

CLIMATE CHANGE, GENDER EQUALITY, AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (SRHR)



CSW66 is an opportunity to advance gender equality and the fulfillment of sexual and reproductive health and rights, fully integrated with addressing the urgent crisis of climate change and the core rights endangered by it. **CSW66 must make bold strides in normative guidance and policy commitments to address these intersectional issues.**

THE CLIMATE CRISIS IS UNDERPINNED BY GRAVE INJUSTICES

Within countries and communities, “[c]limate change has already harmed human physical and mental health. In all regions, health impacts often undermine efforts for inclusive development. Women, children, the elderly, Indigenous People, low-income households, and socially marginalized groups within cities, settlements, regions, and countries are the most vulnerable.”³ Those who contributed the least to the climate crisis suffer first and worst from its consequences, and have

limited access to the resources needed to adapt to climate change, to maintain good health, and to exercise their human right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, including SRHR.

GENDER EQUALITY IS HINDERED BY CLIMATE CHANGE

Historical and structural inequalities in gender power relations, reinforced through colonial, neoliberal, and fundamentalist policies and practices have already led to barriers to gender equality and the empowerment

of women and girls in all their diversity. Climate change, with impacts on natural resources, infrastructure, food, security and sovereignty, education, migration, conflict, health and well-being, among others, exacerbates those barriers. “Individual livelihoods have been affected through changes in agricultural productivity, impacts on human health and food security, destruction of homes and infrastructure, and loss of property and income, with adverse effects on gender and social equity.”⁴

KEY MESSAGES ON SRHR AND CLIMATE JUSTICE

- SRHR and bodily autonomy are foundations for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.
- Realizing SRHR is crucial for climate justice, for strengthening resilience, and for supporting the adaptive capacity of marginalized people and communities who are already experiencing the disproportionate impacts of climate change, including loss and damage.
- SRHR must be incorporated as a key component of environmental, climate change, and disaster risk reduction policies and programs, to ensure their success and support the achievement of gender equality and the fulfillment of the right to health.
- A human rights-based approach to climate action includes ensuring universal access to the full range of SRHR.
- Multiple and intersecting forms of violence, discrimination, stigmatization, exclusion and inequalities, for example, on the basis of age, household and relationship status, indigeneity, race or ethnicity, HIV/AIDS status, disability, immigration status, socioeconomic status, employment, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, sex characteristics, and other grounds-heighten vulnerability to climate change and also adversely impact SRHR.
- Climate change has differential and negative impacts on women, girls, and gender-diverse people, including on their ability to exercise their SRHR, as a result of structural discrimination and intersecting inequalities that contribute to marginalization and vulnerability.
- Climate resilient health systems are more likely to support and ensure sexual and reproductive health services in times of crisis or disaster.
- To advance SRH, gender equality interventions must address the structural barriers embedded in norms, laws, and policies that contribute to inequality and injustice. This must happen beyond the health sector, including in climate policies.
- Climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programs must be developed and implemented with an intersectional, equitable lens, and a human rights-based approach.

CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION CANNOT BE AN EXCUSE FOR POPULATION CONTROL MEASURES

A human rights-based approach to climate justice centers a person’s bodily autonomy and individual choice. Contraception and family planning are not climate mitigation measures. Restricting fertility and using coercive measures to address social and environmental problems and stem population growth has a long, racist, and violent history that violates human rights and undermines bodily autonomy. The move away from a population-focus began in 1994 with the International Conference on Population and Development. Mitigating climate change requires immediate emissions reductions and transformation to sustainable consumption and production, especially in higher income countries. Systemic transformation and responsibility for reducing global greenhouse gas emissions should not be placed on people, particularly women and girls, in low-emitting countries who contribute very little to the causes of climate change but are highly vulnerable to its effects.

Factsheet for the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66)¹ by the SRHR & Climate Justice Coalition²

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CSW66

- 1. CSW66 must bring new language at the intersection of climate change and gender.** Previously agreed upon language is not sufficient to make progress on gender equality or fulfilling sexual and reproductive health and rights in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programs. It can serve as a basis for text in the CSW66 Agreed Conclusions, but **new language must be crafted to advance gender equality, women's human rights, and the empowerment of all women and girls while addressing the climate crisis.**
2. Commit to **mainstreaming gender and sexual and reproductive health and rights in national policies, programming, and budgets related to climate change and disaster risk reduction**, and commit to engaging girls and women, in all their intersecting identities, and youth and women-led organizations, in the design, development, implementation, and monitoring of **rights-based policies and programs** integrating SRHR.
3. Recognize the lack of financial and other resources supporting women's and feminist organizations' climate work overall, and especially at the intersection of SRHR and climate, and **commit to robust and feminist financing for the climate and SRHR intersection through holistic and integrated efforts**, including:
 - Investments that address underlying systemic causes of vulnerabilities to the climate crisis, including for women, girls and Indigenous people,
 - Funds that are directed to feminists and women's rights organizations,
 - Investments in climate-resilient health systems,
 - Social protection and public services,
 - Universal health coverage, including SRH in essential services, and
 - Support and training for community health workers specializing in SRH.
- 4. Invest in data, information, and education.** Invest in the **collection, analysis, and use of data disaggregated** by income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migratory status, disability, geographic location, and other characteristics relevant in national contexts that furthers the understanding of interlinkages between SRHR and climate change, with an intersectional lens. **Commit to education and information, including comprehensive sexuality education**, that support women and girls' participation and leadership in the just and equitable transition to a regenerative economy and in climate decision-making.
5. Acknowledge the Gender Action Plan under the UNFCCC in the preambular paragraphs, and the opportunity it presents to integrate SRHR. In the operative paragraphs, **urge Member States to integrate SRHR into the Gender Action Plan under all its priority areas**, including capacity-building, knowledge management, coherence, gender-responsive means of implementation, and monitoring and reporting.
- 6. Support opportunities to strengthen knowledge of and integrate action on the intersections between climate change and SRHR.** Promote collaboration between government entities working on climate change, gender, health, and SRHR so that SRHR considerations can be integrated in country-level climate and disaster policies and programs, including NDCs and NAPs. Hold spaces in global development processes such as CSW, COP, Generation Equality Forum follow-up, and other climate platforms to discuss and raise awareness on these issues.

According to the Gutmacher-Lancet Commission on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights⁵, achieving sexual and reproductive health, defined as “a state of physical, emotional, mental, and social wellbeing in relation to all aspects of sexuality and reproduction, not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction, or infirmity,” relies on the realization of SRHR. It requires the provision of an essential package of SRH interventions, including on gender-based violence, HIV/AIDS and other STIs, contraception, maternal and newborn health, abortion, infertility, and reproductive cancers.

SRHR MUST BE INTEGRATED INTO CLIMATE ACTION

Gender equality depends on fulfilling the right to health. Global progress on equitable access to affordable, quality comprehensive sexual and reproductive healthcare (SRH), including through universal health coverage, is inadequate. Lack of SRH drives poverty, deepening the vulnerability of women and girls across their life course; they are the majority of those impoverished globally and often bear heavy care-taking responsibilities. It also results in a range of health injustices, including high rates of maternal deaths, premature birth, unsafe abortions, and high HIV transmission to girls and women. Strong, accessible, and resilient health systems that serve the specific SRH needs of all women and girls and gender diverse people, whether for contraception, antenatal care, or infertility, are required to fulfill the right to health and to build adaptive capacity and strengthen resilience to direct and indirect climate impacts.

[1]. [CSW66](#) theme: Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes.

[2]. [The Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and Climate Justice \(SRHR & CJ\) Coalition](#) is a global network of more than 50 civil society 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.

[3]. IPCC, 2022: [Technical Summary](#). 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 a period.

[4]. IPCC, 2022: [Summary for Policymakers](#). 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 a period.

[5]. Starrs, et al. [Accelerate progress – sexual and reproductive health and rights for all](#): report of the Gutmacher-Lancet Commission. Lancet 391 (2018): 2642–92.

HOW TO JOIN THE COALITION

To find out more about the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and Climate Justice coalition, including how to join, please visit <https://womensgenderclimate.org/map/srhr-and-climate-justice-coalition/>