https://regenerateafrica.org/2024/02/15/final-study-report-scaling-up-srhr-fp-for-climate-adaptation-and-resilience-in-uganda/>



Promote Gender-Responsive Policies and Economic Empowerment

Advocate for, promote, and implement gender-sensitive policies and inclusive economic programs that enhance women's resilience.

Invest in secure and well-remunerated employment opportunities for women in natural resource-based sectors and strengthen their adaptive capacities.

Implement programs to reduce household air pollution and provide access to clean energy solutions.

Intensify efforts to collect and utilize disaggregated data to better understand and address the differentiated impacts of the climate crisis, thereby informing and shaping effective policies and practices.

Reduce time poverty through development of infrastructure and technologies to lessen the burden of water and fuel collection on women and girls.



Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence and Exploitation

Establish and scale-up initiatives to prevent gender-based violence exacerbated by climate issues, creating safe spaces and support systems for women and girls.

Design and implement programs to prevent child marriages and improve the understanding of communities about its long-term impacts.

Strengthen legal frameworks and enforcement to protect women and girls from exploitation and abuse.

Strengthen the national-level evidence on the impacts of climate change on sexual and reproductive health and rights, GBV and harmful practices.

Increase safety measures for women and girls traveling to collect resources, including community patrols and resource centers.



Improve Health and Educational Outcomes for Women and Girls

Provide adequate menstrual hygiene facilities and supplies in schools and communities to ensure water scarcity does not impede girls' education.

Develop strategies to keep young in school during and after climate-induced disasters, including scholarships and school feeding programs.

Create economic opportunities and social support systems to reduce the need for transactional sex among women and girls.

Enhance health services tailored to the needs of women and girls in climate-affected areas, including sexual and reproductive health services and maternal care.

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