

Towards Localisation of Gender, Climate and Security: Moving Beyond Commitments and Towards an Action¹

This submission highlights the key findings and recommendations of GPPAC's work on the nexus between gender, climate, and security.

In his October 2021 statement to the Peacebuilding Commission, the UN Secretary-General stated that the role of the entire UN System, including the Peacebuilding Commission, the Security Council, the UN agencies, funds and programmes, along with the partners, is to address an important challenge of climate change in a “comprehensive manner.”² The current climate crisis leads to increased competition over resources, exacerbates vulnerabilities and livelihood insecurity, and is a push factor for migration and displacement. Women and girls are especially affected by the situation because they face societal expectations created by intersectional factors that fuel discrimination, including their gender, age, geographical location, disabilities, sexual orientation, and/or ethno-religious background.³

1. Supporting the localisation approach through trust, respect and authentic partnership with the feminist peacebuilding networks.

Local and indigenous knowledge is imperative to responding to climate challenges but is seldom taken into consideration by policymakers, who tend to resort to top-down decision making. Climate change has extremely diverse impacts depending on a specific context. Some areas are facing conflicts over resource scarcity; in other areas, flooding and sea-level rise force communities to relocate; in other cases, the conflict brings communities closer to an ecological catastrophe. These dynamics are not mutually exclusive, they can occur simultaneously or in different periods in the same place. In this context, women have the local expertise and knowledge to address the Triple Nexus, but if their participation is seldom supported in decision-making, this expertise is lost and responses often are less-effective. It is local women’s proximity to climate risks that make them the most equipped to prevent and mitigate conflicts in the midst of a climate crisis. Such efforts need to be supported politically, operationally, and financially.

One interesting case for understanding the need for localisation of climate action through women’s participation can be noted from Uganda. This country is currently experiencing dry spells and resulting conflicts over water and food. Moreover, construction in Uganda is often very wood intensive. Women are often pushed into selling wood as their main source of livelihood. It is important then to provide the resources for women to pursue alternative livelihoods, as well as the resources to replace cut-down trees. Women are also integral to reducing incidents of male violence. In Uganda, marriages require a dowry, which is often paid in the form of animals. Conflicts arise when men feel pressured to try to find animals, potentially crossing disputed borders. This context speaks clearly to the need to localise the global

¹ This brief summary note of the key points is prepared by the GPPAC Global Secretariat, with the support of GPPAC’s climate advisory group. Special thanks are extended to Adriana Abdenur and Sharon Bhagwan Rolls for their invaluable contribution to this note.

² United Nations, Department of Public Information, Secretary-General, Addressing Peacebuilding Commission, Says New Agenda for Peace ‘Is Our Platform to Update Promise’ of Saving Future Generations from War. SG/SM/20985 22 October 2021, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2021/sgsm20985.doc.htm>

³ See the Global Network of Women Peacebuilders (GNWP), Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) and the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation (DHF), At the crossroads of Climate, Gender and Sustaining Peace: What is the role of the UN peacebuilding architecture?, <https://www.daghammarskjold.se/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/climate-gender-and-sustaining-peace-summary-note.pdf>

development and peacebuilding agendas in an attempt to work with communities in the development of tools and resources to respond to immediate needs and support long-term peaceful co-existence and sustainability of communities.

Good practices:

- GPPAC-Pacific member Vanuatu Young Women for Change was part of the first **all indigenous women-led response to category 5 Tropical Cyclone Harold in 2020**, working in collaboration with ActionAid Vanuatu and Vanuatu Disability Promotion and Advocacy.
- In January 2021, following Tropical Cyclone Yasa 6, **diverse first responders across Fiji's two main islands provided emergency relief and convened safe spaces for rural women** to discuss how to enhance their protection and effectively demand their participation in disaster response and long-term recovery plans for COVID-19.
- The GPPAC Pacific “**on the mat” methodology supported by the IOM** provides an opportunity for women to informally come together and conduct sessions and strategise and discuss local priorities which are then connected to the national government and regional intergovernmental processes. These sessions in Fiji, Bougainville/Papua New Guinea, and Vanuatu have already proven the ability of women to conduct effective mapping of risks and develop conflict prevention strategies rooted in the principles of human security. Such a model can serve as an avenue to develop climate security action plans at the national, regional and global levels.
- **The Pacific Partnership to Strengthen Gender, Climate Change Responses and Sustainable Development (PPGCCSD)** has become an online platform that brings attention to local action on global priorities while supporting learning and alliance building across the wide Pacific region. These resources can ensure that local women can better understand their options and strategise their engagement with decision-makers.

Recommendations for the UN and Member States:

- *Support feminist peacebuilding networks that employ a feminist intersectional and intergenerational approach.* There are several opportunities for the UN and its Member States to meaningfully support women’s peacebuilding networks in advancing climate and security action. These include 1) providing financial and political support to locally-led networks that provide diverse expertise at the community level (i.e., investing in community-led approaches, consortia, and coalitions to facilitate the inclusive involvement of different societal groups (i.e., young, differently-abled, indigenous women) and 2) incentivising network collaboration and engagement (i.e., supporting specific convening and conference grants to support women local peacebuilders to access a greater diversity of knowledge and experience (i.e., of varied local contexts), expertise (i.e., in human rights, gender, the environment, economic development, law), and constituencies (i.e., different ethnic and religious groups, youth, women)).
- *Include local communities in the climate security programming.* Communities must trust the process. This requires processes that support open and frank dialogue with those who design programming from the very beginning (i.e., goals, activities, and indicators for relevant programmes). Women can help facilitate the connection to the communities. Any action planned should build on what is already exist within communities and the initiatives, infrastructures and approaches already led by local women and feminist champions. It is similarly critical to ensure that the proposed interventions build on the initiatives that already exist within communities. Finally, it is critical to building gender-sensitive infrastructures for peace that sustain activities within communities beyond the scope of a specific project (i.e., creating local women’s councils, early warning, and early response systems, etc.).

- *Support women-led think tanks and other knowledge platforms working on gender, climate and security.* Women's organisations are sometimes engaged by the UN system as local implementing agencies, but they are also powerful generators of analyses and knowledge and should be better incorporated into policy discussions and decisions at the global and regional levels.
- *Frame the issue of climate and feminism in line with political dynamics.* Same is the case with feminist foreign policy, it creates enormous backlash not only from the right, but also from left leaning circles that accuse feminism of overlooking black women.

2. Sustainable, accessible and adequate financing for women's engagement in climate security.

There is substantial evidence and the recognition by the various UN actors, including the Peacebuilding Commission, the Security Council, and the Secretary-General that applying a gender lens to climate action by investing in women's leadership helps countries more effectively adapt to climate change and actually reduce the gendered impacts of the climate crisis. Women's initiatives however require sustained funding, which most of them do not have. Women often rely on short-term project grants and constantly divert their attention from pressing needs of their communities to seek opportunities to support their work. In the Pacific – a region heavily impacted by climate change – only 1% of funding was found to be directed to Pacific women's organisations, and overall funding for women's empowerment in the Pacific has stagnated since 2012. Generally, beyond funding for feminist peacebuilding movement, there is an overarching challenge of making financing more effective and impactful at the country level. This is aggravated by the fact that there is no dedicated fund for climate and security. A tight restrictive funding environment leaves feminist and women's organisations with little room to maneuver.

Good practices:

- The establishment of **the Pacific Island Feminist Alliance for Climate Justice** reaffirms the diversity of women-led climate justice. Through a movement-led committee which includes the Shifting the Power Coalition steering committee, DIVA for Equality, Pacific Conference of Churches and Kiribati Climate Action Network (KIRICAN) is putting decision making on climate justice funds in the hands of Pacific Island women.
- In West Africa, **the UN Climate and Security Mechanism** supports inclusive climate risk management that promotes conflict prevention by linking national and regional actors, involving the private sector, distributing new technology and renewable energy resources and improving women's access to land.
- **The Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)** plays a catalytic role in climate action and can have a multiplier effect on investments in climate security. A recent example of this work can be found in the Pacific, where the PBF has pledged US\$3.2 million to support a climate security project in partnership with the Governments of Kiribati, Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands. The project aims to address climate security challenges faced by the three nations, including displacement and forced migration due to the loss of livelihoods, food sources and coastal erosion and increased social tensions linked to shrinking land and fisheries resources.⁴

Recommendations:

- *Promote funding models for climate security that include direct, multiyear, longer-term funding.* This could include the establishment of a Feminist Climate Fund as part of shifting more substantial resources to women and their peacebuilding networks.

⁴ UNDP Pacific, 2020, "United Nations launches pioneering Climate Security Project in the Pacific supported by UN SG's Peacebuilding Fund:"<https://www.pacific.undp.org/content/pacific/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2020/un-launchespioneering-climate-security-project-in-the-pacific.html>

Subsequently, donors and the UN Joint Programmes and Initiatives, such as the UN Climate and Security Mechanism, should explore dedicated funding for women-led climate action.

- *Developing concrete financial targets for gender-sensitive climate security.* In this, there are lessons to be learned from the financing for the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. For example, the Secretary-General's call for a minimum of 15 percent of peacebuilding funds to be allocated to projects with the principal objective of addressing women's needs and advancing gender equality. Similarly, the PBF has a marker of 15 percent for gender-sensitive action. Similar financing targets on climate and a specific fund must be established to ensure climate security action is sustainably and adequately resourced. These climate-related targets must be gender-sensitive and could be tracked through a funding dashboard for peacebuilding.

3. Re-envisioning the current infrastructure that surrounds climate security policy and programming to meaningfully engage women peacebuilders.

In addition to a clear intergovernmental platform for climate security policy and programming exchange, the current architecture does not allow for fulfilling the participation pillar of the WPS Agenda. Local civil society generally perceives itself to be left out of these spaces and cites the difficulty of getting information about windows for civil society engagement in policy and programming. For organisations, these types of spaces can provide for engaging new potential funding partners and accessing resources based on the joint, strategic, and complimentary alignment of the Government-CSO-Donor priorities.

Further, there remains varying levels of hesitancy to elevate and discuss themes related to climate security by some Member States, as well as non-governmental actors, often because of concerns related to securitisation, sovereignty, national ownership and viewing the issue as outside of the mandate for relevant bodies, including the Peacebuilding Commission and the Security Council. This reduces their organisational ability to mitigate climate risks and can challenge multilateral systems working to address the impact of climate change on security, creating a gap which armed non-state actors may seek to fill. For example, Al-Shabaab has become a service provider, following severe droughts in Somalia in a space where the government cannot respond.

Good practices:

- **The Pacific Climate Security Network has included a WPS expert as a co-chair of the network.** It is currently working on the development of the Pacific Climate Security Assessment Framework (PCSAF), which is currently in the drafting stage. The Pacific Climate Security Assessment Framework (PCSAF) aims at providing an overall guidance for policy makers from Pacific countries to identify and assess their regional and national climate security risks and suggest approaches to address them, based on identified regional climate security risks and trends. Focus rests on analysing locally specific risk cascades to assess the interaction between climate change and socio-political, economic and demographic factors that can impact livelihoods, economic security, political stability, and human security of different members of society, at local, national and transnational scales. The Regional Assessment Framework will be based on existing vulnerability and risks assessments and other relevant policy documents (strategies, action plans, frameworks) as well as on consultations with key stakeholders. Furthermore, the PCSAF will be informed by the three Climate Security Risk Profiles that are concurrently being developed for the Atoll countries of Kiribati, Republic of the Marshall Islands and Tuvalu by Adelphi, under the Climate Security in the Pacific project. The proposed approach for the development of the PCSAF has its grounding in the UN

Climate Security Mechanisms toolbox⁵ and in the *Weathering the Risks* methodology⁶. However, Pacific women are yet to integrate gender-sensitivity into this framework.

- The current approach to advancing Pacific women's rights in relation to climate justice is charted in **the Pacific Platform for Action on Gender Equality and Women's Human Rights (PPA) 2018-2030**. With the recognition of the impact of climate change and the climate crisis in the Pacific, the focus on women's role and knowledge in environmental management and action and the long-term environmental effects of military and mining-related activities was one of 13 areas of the earlier 1994 PPA. It has been further elaborated on in relation to climate change in the revised PPA 2018-2030.
- **Regional approaches are critical in fostering coordination among stakeholders.** The Pacific Islands Forum coordinates humanitarian pathways developed to support countries in the Pacific pooling together capacities and expertise to support each country. In West Africa, a regional working group has been established by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the Regional Collaboration Centre of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) to craft comprehensive, regional solutions and ensure that local needs are addressed.
- Member States formed **the UN Security Council Informal Expert Group of Climate Security** established to enable the Security Council to identify risks at an early stage and to act before conflicts break out or escalate. Through the Group of Friends on Climate and Security, Member States also created a community of practice around climate security to accelerate the implementation of the Paris Agreement by raising ambition and engaging with public and private actors.
- The normative developments have been visible in **concrete national actions**. Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Colombia, for example, have integrated approaches to peacebuilding and climate economics to mitigate continued deforestation.
- **The Peacebuilding Commission's** emphasis on national ownership has allowed affected countries to bring the effects of climate change into their conversations with the Commission. In the context of the UN Integrated Strategy for the Sahel (UNISS), the Sahel is one region where the Commission is expected to support the response to climate change. The climate issues have been discussed in the context of Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso, and the Pacific Islands, where the governments have raised the issue of climate change and its linkages to security in their specific country or regional contexts.
- The United Nations and PIF lead a series of consultative processes that supported the adoption of **the regional Human Security Framework, a Conflict Prevention Framework and Security Sector Governance Framework**. Through such consultative processes, women local peacebuilders were able to actively lobby directly with government officials to transform the definition of regional security. In the Pacific, the regional peace and development advisor also worked to create space for inclusive dialogue, with a particular engagement of women and youth, during the first Guadalcanal Land Summit in the Solomon Islands in 2018. Such practices can be replicated in climate and security policy work.

Recommendations:

- *Strengthen partnerships on climate and security*, including by supporting south-south collaborative learning. The UN Office for South-South Cooperation should expand their action on issues of climate, gender and sustaining peace.
- *Revise the current National and Regional Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security* to integrate climate and security and strengthen the role of women in both risk assessment

⁵ United Nations, Political and Peacebuilding Affairs. "Addressing the Impact of Climate Change on Peace and Security." United Nations, n.d. <https://dppa.un.org/en/climate-peace-security>

⁶ The Weathering Risk methodology | Weathering Risk. "The Weathering Risk Methodology | Weathering Risk." weatheringrisk.org, March 6, 2021. <https://weatheringrisk.org/en/publication/weathering-risk-methodology>.

and response. However, some national partners believe that these are pretty meaningless, and sometimes incorporating climate will cause even more backlash from decisionmakers.

- *Ensure women's meaningful participation in governance structures and decision making on climate and security, with a feedback loop.* In order for progress to be made on a global threat such as climate change, the dialogue needs to be more action-oriented and rooted in robust analytical data informed by local experiences. This requires inviting women peacebuilders to brief relevant debates and become members of relevant reference and advisory groups required to support the policy and programming on climate security. The UN partners can use the UN System-Wide Community Engagement Guidelines⁷ to explore avenues to systematise and institutionalise the partnership with local women peacebuilders. All parts of the UN System, in their discussions on climate security should invite relevant and diverse civil society experts to meetings more regularly, with appropriate follow-up, and provide a platform that would allow Member States and/or internally to reflect on the experiences and expertise of civil society in conducting its work for a stronger impact at the field level.
- *Support coordination among diverse partners on climate and security.* The Peacebuilding Commission can utilise its convening role to convene all relevant actors within and outside the United Nations, on the request from Member States, to improve their coordination, develop and share good practices in peacebuilding, and ensure predictable financing to peacebuilding. The Commission's platform could be effectively used to support the advisory function of the PBC. This is important because, once picked up by the UN Security Council, the outcomes of the Commission's discussions can have immense impacts on the ground. One example of this is the recognition of the adverse impacts of climate change by the Council in the most recent UNOWAS mandate.⁸ The development of the UN Climate Security Strategy could also support better operational and policy coherence between diverse entities within the UN System.

⁷ UN Community Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace | PEACEBUILDING. "UN Community Engagement Guidelines on Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace | Peacebuilding." <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/un-community-engagement-guidelines-peacebuilding-and-sustaining-peace-0>

⁸ This has led the region to conduct a comprehensive risk assessment analysis (covering adaptation and mitigation) and develop context-based strategies to address climate-related security risks, including by supporting local women's efforts to find new jobs and acquire new skills.