

Gender-based loss and damage from climate change: Defining and meeting the challenges for evidence-based policy

21st meeting of the Executive Committee of the Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage, 11 - 13
Sep. 2024, Bonn, Germany

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Outline

1. Scoping the subject – from climate science to gender analysis
2. Reasons to focus on gender-based loss and damage
3. Gender dimensions of loss and damage
4. Meeting the data and evidence challenge

1. Scoping the subject – from climate science to gender analysis

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Social sciences have been part of climate science from the outset in the UN.2. The physical sciences of climate change are the essential baseline for understanding, but they always serve policy objectives to reduce GHG emissions and address environmental and socio-economic impacts through adaptation strategies.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• IPCC Mandate 1988• UNFCCC text 1992 | <ol style="list-style-type: none">3. The Warsaw International Mechanism for Loss and Damage associated with Climate Change Impacts (WIM), with its focus on impacts in developing countries particularly vulnerable to climate change, uses the tools of economics, statistics, health and social research and other social sciences to calculate:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Economic loss• Non-economic loss4. It is then a logical step to look beneath the level of whole societies and communities, to look at differential impacts, loss and damage between groups. And that includes gender analysis. |
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2. Reasons to focus on gender-based loss and damage



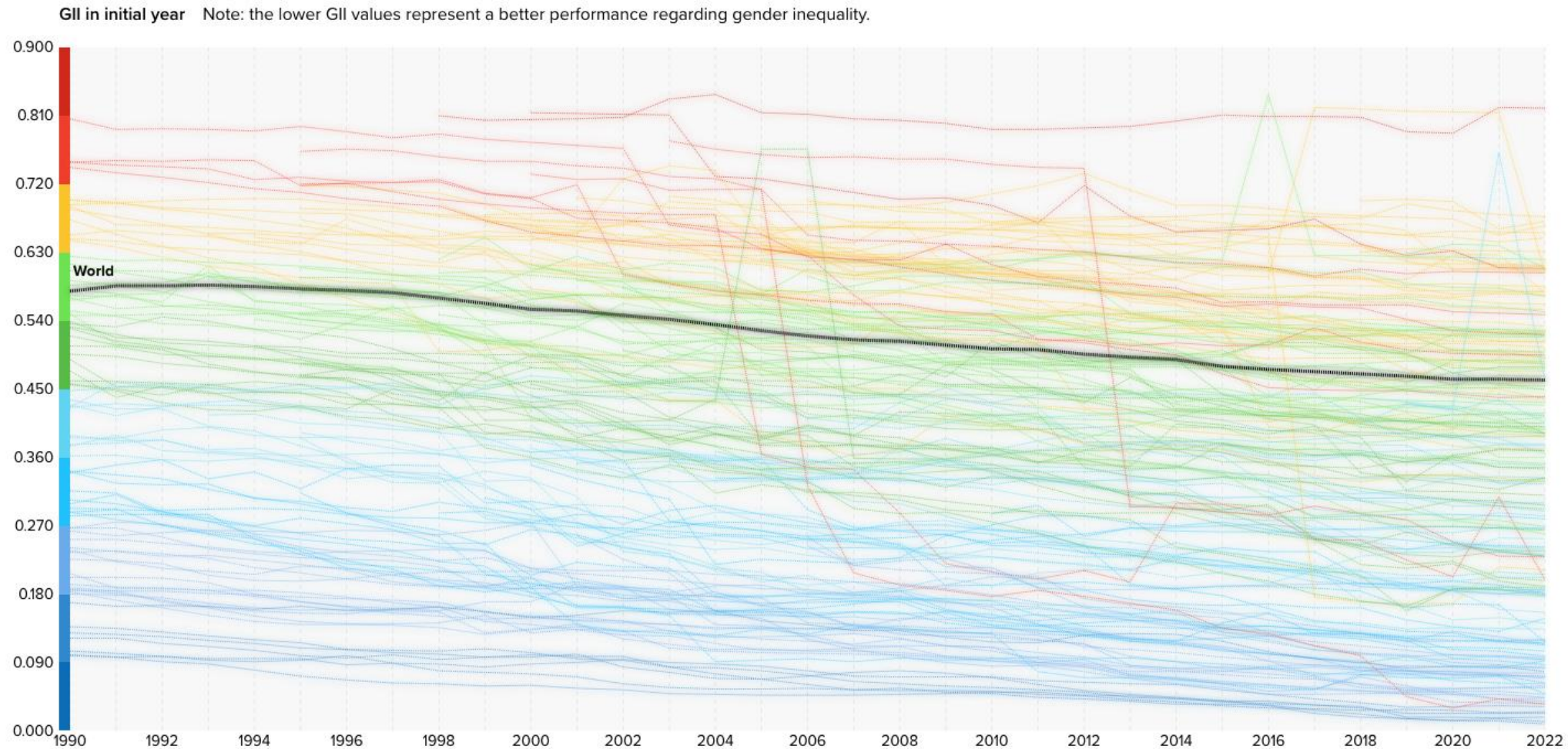
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Gender equality = a human right + an SDG + a UNFCCC goal

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Almost universal at 189 States.• Binding obligations on States.• CEDAW Committee - General recommendation No.37 (2018) on gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in a changing climate<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Widely consulted, expert• Key reference to understand the gender equality dimensions | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SDG 5 : Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls• SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts, not specific gender targets or indicators but disaggregated data could tell us a lot.• Paris Agreement: Preamble, Art 7(5) and Art 11(2) “gender-responsive” ambition• UNFCCC Enhanced Lima Work Programme and its Gender Action Plan - Decision 3/CP.25 (now due for review) |
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Slow progress: UNDP Human Development Reports Gender Inequality Index (GII)

GII is a composite metric of gender inequality using three dimensions: **reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market**. A low GII value indicates low inequality between women and men, and vice-versa. It has been improving very slowly on average, and the coloured country lines show it is uneven.

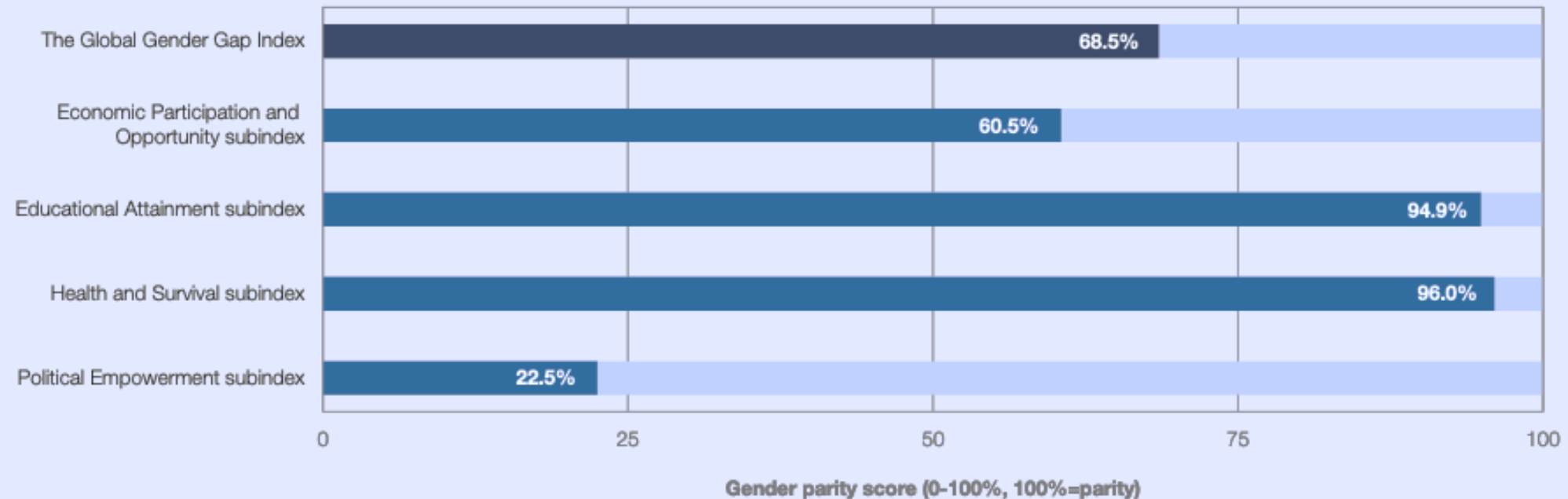


WEF Global Gender Gap Report 2024 – 5 generations from gender equality, **without counting climate change impacts**

FIGURE 1.3

The state of gender gaps, by subindex

Percentage of the gender gap closed to date, 2024



Source

World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Index 2024.

Note

Population-weighted averages, 146 countries. The percentages indicate of the gender gap that has been closed to date.

Climate change and disasters are risk-multipliers of existing inequality – IPCC examples

Climate Change 2022 – Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability: Working Group II Contribution to the AR6, Summary.

Vulnerability and Exposure of Ecosystems and People

- [B.2] Vulnerability of ecosystems and people to climate change differs substantially among and within regions (*very high confidence*), driven by patterns of intersecting socioeconomic development, unsustainable ocean and land use, **inequity, marginalization, historical and ongoing patterns of inequity** such as colonialism, and governance ³¹ (*high confidence*).
- [B.2.4] Vulnerability at different spatial levels is exacerbated by **inequity and marginalization linked to gender, ethnicity, low income or combinations thereof** (*high confidence*)...

Future Adaptation Options and their Feasibility

- [C.2]... Integrated, multi-sectoral **solutions that address social inequities**, differentiate responses based on climate risk and cut across systems, **increase the feasibility and effectiveness of adaptation in multiple sectors** (*high confidence*).
- [C.2.9] Social safety nets that support climate change adaptation have strong co-benefits with development goals such as **education, poverty alleviation, gender inclusion and food security**. (*high confidence*)

3. Gender dimensions of loss and damage



Image: Make Mothers Matter 2023

Around 200 million hours spent by women and girls fetching water every day (UNICEF 2016)¹ – droughts make it longer and add to existing risks of violence.

A gender lens on economic loss & damage

Examples - gendered economic losses in agrarian developing economies / SIDS

Climate change effects	Gender dimensions	Gendered losses
Damage or loss of local ecosystems from sudden and slow onset events or conditions (hurricanes, floods, droughts, desertification)	Women have reduced access to communal “environmental services” due to (a) increased competition with commercial businesses, and landowners (b) damage to ecosystems such as river water, forests, mangroves, shorelines. These are diffuse losses from communal resources, not the private or formal economy.	Women lose access to on-shore fishing, beach ecosystems and non-timber forest products, that they used for food or traditional crafts or medicines. These are rarely counted as losses in disaster contexts, although they have wellbeing, cultural and also economic value. Loss of access to clean, potable water from the environment leads to complex losses [see water example slide]
Disruption to private economic production and retail due to rapid and slow-onset events or conditions such as displacement	As many women work in the informal sector (family farms, micro enterprises) their economic activity is not counted in national accounts. Without a good baseline it is hard to count CC impacts, loss and damage.	The “backyard economy” mostly run by women includes small livestock, food gardens, fruit trees etc. that are not traded. They are possible to count because their loss must be substituted with tradable goods to maintain family nutrition and or other income-generating work.

A gender lens on non-economic loss and damage

Examples – some gendered non- economic losses

Loss of quality of life (shelter, food, health, skills, education)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Degraded or lost resources can change food habits if the traditional ingredients cannot be grown or found and impact their food security and nutritional status.• Loss of access to safe drinking water means mainly women and girls who will have to walk longer distances to get water.• Girls' access to education is often interrupted by crises and increased domestic labour, affecting their lifelong earning capacity
Mental and physical health impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Direct physical health impacts, such as increased heat-related illnesses and poor nutrition also affect pregnancy, birthweights and child health• Heat stress affects women outdoor workers such as street sellers and farm labourers and older women
Social disruption and (migration and displacement)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This can lead to loss of women's social support networks, traditional ways of life, and specific cultural heritage.• Increased economic-social stresses increase mental and physical health problems and gender-based violence, including trafficking and modern slavery

Example. Carrying Water.

Unpaid domestic labour, extended by droughts, heatwaves

SDG 6 for water and sanitation aims for universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water by 2030.

- In 2016 UNICEF estimated women and girls spend 200 million hours every day collecting water.
- This burden of unpaid work is highest in dry developing countries not yet able to provide water to homes or within 30 minutes' walk.
- Do we have good baseline data on this in relevant countries? Eg in Eastern and Southern Africa. When does it date from?
- What are the impacts of drought, heatwaves, permanent loss of water sources due to climate change? How do we look at loss?

Economic losses of climate change for women who need to carry water :

- Cost of buying water increases
- Cost of time lost to income earning work increases

Non-economic losses?

- Loss of time with family and in other unpaid domestic work
- Health effects of carrying heavier loads, longer distances
- Nutrition needs increase while productivity of food gardens and small domestic animals decrease
- Increased exposure to violence for women and girls walking longer distances

(Note: This is a simplified version of an example given by Dr Asha Kambon, Trinidad and Tobago, in a recent conversation)

4. Meeting the data and evidence challenge



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Challenges and opportunities

- National baseline data relevant to gender and disasters and climate change loss and damage is often hard to find but much of what is needed is there.
 - National census data can be used much more to understand the current and historical situation of women in the economy, political systems and society in developing baselines to assess climate change loss and damage
 - National disaster loss databases are being improved, with support from UNDRR, and this also country reporting to the Sendai Framework Monitor for global disaster data.
- Women's unpaid work and informal economic roles are still not adequately counted in national accounts. Either this needs to change, or parallel systems need to step in, if the gendered impacts of climate change are to be properly understood.
- Large scale and specific social and economic research (quantitative and qualitative) is needed on this topic, but there is also a large existing literature that is not necessarily known or used.
- The reports and databases of UNDRR, UN Women and the World Bank can be utilized more in relation to gender and CC, including UNDRR Prevention Web and UN Women "Women's resilience to Disasters" knowledge hub.

Three initiatives beyond UNFCCC to support the evidence base and action on gender and climate change loss and damage

- The [Gender Action Plan to Support Implementation of the Sendai Framework \(Sendai GAP\)](#) was finalized in March 2024 by UNDRR, UN Women and UNFPA, and provides significant guidance on the gender dimensions of both slow and rapid onset events, recommending focused actions to reduce and address gender based loss and damage.
- An international membership-based initiative which UNFCCC has joined is [the Gender and Environment Data Alliance \(GEDA\)](#) which helps fill the gap by “serving as a specific, dedicated entity to compile, curate, and communicate data at the intersection of gender and environment”. Hosted by the Women’s Environment and Development Organizations (WEDO) and IUCN.
- There are strong parallels with the widely used [Post-Disaster Needs Assessment \(PDNA\)](#) methodology developed by the EU, World Bank and UNDG for assessing damage, loss and recovery costs and needs in large-scale disasters. It is currently being reviewed after its first ten years.
 - It already includes extensive guidance on including gender in sectoral needs assessments as well as separate chapters on gender equality. **Gender [Volume B](#)**.
 - Its established gender damage and loss costing methodology is currently being updated with more examples and will also be informed by WIM.

Thank you!

Further questions? You are welcome to contact Dr Mary Picard at email: mary.picard@humdev.com.au



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