

GBV AoR HELPDESK

Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies

Learning Brief for Climate Actors: Integrating Attention to Gender- Based Violence in Climate Action in Asia and the Pacific

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Introduction

The Asia-Pacific region stands out as one of the most climate-related disaster-prone areas in the world. Alongside this vulnerability, the region is marked by high rates of gender-based violence (GBV). These overlapping challenges mean that climate-induced disasters have a disproportionate impact on women and girls, often intensifying existing gender inequalities and increasing risks of GBV. Ignoring GBV in climate action is a fundamental barrier to achieving effective, equitable, and sustainable climate resilience across the region.

Traditionally, climate change has been viewed primarily through environmental or economic perspectives. Increasingly, however, climate change is recognized as a protection crisis that requires all stakeholders in climate action¹ to consider the protection-related rights and needs of affected populations.² GBV is not only a key protection concern linked to climate change, it is also material risk that can undermine climate action outcomes, reduce return on climate investments, and weaken long-term climate resilience.

This learning brief introduces climate and disaster risk reduction (DRR) actors to the importance of addressing the connections

Box 1: How to Use This Learning Brief

This learning brief is designed for climate and disaster risk reduction actors working in Asia and the Pacific who are not GBV specialists. This includes anyone striving to limit climate change, protect people and ecosystems from its impacts, and support climate-induced disaster preparedness, response and recovery. Its purpose is to help practitioners identify and mitigate GBV risks within climate and disaster actions, and to ensure safe referral for survivors to specialized services where needed and requested. Environmental specialists, donors, government ministries and other relevant government actors, UN agencies, women's leaders and organizations and other programming implementers are encouraged to utilize the information in this brief for reflection and planning at different stages of policy development and program design, implementation, and review.

¹ In this learning brief, climate action refers to a wide range of efforts taken by policy, finance, technology, governance, programming and other actors to mitigate and adapt to climate impacts in just and inclusive ways and to support disaster preparedness, response and recovery.

² UNICEF. (2025). *Violence Against Children – The Forgotten Impact of Climate Change: Why child protection must be central to climate resilience and adaptation in East Asia and Pacific*.

https://www.unicef.org/eap/media/18401/file/Advocacy%20Brief_Web.pdf.pdf Also see

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/07/24/world-court-rules-tackling-climate-crisis-is-an-international-legal-obligation>

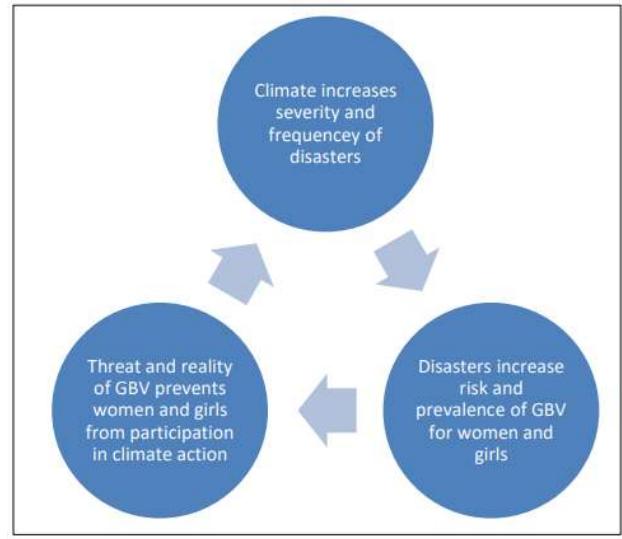
between GBV and climate change to facilitate more effective and comprehensive climate action in the Asia-Pacific region (see Box 1). It begins with an overview of evidence of how climate change, manifested through both sudden-onset disasters (e.g., cyclones, floods) and slow-onset events (e.g. drought) can lead to increased risks of GBV for women and girls, and how, in turn, this creates barriers to climate resilience. The paper then reviews the growing global mandate to integrate attention to GBV climate action. It goes on to explore core or overarching priorities for increasing attention to GBV in climate action and highlights associated gaps in meeting these priorities. It concludes with examples of specific GBV-related activities that can be introduced across key climate action pillars (e.g. adaptation, mitigation, and resilience, as well as in addressing loss and damage). A bibliography is appended for further reading.³

Understanding Why GBV Matters in Climate Action

While climate change does not cause GBV, it often intensifies the conditions that facilitate GBV. This creates a detrimental feedback loop in relation to climate change and climate action: climate shocks increase the prevalence and severity of GBV, and GBV, in turn, severely limits the capacity of affected communities—particularly women and girls—to recover from disasters and respond constructively to future climate-related crises (see Box 2).⁴⁵ Neglecting GBV in climate action makes attempts to address climate change significantly less effective because GBV undermines critical aspects necessary for successful adaptation, mitigation and resilience programming.⁶ These issues are discussed further below.

Climate Change Exacerbates Gender-Based Violence

Box 2: GBV as a Climate Risk Multiplier



Climate shocks can exacerbate existing patterns of GBV in a variety of ways. Throughout and following disasters, factors such as weakened rule of law, absence of shelter and other safe infrastructure, and increased competition for resources contribute to elevated GBV risks for women and girls.⁷ The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has recognized these links, noting documented increases in intimate partner violence (IPV), child marriage, sexual exploitation, and trafficking following extreme weather events and linked to climate-related resource scarcity.⁸

³ This learning brief is based on a rapid desk review of GBV, UN, climate action and other relevant guidance available online. While preparing this document, AI tools *ChatGPT* and *Gemini* were used to provide input to the literature scan and ideation. This document does not rely solely on AI/LLM output and centers GBViE human technical knowledge and information. This learning brief is a companion resource to a GBV AoR Helpdesk (2025) publication on climate action directed to GBV specialists working in Asia and the Pacific: “Key Considerations at the Intersection of Disasters, Climate Change and Gender-based Violence in the Asia-Pacific Region”, available at <https://sddirect.org.uk/resource/key-considerations-intersection-disasters-climate-change-and-gender-based-violence-asia>

⁴ UN Women. (2022). *Addressing violence against women and girls in the context of the climate crisis and environmental degradation: A snapshot summary on VAWG integration in climate policy*. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/CSW66-agreed-conclusions-and-ways-forward-for-addressing-VAWG-and-climate-change-linkages-in-policies-decision-making-and-programming-Summary-en.pdf>

⁵ Diagram from Quarterman, L. (2025). *Key Considerations at the Intersection of Disasters, Climate Change and Gender-based Violence in the Asia-Pacific Region*. <https://www.sddirect.org.uk/resource/key-considerations-intersection-disasters-climate-change-and-gender-based-violence-asia>

⁶ Prevention Collaborative. (2024). *Gender Based Violence: Overcoming an unseen barrier to effective climate action*. <https://prevention-collaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/1730999571-gbv-overcoming-an-unseen-barrier-to-effective-climate-action.pdf>

⁷ UNFPA. (2021). *Five ways climate change hurts women and girls*. <https://www.unfpa.org/news/five-ways-climate-change-hurts-women-and-girls>

⁸ IPCC. (2022). *Sixth Assessment Report (AR6) on Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*. <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>

Other areas of discrimination and marginalization can further compound GBV risk—such as racism, poverty, ableism, xenophobia and sexual orientation bias. (See Box 3 for a summary of climate links to GBV and examples of contributing factors.)

In **slow-onset climate events**, such as droughts that are worsened by climate change, evidence shows that communities under significant stress may revert to more conservative or patriarchal practices that harm women and girls, including increasing rates of multiple forms of GBV. The loss of property and communal resources, as well as the scarcity of food and water, can lead to community conflict over resources and a rise in violent behavior by men, including GBV. Additionally, as many women and girls have increased workloads due to challenges in accessing food and water and preparing meals, they may be less able to meet domestic expectations of male family members. This can increase household tensions and result in violence. The need to walk longer distances in search of potable water and food further exposes women and girls to the risk of sexual assault. In these conditions of resource scarcity, women and girls are also more vulnerable to sexual exploitation. When families are unable to meet basic needs, evidence indicates a significant increase in the risk of child marriage for girls.⁹

In **acute disasters**, such as flooding, cyclones, and wildfires, the risk of GBV can intensify for many of the same reasons. Displacement resulting from these events increases the exposure of women and girls to GBV in transit centers or refugee camps. Displaced women and girls may lack access to food or the means to feed their families, making them more susceptible to sexual exploitation including through transactional sex, and child marriage. Inadequate or poorly designed relief efforts can further compound these risks. For instance, a study of the humanitarian response in Samoa after a cyclone in 2012 found that the unequal distribution of relief supplies created community tension, which indirectly led to a rise in IPV.¹⁰

Box 3: Summary Climate Hazards and Potential Links to Gender-based Violence

Climate Hazard/Impact	Contributing Factors to a Rise in Various Forms of GBV	Types of GBV that may be exacerbated across various climate hazards
Extreme Heat/Gradual Warming	Increased household stress, mental health deterioration, economic distress, social conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sexual Violence • Child Marriage • Femicide • Human Trafficking, Sexual Exploitation • IPV • Economic Violence, Coercion • Harassment, Abduction • Targeted Violence Against Women Environmental Human Rights Defenders
Extreme Weather Events (Floods, Cyclones)	Displacement, infrastructural breakdown, resource scarcity, collapse of law enforcement/safety mechanisms, exposure in confined shelters	
Resource Scarcity & Ecosystem Degradation	Livelihood collapse, families resorting to transactional coping mechanisms, dangerous journeys for food/water/fuel	

Gender-Based Violence Reduces Communities' Abilities to Adapt to and Recover from Impacts of Climate Change

GBV can diminish survivors' capacity to cope with and recover from climate shocks, thereby weakening the overall resilience of affected populations. Examples of GBV-related issues contributing to poor adaptation and recovery include women's restricted participation, mobility and livelihoods, and erosion of protective services, discussed below. These issues may be even more acute for women and girls who are doubly or triply marginalized by additional

⁹ Gevers, A., Musaya, T., and Bukuluki, P., (2020). "Why climate change fuels violence against women," *UNDP*.

<https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/blog/2020/why-climate-change-fuels-violence-against-women.html>

¹⁰ Le Masson, V., Lim S., Budimir M, and Podboj J.S. (2016). "Disasters and violence against women and girls: can disasters shake social norms and power relations?". *ODI*. <https://odi.org/en/publications/disasters-and-violence-against-women-and-girls-can-disasters-shake-social-norms-and-power-relations/>

intersecting forms of discrimination.

- **Restricted participation.** Women often possess crucial, location-specific knowledge about natural resources, early warning signs, and local adaptation strategies, especially in sectors like agriculture and water management.¹¹ However, GBV can actively prevent this knowledge from being utilized to benefit the whole community. Fear of violence, harassment, or even retaliation in highly patriarchal settings discourages women from attending community-level meetings on climate preparedness, disaster planning, and resource allocation.¹² This exclusion can lead to adaptation strategies that are gender-unaware, and therefore fail to address the needs of all community members, ultimately reducing the effectiveness of the entire effort. In addition to communities losing out on women's knowledge to improve overall response, GBV survivors may be less able to access information critical to recovery.¹³ In coastal Bangladesh, for example, women who faced high rates of IPV often were unable to travel to district centers for training or secure micro-loans for climate-resilient livelihoods, leaving their households trapped in vulnerable, climate-dependent practices.¹⁴
- **Restricted mobility.** As noted above, in climate-stressed environments, women are often responsible for traveling longer distances to collect scarce resources like water or firewood, making them more vulnerable to sexual assault and violence, including from armed groups.¹⁵ In Micronesia, during periods of drought, women and children who were forced to walk farther to collect water reported incidents of rape and abuse by strangers along the way.¹⁶ The fear of this violence may limit household access to vital resources, in turn diminishing their adaptive strategies. In Bangladesh, for example, fear of violence when traveling longer distances to access clean water due to severe weather events was found to be associated with reduced water collection trips for women, resulting in families drinking less or using contaminated water, leading to poor health outcomes (diarrhea, skin diseases, high blood pressure from salinity) that weaken their resilience to climate adversities.¹⁷
- **Compromised livelihoods.** As noted above, climate-induced financial stress often leads to increased rates of IPV.¹⁸ This violence can in turn result in physical injury and psychological trauma that prevent survivors from engaging in income-generating activities or restoring livelihoods, further weakening the economic resilience of the

¹¹ Tantoh, H. B., & Simatele, D. (2021). "Gender roles and implications for water, land, and food security in a changing climate: A systematic review". *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*, 5. <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/sustainable-food-systems/articles/10.3389/fsufs.2021.707835/full> Also see Carvajal-Escobar, Y., Quintero-Angel, M., & Garcia-Vargas, M. (2008). "Women's role in adapting to climate change and variability". *Advances in Geosciences*, 14, 277–280. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/29631622_Women's_role_in_adapting_to_climate_change_and_variability#fullTextFileContent

¹² IUCN. (2020). *Gender-based violence and the environment - resource - IUCN*. International Union for Conservation of Nature. <https://iucn.org/resources/issues-brief/gender-based-violence-and-environment>

¹³ Prevention Collaborative. (2024). *Gender Based Violence: Overcoming an unseen barrier to effective climate action*. <https://prevention-collaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/1730999571-gbv-overcoming-an-unseen-barrier-to-effective-climate-action.pdf>

¹⁴ UN Women and IUCN. (2024). *State of Gender Equality and Climate Change in Bangladesh*. <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/09/state-of-gender-equality-and-climate-change-in-bangladesh>

¹⁵ World Bank. (2023). *Climate change and gender-based violence -- interlinked crises in East Africa*. World Bank Blogs. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/climatechange/climate-change-and-gender-based-violence-interlinked-crises-east-africa>

¹⁶ UN Women. (2014). *Climate Change, Disasters and Gender Based Violence in the Pacific*. <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/1/climate-change-disasters-and-gender-based-violence-in-the-pacific> Also see Hertzog, L., et al. (2025). "Extreme drought and sexual violence against adolescent girls and young women: A multi-country population-based study." *Global Public Health*. <https://journals.plos.org/globalpublichealth/article?id=10.1371/journal.pgph.0004752>

¹⁷ Landesa. (2025). *Climate Change Adversities and Gender Inequality in Bangladesh: Program Reflections*. <https://www.landes.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Climate-Change-Adversities-and-Gender-Inequality-in-Bangladesh-Program-Reflections.pdf>

¹⁸UN Spotlight Initiative. (2025). *Colliding Crises: How the climate crisis fuels gender-based violence*. https://spotlightinitiative.org/sites/default/files/publication/2025-04/Colliding%20Crises%20How%20the%20climate%20crisis%20fuels%20gender-based%20violence_0.pdf

entire household.¹⁹ In the Philippines, for example, Typhoon Haiyan contributed to increased rates of IPV, which then prevented women from participating in income-generating activities, such as rebuilding small businesses or engaging in relief-for-work programs.²⁰ This can slow the economic recovery of the entire family.²¹

- **Erosion of protective mechanisms and services.** Climate disasters often damage the infrastructure needed to address GBV, perpetuating a cycle of violence and inhibiting recovery. Essential services—including psychosocial support, shelters, health facilities, police and courts—are frequently damaged or overwhelmed post-disaster, making it harder for GBV survivors to seek help and for perpetrators to be held accountable. Displacement into overcrowded shelters or camps following a flood or cyclone that do not provide sufficient protection against GBV may make women opt to stay in unsafe homes or make-shift shelters, directly exposing themselves and their families to greater harm from the ongoing climate disaster, and decreasing the community's overall safety and ability to recover.²²

The Mandate to Address GBV in Climate Action

Recognizing that the climate crisis is a “serious aggravator”²³ of existing GBV, and that GBV is an impediment to successful climate work, a global mandate to address GBV within climate action is emerging in a convergence of international human rights and humanitarian agreements, environmental policy frameworks, and development policies and agreements.²⁴ Countries are increasingly encouraged to reflect this mandate in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Adaptation Plans (NAPs), as already demonstrated by countries like Fiji, which acknowledge an increase in GBV during environmental events.²⁵ Some of the core areas underpinning this mandate are summarized below.

Human Rights Frameworks and Agreements

International human rights principles, including the rights to life, health, and a healthy environment, are undermined when climate-induced resource scarcity or displacement increases GBV. The nexus between human rights and the environment has become more prominent in public debate in recent years. In 2022, the UN General Assembly (UNGA), voted in favor of the “Resolution on the Human Right to a Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment.” Although non-legally binding, this Resolution recognizes a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment as a human right and calls on all actors, including businesses, to scale up efforts to realize it.²⁶

¹⁹ OpenGlobalRights. (2022). *Gender-based violence and the climate crisis: an obstacle to climate-resilient communities*. <https://www.openglobalrights.org/gbv-and-the-climate-crisis-an-obstacle-to-climate-resilient-communities/>

²⁰ Nguyen, H. T. (2018). “Gendered Vulnerabilities in Times of Natural Disasters: Male-to-Female Violence in the Philippines in the Aftermath of Super Typhoon Haiyan.” *Violence Against Women*, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327063053_Gendered_Vulnerabilities_in_Times_of_Natural_Disasters_Male-to-Female_Violence_in_the_Philippines_in_the_Aftermath_of_Super_Typhoon_Haiyan

²¹ Women’s Refugee Commission. (2014). A Double-edged Sword: Livelihoods in Emergencies. <https://www.womensrefugeecommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Livelihoods-Double-edged-Sword-2014-Report.pdf>

²² UNFPA. (2021). *Five ways climate change hurts women and girls*. <https://www.unfpa.org/news/five-ways-climate-change-hurts-women-and-girls>

²³ UN Women & IOM. (2022). *Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls in the Context of Climate Change*. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/Tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-in-the-context-of-climate-change-en.pdf>

²⁴ UN Women. (2022). *Addressing violence against women and girls in the context of the climate crisis and environmental degradation: A snapshot summary on VAWG integration in climate policy*. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/CSW66-agreed-conclusions-and-ways-forward-for-addressing-VAWG-and-climate-change-linkages-in-policies-decision-making-and-programming-Summary-en.pdf>. For additional information about tracking integration of gender equality in national climate policies, see https://www.unwomen.org/en/climate-scorecard?f%5B0%5D=gender_dimension%3A4385

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ UN General Assembly. (2022). *The Human Right to a Clean, Healthy and Sustainable Environment*. (A/RES/76/300). <https://docs.un.org/en/a/res/76/300>

Human rights frameworks also establish binding legal obligations of states to protect individuals from violence and ensure access to life-sustaining resources, which climate change directly threatens. In particular, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) imposes obligations on States to prevent and protect women from all forms of violence and discrimination. The CEDAW Committee, through its interpretations, has made the links between GBV and climate explicit: General Recommendation No. 37 (2018) on *Gender-Related Dimensions of Disaster Risk Reduction in the Context of Climate Change* explicitly acknowledges that situations of disaster, degradation, and destruction of natural resources are factors that heighten the risk of GBV and calls upon states to take specific measures to prevent and address this heightened risk.²⁷ The agreed conclusions from the Commission on the Status of Women²⁸ in 2022 similarly recognize that the adverse impacts of climate change and environmental challenges increase and exacerbate the vulnerability of women and girls to discrimination and all forms of violence. In addition, the Women, Peace and Security resolutions (starting with UNSC Resolution 1325) increasingly incorporate the links between climate change, conflict, and gender-based insecurity, providing a mandate for integrating women's participation and protection into climate-security planning.²⁹

Climate Change Governance

Core climate agreements are progressing from being generally gender-unaware to recognizing the necessity of addressing gender equality and GBV for effective climate action. The 2015 Paris Agreement³⁰ preamble calls on parties to respect, promote, and consider their respective obligations on human rights and gender equality when taking climate action. This creates the foundational policy mandate for integrating protection issues into national climate plans. Under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the *Lima Work Programme on Gender* and its enhanced Gender Action Plan (GAP) are the primary vehicles for advancing gender-responsive climate policy.

While the initial 2019 Lima GAP did not explicitly name GBV, the global review process and subsequent decisions have increasingly emphasized the link. The finalized update—the Belem Gender Action Plan—released at the Belem UN Climate Change Conference (November 2025) explicitly addresses violence and harassment as key protection components of gender and climate,³¹ and reports informing the GAP revisions also highlighted that GBV is a key obstacle to the implementation of effective, inclusive and resilient climate action.³² In addition, as noted above, the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report (AR6, 2022) included GBV, noting that climate impacts can cause an increase in conflict within communities, including GBV, and citing documented increases in intimate partner violence, child marriage, and sexual exploitation following extreme weather events.³³

²⁷ UN Women. (2022). *Addressing violence against women and girls in the context of the climate crisis and environmental degradation: A snapshot summary on VAWG integration in climate policy*. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/CSW66-agreed-conclusions-and-ways-forward-for-addressing-VAWG-and-climate-change-linkages-in-policies-decision-making-and-programming-Summary-en.pdf>

²⁸ The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the United Nations' principal intergovernmental body dedicated to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls by shaping global standards, policies, and progress reviews. See <https://www.unwomen.org/en/how-we-work/commission-on-the-status-of-women>

²⁹ UN Women. (2025). *Advancing the Intersections of Gender, Climate, Peace and Security through the Women, Peace and Security framework*. <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2025-10/brief-advancing-the-intersections-of-gender-climate-peace-and-security-en.pdf>

³⁰ The 2015 Paris Agreement is a legally binding international climate treaty under the UNFCCC in which countries commit to limit global warming to below 2 °C through national climate action plans, adaptation, and climate finance. See <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement>

³¹ Specifically see Activity A.3.9, B3.3, and B4. UNFCCC Conference of Parties (2025). *Belem Gender Action Plan*. <https://unfccc.int/documents/654640>

³² Prevention Collaborative. (2024). *A Missing Link: the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan and Gender Based Violence*. <https://ww2preventvawg.org/news-events/gender-action-plan>

³³ IPCC. (2022). *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Cambridge University Press. https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/report/IPCC_AR6_WGII_FullReport.pdf

Sustainable Development

Policies governing sustainable development, including the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) explicitly recognize the compounding effect of GBV on poverty and resilience, framing it as a critical variable in achieving sustainable development goals. The current draft of the GAP linked to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) explicitly recognizes that "gender-based violence has been shown to escalate in situations of resource scarcity and increased environmental stress, including in post-natural disaster contexts."³⁴ It includes an objective to identify, eliminate, prevent, and respond to all forms of gender-based discrimination and violence related to biodiversity conservation and resource use. This objective is particularly important in relation to protecting women environmental human rights defenders (WEHRDs) who often face violence and threats when advocating for conservation and sustainable resource management against powerful interests. Major development finance institutions are increasingly linking GBV and climate action. For instance, the World Bank's IDA (International Development Association) investment mandates are helping to strengthen national frameworks to address GBV at the policy and institutional levels to ensure that climate investments "do no harm" and actively support gender protection.³⁵

Integration of GBV in Climate Action: Understanding Key Terminology and Key Gaps in Areas for Action

GBV is not just a side effect of the climate crisis, it is a structural impediment to climate action. Addressing GBV is therefore a prerequisite for effective climate adaptation, mitigation and post-disaster recovery efforts. As a first step to successful integration of GBV into climate action, it is important to understand the terminology used across both sectors, especially where terms overlap or are easily confused. Another step to integrating GBV into climate action is to recognize some of the common gaps in linking GBV and climate work. Key terminology and gaps are briefly summarized below.

Understanding Key Areas of Action and Associated Terminology

Climate action priorities generally focus on physical and environmental risks, seeking to mitigate future harm and adapt to environmental changes. The key areas or phases of climate change have been laid out in the 2015 Paris Agreement.³⁶ GBV priorities are anchored in feminist and human rights frameworks and based on global evidence and practice.³⁷ The primary goal of GBV core areas of action is to support women's and girls' rights to be free from violence, protect survivors, and ensure accountability. These differences in terminology and core areas for action and outline in Box 2.

Box 2: Terminology Describing Key Areas of Climate Action and of GBV Action	
Climate Action Areas/Phases	GBV Action Areas
1. Climate Adaptation is the process of adjusting to current or expected climate and its effects to moderate harm or exploit beneficial opportunities. It involves actions taken at the local, national, and	1. GBV Prevention refers to actions and strategies designed to stop GBV from occurring in the first place. Prevention efforts focus addressing the root causes of violence, such as patriarchal norms, rigid gender stereotypes, economic

³⁴ UNEP. (2021) Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Draft Post-2020 Gender Plan of Action, Objective 1.5 <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/0919/6830/6fe8d737b8192a39f3378e23/sbi-03-04-add2-rev2-en.pdf> Discussions are underway to support convergence and accelerate implementation of GAPs under CBD, UNFCCC, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction to ensure financed implementation. These mutually reinforcing policies emphasize GBV work as imperative to achieving climate and environment goals.

³⁵ World Bank. (2022). *Climate Change and Gender-Based Violence — Interlinked Crises in East Africa*. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/climatechange/climate-change-and-gender-based-violence-interlinked-crises-east-africa>

³⁶ Paris Agreement (FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1) https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf

³⁷ See, for example, the *Interagency Minimum Standards for GBV in Emergencies Programming*. (2019). For a discussion of feminist principles in humanitarian action, see Ward, J. and Voss, J. (2024). *Guidance Note on Applying Feminist Principles in Humanitarian Action*. GBV AoR Helpdesk. <https://www.sddirect.org.uk/resource/guidance-note-applying-feminist-approaches-humanitarian-action>

<p>global levels to prepare for and cope with changes in climate, such as rising sea levels, more frequent heatwaves, or altered rainfall patterns.³⁸ Examples include developing drought-resistant crops, improving early warning systems for floods, or implementing water-harvesting techniques.</p> <p>2. Climate Mitigation and Just Transition refers to human intervention to reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases (GHGs) and enhance the natural sinks. The goal of mitigation and just transition is to tackle the root cause of climate change.³⁹ Examples include transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy (solar, wind), improving energy efficiency, protecting and expanding forests (carbon sinks), and implementing carbon capture technologies.</p> <p>3. Climate Resilience is the capacity of social, economic, and environmental systems to cope with a hazardous event, trend, or disturbance, responding or reorganizing in ways that maintain their essential function, identity, and structure, and also retain the capacity for adaptation, learning, and transformation. A resilient system can minimize the impact of a climate shock and recover quickly.⁴⁰ Examples include a city with robust emergency services and diversified infrastructure that remains functional after a major storm; or a community with strong social networks that quickly mobilizes aid after a flood.</p> <p>4. Loss and Damage refers to the adverse impacts of climate change that occur despite, or in the absence of, adaptation and mitigation efforts. This concept addresses the impacts—both economic and non-economic—that are already happening or will inevitably happen, particularly in highly vulnerable developing countries, due to residual climate change effects that cannot be adapted to.⁴¹ It is the central political and financial mechanism under the UNFCCC</p>	<p>inequality, and weak rule of law. They seek to transform social norms, power imbalances, and structural gender inequalities that cause violence. Examples include implementing school-based curricula that promote gender equality and healthy relationships; running community campaigns to change attitudes about women's autonomy and decision-making power; implementing economic empowerment programs for women (while mitigating risk of backlash by working with men) to shift power dynamics within households; advocating for legislative reforms that establish equal rights and protections.⁴³</p> <p>2. GBV Response encompasses the multi-sectoral services and support provided to survivors of violence after an incident has occurred. Response work is centered on the immediate and long-term safety, care, and recovery of the survivor and aims to provide survivor-centered, confidential, and comprehensive support that respects the survivor's choices and dignity. Examples across core service delivery sectors include: providing clinical care, including medical treatment, psychological first aid, and Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) for sexual assault survivors; offering mental health services, counseling, and emotional support; providing secure, temporary housing for survivors and their children; and assisting survivors in navigating police and court processes, should they choose to report. The core guidance on GBV prevention and response in emergencies is the Interagency Minimum Standards for GBV in Emergencies Programming.</p> <p>3. GBV Risk Mitigation refers to actions taken to reduce the likelihood and severity of GBV occurring. GBV risk mitigation typically centers on non-GBV specialist sectors and the actions they can take to address GBV risks. Examples include ensuring that aid distribution sites (food, water, cash) are safe, well-lit, and accessible, and that hours are flexible; consulting with women on the design and location of new infrastructure, such as water points or shelters, to maximize safety; installing secure latrines and lighting in displacement sites to reduce the risk of violence at night. The core</p>
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³⁸ IPCC. (2022). *Glossary*. In: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/chapter/annex-ii/>

³⁹ UNFCCC. (1992). *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/conveng.pdf>

⁴⁰ IPCC. (2022). *Glossary*. In: *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*.

<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/resources/glossary/>

⁴¹ UNFCCC. (2013). *Decision 2/CP.19: Warsaw international mechanism for loss and damage associated with climate change impacts*. <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2013/cop19/eng/10a01.pdf>

⁴³ For additional information on GBV prevention, see the What Works to Prevent Violence Evidence Hub, <https://ww2preventvawg.org/evidence-hub>

<p>for developed countries to provide new and additional resources to assist developing countries in dealing with these unavoidable impacts. Crucially, GBV is a key form of non-economic loss and damage that has not yet been adequately captured in L&D negotiations.⁴²</p>	<p>guidance on GBV risk mitigation in emergencies is the Interagency Standing Committee Guidelines on Integrating GBV Interventions in Humanitarian Action.</p> <p>Key examples of prevention, response and risk mitigation actions that can be taken in relation to climate action can be found in the GBV AoR Helpdesk guidance Key Considerations at the Intersection of Disasters, Climate Change and Gender-based Violence in the Asia-Pacific Region.</p>
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Key Gaps and Priorities for Action in Linking GBV Prevention, Response and Risk Mitigation with Climate Action

Even though some important efforts are underway to improve the effectiveness of climate action by better integrating attention to GBV, there are significant ongoing gaps across key priority areas for action. Several critical priorities and gaps are highlighted below (noting this summary is more illustrative than exhaustive).

- **Priority for Action: Address limited policy development and legal frameworks.** A primary gap in policy development is the persistent treatment of GBV as a separate gender or protection issue, rather than a central driver of climate vulnerability and risk. This leads to a lack of legally binding requirements and dedicated resourcing. National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)—the foundational government documents guiding climate action—often fail to explicitly mandate the inclusion of GBV risk mitigation and response. Where gender is mentioned, it may not be accompanied with specific commitments to fund or implement GBV services in post-disaster budgets.⁴⁴ Environmental, infrastructure, or disaster risk reduction (DRR) ministries and agencies may lack the mandate, skills, or budget to deal with violence, and yet they often fail to integrate with Ministries of Women's Affairs, health services, and justice systems, which are essential for GBV response. This siloed approach can result in GBV programming remaining separate from climate objectives.
- **Priority for Action: Improve risk analysis and data/evidence generation.** Initial Disaster Needs Assessments (DINAs) and vulnerability analyses are rarely mandated to include a dedicated, robust component on GBV risks. This can result in generic or anecdotal protection data, preventing detailed response planning that addresses specific GBV related needs.⁴⁵ Moreover, there is an over-reliance on aggregated data-- rather than more detailed sex, age and disability-disaggregated data or intersectional risk analysis--and a lack of funding for participatory research led by local Women's Rights Organizations (WROs).⁴⁶ Consequently, implementing agencies often miss climate-specific GBV indicators, such as spikes in child marriage following a drought or localized sexual harassment around new water points.⁴⁷
- **Priority for Action: Accelerate GBV integration across all core phases of climate action.** Climate adaptation projects are often designed without consulting GBV specialists. This can result in infrastructure placed in remote, unlit, or unsafe locations, directly increasing women's exposure to violence when accessing the

⁴² Prevention Collaborative. (2024). *A Missing Link: the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan and Gender Based Violence*. <https://ww2preventvawg.org/news-events/gender-action-plan>

⁴⁴UN Women. (2022). *Addressing violence against women and girls in the context of the climate crisis and environmental degradation*. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/11/csw66-agreed-conclusions-and-ways-forward-for-addressing-vawg-and-climate-change-linkages-in-policies-decision-making-and-programming>

⁴⁵ IFRC. (2015). *Unseen, unheard: Gender-based violence in disasters – A Global Study*.

<https://www.ifrc.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/1297700-Gender-based%20Violence%20in%20Disasters-EN.pdf>

⁴⁶ Acanga A., Matovu B., Murale V., Arlikatti, S. (2025). "Gender perspectives in disaster response: An evidence-based review," *Progress in Disaster Science*, Volume 26, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590061725000134>

⁴⁷ Castañeda Camey, I., Sabater, L., Owren, C., & Boyer, A. E. (2020). *Gender-based violence and environment linkages: The violence of inequality*. IUCN. <https://portals.iucn.org/library/sites/library/files/documents/2020-002-En.pdf>

adapted resource.⁴⁸ Moreover, funding for adaptation is not typically conditional on access to GBV referral services; donors do not typically require adaptation projects to ensure availability or accessibility of services to survivors. Thus, even as GBV risks may increase as a result of these projects, access to care and support may be limited or non-existent.⁴⁹ Climate mitigation projects that introduce new resources, like community-owned solar power, often fail to address pre-existing gender inequality and GBV. If men control the new technology and the income generated, women may still be denied access to clean energy or forced to continue reliance on harmful biomass fuels, undermining the project's health and equity goals.⁵⁰ Resilience programming often focuses on economic recovery, but may fail to address the risk of economic violence (e.g., men seizing control of cash transfers or property titles) in program delivery. If resilience and recovery aid is siphoned off by an abusive partner, the household cannot recover, and the community's overall resilience remains weak.

- **Priority for Action: Scale up financing and resource allocation.** Finance remains one of the most significant systemic barriers to integrating GBV in climate action. Most climate finance is not formally tracked for GBV components. Major climate finance vehicles (e.g., the Green Climate Fund,⁵¹ and multilateral development banks) rarely require projects to budget specifically for GBV risk assessment and reduction, safe referral pathways, or survivor services.⁵² This means that when a climate project inadvertently exacerbates GBV, no funds are available for GBV mitigation or response. National budget lines for DRR and climate adaptation rarely include gender-responsive budgeting details, making it impossible to track whether funds are being allocated to GBV mitigation and response, such as secure shelter or psychosocial support programs for survivors.⁵³ Climate financing, humanitarian funds, disaster risk financing and public financing with climate action windows are also not streamlined or coordinated to support a common financing approach to GBV.

Recommendations for Integrating GBV in Key Pillars of Climate Action

Effective climate action must treat GBV as a core vulnerability driver. The following table provides several examples of specific actions across priority areas of policy, data, programming, and funding to ensure GBV prevention, response, and risk mitigation are central to climate work. The guidance translates evidence and global mandates into practical entry points across climate pillars and related disaster practice. It is not a checklist for GBV service delivery, nor does it require climate or DRR actors to conduct GBV case management, prevention programming, or investigations. Rather, these actions provide an overall starting point for climate actors. Climate actors should seek out and coordinate with GBV specialists and WROs in the planning and implementation of these actions.

Climate Pillars	Sample Activities for Integrating GBV (including Policy, Data, Programming and Funding Activities)
Adaptation (Adjusting to Impacts) <i>This pillar includes, for example, national and local adaptation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Climate policies and national governments should mandate GBV Risk Assessments (at minimum ensuring GBV is integrated into the required Gender Assessment) and mitigation plans as a pre-condition for all National Adaptation Plan (NAP) projects. ✓ Governments should collect data linking quantifiable temperature rises and other climate data to GBV and systematically provide this to the CEDAW Committee and other human rights treaty bodies. Data should be utilized to establish, under international

⁴⁸ IUCN. (2020). *Gender-based violence and the environment*. <https://iucn.org/resources/issues-brief/gender-based-violence-and-environment>

⁴⁹ Prevention Collaborative. (2024). *Gender Based Violence: Overcoming an unseen barrier to effective climate action*.

<https://prevention-collaborative.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/1730999571-gbv-overcoming-an-unseen-barrier-to-effective-climate-action.pdf>

⁵⁰ IWMI. (2024). *Gender-based violence prevention as a climate adaptation imperative*. <https://www.iwmi.org/blogs/gender-based-violence-prevention-as-a-climate-adaptation-imperative/>

⁵¹ See <https://www.greenclimate.fund>

⁵² World Bank. (2023). *Climate change and gender-based violence -- interlinked crises in East Africa*.

<https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/climatechange/climate-change-and-gender-based-violence-interlinked-crises-east-africa>

⁵³ See, for example, UN Women Asia and the Pacific. (2022). *Policy Brief: Gender-responsive Climate Financing in Bangladesh*.

https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/policy_brief - gender responsive climate fina shararat islam.pdf

<p><i>planning, early warning systems, resilient infrastructure, DRR and anticipatory action.</i></p>	<p>human rights law, an explicit state duty to prevent foreseeable climate-related GBV and be reflected in budgets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Climate actors should integrate GBV-specific indicators into all formal DINAs and national DRR plans to quantify GBV risks, including trafficking and child marriage. ✓ Climate project actors should conduct GBV risk assessment analysis <i>before</i> project design, focusing on <i>safety perceptions of users</i> related to resource access (water points, pathways). ✓ Adaptation projects should include mandatory, recurrent GBV training for all staff, including non-GBV specialists, covering risk assessment, first-line support, and ethical disclosure protocols. ✓ Donors, governments and project actors should strive to allocate specific resources from adaptation project budgets for protection, including safe infrastructure, GBV referral and response, and GBV staff training. ✓ Anticipatory action donors should dedicate a percentage of anticipatory and early action funds to local WROs for preemptive or anticipatory GBV response (e.g., pre-positioning dignity kits, pre-establishing mobile psychosocial support teams). ✓ National climate actors should incorporate practical risk-mitigation measures (safe siting, lighting, privacy, safe access routes) into preparedness and adaptation infrastructure. ✓ National climate actors should ensure preparedness and anticipatory action plans are linked to existing GBV referral pathways. ✓ Global and national climate actors should ensure adaptation strategies go beyond gender sensitivity to become gender-transformative,⁵⁴ through shifting unequal power relations between men and women and addressing structural factors that make women disproportionately vulnerable to climate impacts.
<p>Mitigation & Just Transition (Reducing Emissions)</p> <p><i>This pillar includes, for example, renewable energy, transport, infrastructure.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Mitigation projects—particularly given that mitigation sectors such as energy, construction and mining) tend to be male dominated—should strive to incorporate female staff, including in management. ✓ Mitigation projects should make adherence to a GBV/Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) Code of Conduct and an accessible, confidential reporting system a mandatory legal requirement for all project contractors (e.g. in clean energy infrastructure bids). ✓ Mitigation projects should monitor disaggregated data (at minimum gender, age, disability and geography) on grievances and reported GBV/SEA incidents related to project sites (e.g., construction camps) and share anonymized trends with GBV/SEA specialists for further support. ✓ Mitigation projects should establish and fund confidential, survivor-centered reporting mechanisms accessible to both project workers and local community members. ✓ Climate finance mechanisms [e.g., Green Climate Fund (GCF), Multilateral Development Bank (MDB) loans] should condition climate finance on evidence of robust, independent GBV risk monitoring and the inclusion of budget lines for survivor support services.
<p>Response and Recovery (Disaster Response)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Disaster preparedness and response actors should collect and use data on barriers to access (distance, safety, affordability, acceptability) for essential services (e.g. WASH, food) to inform context-specific GBV risk mitigation actions in disaster response.

⁵⁴ Gender-Sensitive work typically focuses on *coping* with the existing system. For example, a disaster relief effort provides separate, well-lit latrines (recognizing the differential safety needs of women) and ensures equitable distribution of aid. It avoids making things worse. Gender-Transformative work focuses on *changing* the system. For example, a disaster reconstruction effort not only ensures equitable aid distribution but also mandates women's equal participation and leadership on the reconstruction committee, granting them control over resource allocation and decision-making for long-term recovery. It actively seeks to shift power. See UNFPA. (2025). *Taking Action: A Handbook for Integrating Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Gender-based Violence and Harmful Practices into National Climate Policies and Action*. <https://esaro.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/2025-11/UNFPA%20-%20Climate%20Report%20%28Compressed%20Quality%20Version%29.pdf>

<p>and Recovery)</p> <p><i>This pillar includes humanitarian response systems and programs.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Governments and donors should mandate and fund the immediate establishment of separate, lockable sanitation facilities and designated safe spaces for women and girls in all evacuation centers, as well as other core safety mechanisms across sectoral disaster response. ✓ Disaster preparedness and response actors should coordinate with GBV specialists for information about where and how to refer GBV survivors and those at risk to specialized services. ✓ Governments and donors should establish accessible funding streams that guarantee local WROs direct access to climate resources for disaster preparedness, response and recovery. ✓ Climate resilience strategies should fund and integrate tailored mental health support services and fund and strengthen social safety nets (e.g., livelihood diversification, emergency cash transfers) to address the dual impact of economic stress and trauma that contributes to GBV in climate emergencies.
<p>Loss and Damage (Unavoidable Impacts Despite Mitigation and Adaptation Efforts)</p> <p><i>This includes funding to address economic losses (property, infrastructure, agriculture) and non-economic losses (lives, health, cultural heritage, ecosystems).</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ The governing body of the L&D Fund should mandate a GBV-sensitive approach in all funding, explicitly recognizing GBV as a protection consequence of non-economic loss (e.g., loss of community, displacement trauma). ✓ Governments should champion gender equality and the prevention of GBV in global policy spaces like the UNFCCC, specifically highlighting GBV as a key form of non-economic loss and damage in L&D negotiations. ✓ Donors should fund research led by WROs to document the non-economic loss of security and dignity associated with GBV following climate disasters (e.g. post-disaster child marriage). ✓ Donors and governments should ensure L&D assistance includes multi-year funding for PSS and specialized GBV case management to support recovery of survivors. ✓ Programs should prioritize shock-responsive unconditional cash transfers to women following disasters to mitigate the economic stress that drives harmful coping mechanisms like child marriage. ✓ L&D funds should fund national and international specialized judicial response, investigation, and prosecution of all threats and acts of violence against WEHRDs.

Additional Resources

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The GBV AoR Help Desk

The GBVAoR Helpdesk is a unique research and technical advice service which aims to inspire and support humanitarian actors to help prevent, mitigate and respond to violence against women and girls in emergencies. Managed by Social Development Direct, the GBV AoR Helpdesk is staffed by a global roster of senior Gender and GBV Experts who are on standby to help guide frontline humanitarian actors on GBV prevention, risk mitigation and response measures in line with international standards, guidelines and best practice. Views or opinions expressed in GBV AoR Helpdesk Products do not necessarily reflect those of all members of the GBV AoR, nor of all the experts of SDDirect's Helpdesk roster.

The GBV AoR Helpdesk

*You can contact the GBV AoR Helpdesk by emailing us at:
enquiries@gbviehelpdesk.org.uk*

The Helpdesk is available 09.00 to 17.30 GMT Monday to Friday.

Our services are free and confidential.