

CLIMATE JUSTICE AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS



Climate change, gender equality, and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are inextricably linked. SRHR must be considered as a key component of climate adaptation and resilience action and of climate justice.

AUTHORS

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UNDERSTANDING THE INTERSECTIONS BETWEEN CLIMATE JUSTICE AND SRHR

Climate change has a serious impact on SRHR. The climate crisis is worsening maternal health outcomes, jeopardizing progress on sexual rights, and exacerbating inequalities. The realization of SRHR is crucial for strengthening resilience and improving the adaptive capacity of marginalized people and communities who are already experiencing the disproportionate impacts of climate change.¹

Within countries and communities, risks from climate change are greater for “[p]eople who are socially, economically, culturally, politically, institutionally, or otherwise marginalized”.²

Photo credit: International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and Women Deliver.



CLIMATE CHANGE AFFECTS A WIDE RANGE OF SRHR ISSUES

- When vital infrastructure, such as clinics and highways, are destroyed by extreme weather events, **access to sexual and reproductive health services can be obstructed**, leading to negative sexual and reproductive health outcomes.³
- Pregnancy presents a biological vulnerability to climate change impacts. **Poor maternal and neonatal health** are increasingly associated with extreme heat, smoke inhalation as a result of wildfires, and air pollution.
- The climate crisis also **increases the incidence of sexual and gender-based violence**.
- The effects of climate change are also an indirect driver of **early, forced and child marriage**.
- Due to their frequent marginalization, **sexual and gender minorities are often more severely affected by disasters and extreme weather events** that result in humanitarian situations.

CONTRACEPTION SHOULD NOT BE SEEN AS A STRATEGY FOR CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION.

Advocating for restrictions on women's and girls' fertility as a means to solve social and environmental problems has a long, racist, and violent history, evoking population control and eugenics. Policies and practices driven by a desire to stem population growth have led to countless human rights violations.

Climate change mitigation necessitates tackling unsustainable consumption and production habits, particularly in high-income countries. The promotion of contraception as a climate mitigation solution places the burden of solving the crisis on those who are least responsible for it but are most affected by its consequences.

SRHR ARE CORE REQUIREMENTS FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND ADAPTATION

SRHR should be part of broad adaptation efforts, and understood as part of article seven in the Paris Agreement, saying that “adaptation action should follow a country-driven, gender-responsive, participatory, and fully transparent approach, taking into consideration vulnerable groups, communities, and ecosystems.”

For sexual health to advance, gender equality interventions beyond the health sector will also be required, including in climate policy. These should address the structural barriers embedded in norms, laws, and policies that currently contribute to and uphold inequality and injustice.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COP26

The Women and Gender Constituency and the SRHR and Climate Justice Coalition recommend the following critical actions at COP26 for Parties to demonstrate their commitment to SRHR.

- 1. Apply a human rights and social-justice based approach to climate action that includes the full range of SRHR.**
- 2. Commit robust and feminist financing for the climate and SRHR intersection.**
- 3. Ensure SRHR is integrated into specific UNFCCC Gender Action Plan activities.**
- 4. Engage girls and women, in all their intersecting identities, and youth- and gender-focused organizations in climate processes.**
- 5. Continue raising awareness on the intersections between climate change and SRHR.**

* The Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and Climate Justice (SRHR & CJ) Coalition is a global network of more than 25 organizations committed to collective action and coordinated advocacy to advance SRHR and gender equality in the context of climate change from an intersectionality and climate justice approach.

[1] Women Deliver. The Link Between Climate Change and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights - an evidence review (January 2021)

[2] IPCC (2014) Climate Change 2014: Synthesis Report.

[3] See World Bank data on CO2 emissions (metric tons per capita). Available at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EN.ATM.CO2E.PC>