

EFFECTS OF CLIMATE MOBILITY ON WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE MENA REGION



IRAQ, DOHUK, 2022-11 02. HARFA MUSSA MOHAMMED IN HER FARM.

The countries of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region are facing severe and accelerated impacts of climate change, and extreme weather events and environmental degradation have already pushed people to migrate internally.¹ This Policy Brief presents an overview of women's experiences of climate mobility in the MENA region and makes recommendations for governments and regional bodies.

KEY MESSAGES

The severe and accelerated impacts of climate change as well as environmental degradation and disasters in the MENA region create specific risks for women and girls.

Women's vulnerability in climate change adaptation and forced mobility in the context of climate change² can – and should – be reduced as part of efforts to accelerate gender equality, women and girls' empowerment and wider social equity.

Women have the knowledge and capacities needed to minimize and adapt to the adverse effects of climate change, and are already leading meaningful actions across the MENA region to reduce vulnerabilities, increase resilience and resolve conflicts in communities where scarce natural resources result in disputes.

Women and girls are not a homogenous group, and individual women and girls will be impacted differently by the effects of climate change, environmental degradation, and disasters depending on factors such as their socio-economic status, mobility status, and household composition. An intersectional lens is therefore critical.³

1) Kumetat D (2012) Climate change on the arabian peninsula—regional security, sustainability strategies, and research needs. In: Scheffran J, Brozka M, Brauch HG, Link M, Schilling J (eds) Climate change, human security and violent conflict. Challenges for social stability, pp 373–386.

2) While there is no agreed definition of 'climate migration' or 'climate migrant', this Policy Brief uses the term climate migrant to refer to "persons or groups of persons who, predominantly for reasons of sudden or progressive change in the environment that adversely affects their lives or living conditions, are obliged to leave their habitual homes, or choose to do so, either temporarily or permanently, and who move either within their country or abroad," in line with the IOM definition at <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/environmental-migration>

3) Katri Kivioja, Montira Pongsiri and Alyson Brody, 'Synergies in jointly addressing climate change, health equity and gender equality' (UNDP, 2023)

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below identify priority areas of action to build women's resilience to climate change, capitalize on their expertise and skills, and reduce the risks associated with forced migration.

RECOMMENDATION #1

Create safer, better supported, and regular migration pathways for women affected by climate change, environmental degradation, and disasters.

WHY?

During a migration journey, migrant women and girls may be exposed to various forms of gender-based violence, discrimination, exploitation, and trafficking in persons. Labour conditions for women migrants can be exploitative with few protections and women are not always well-equipped to use their earnings to improve their socio-economic situation. Moreover, forced migrants often end up living in informal sites on the outskirts of urban centres in inadequate conditions, with specific risks for women and their children.

HOW?

- Provide women and girls with training and support develop the skills and resources required to migrate as skilled laborers.
- Offer regular pathways for women affected by climate change to migrate safely and regularly.
- Equip women with information that can support their decision-making and experience of climate mobility, such as information on conditions in the destination area (including internal movements from rural to urban areas), type of assistance available, labour laws and standards, and legal recourse for abuse.
- Support women to build their financial literacy and ensure access to financial products to help them capitalize on their migration experience and earning.
- Ensure women and girls have access to essential services including sexual and reproductive health services and protection services while on the move.
- Invest in adequate housing, infrastructure, and services in the destination area, including water, sanitation, healthcare, education, protection against eviction, employment support, and protection services.



RECOMMENDATION #2

Support women in their place of origin to build their resilience to climate change and enhance their adaptive capacity.

WHY?

Agriculture is the largest employer of women in the MENA region and the sole source of livelihood for many women. Traditional forms of agriculture are threatened by climate change because they struggle to adapt to changes such as water scarcity and extreme temperatures, which means that unless women are trained in future-oriented, climate resilient ways of doing agriculture their livelihood will be under threat. Moreover, women face barriers to land ownership and are often excluded from agricultural extension services, training programs, and producer organizations due to discriminatory norms, laws, and practices. Women also struggle to diversify their skillset and find off-farm work. Women left behind while male relatives migrate face a variety of risks that threaten their health and wellbeing and that of their children.

HOW?

- Diversify employment capacities and opportunities for women away from traditional forms of agriculture, both in origin areas that are vulnerable to climate change, as well as in destinations where women have migrated due to the effects of climate change. The focus of diversifying employment capacities should instead be on climate resilient, more sustainable and future oriented agricultural practices such as Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA).
- Remove barriers to women's participation in agriculture extension services, training programs, and producer organizations, as well as barriers to land ownership.
- Enhance social protection for women affected by climate change who work in the informal economy. This includes women left behind when male family members migrate.
- Programs that support adaptation to climate change should include gender-specific socio-economic and political empowerment initiatives. They should aim to challenge patriarchal traditions, while also being responsive to women's concrete needs (as defined by women) and while building on women's existing spaces of power and authority within their communities



RECOMMENDATION #3

Invest in national legal and policy architecture that recognises women's needs and capabilities in relation to climate change and migration.

WHY?

Governments play a vital role in empowering women to protect themselves and their communities from the effects of climate change, environmental degradation, and disasters. Countries in the MENA region have already made important commitments through their National Action Plans and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs); however, there are still significant gaps in the legal and policy framework regarding climate mobility and the role of women.

HOW?

- Integrate actions that relate to the specific needs, capacities, and concerns of women and climate migration into National Action Plans, Nationally Determined Contributions, and National Adaptation Plans. This includes actions to amplify women's voices in relation to policy decisions, and to protect and empower women considering or undertaking migration as an adaptation measure as well as women left behind when men migrate.
- Integrate actions that relate to the specific needs, capacities, and concerns of women and climate migration into DRR strategies, urban resilience planning, and crisis planning.
- Use existing processes for protecting and empowering women to address the issue of forced migration and harness the benefits of regular migration in the context of climate change. For example, mainstream climate concerns within gender equality frameworks, such as 1325 National Action Plans.
- Invest in national data capabilities, including gender and diversity data collection (disaggregated by sex and age), gender analysis, and knowledge management and transfer.
- Strengthen national laws that protect and empower women affected by climate change and climate-induced mobility, including labour laws, land and property rights, access to essential services, regular migration pathways, and social protection for women who work in the informal economy or who are left behind when men migrate.
- Ensure workplace conditions, legal frameworks, and the application of legal frameworks are conducive to women's participation in employment or other initiatives related to climate change and climate migration (such as appropriate locations and working hours).



HAMEEDA STANDS IN FRONT OF HER HOME WITH HER CHILDREN IN ABUGARIN VILLAGE IN BAO LOCALITY, BLUE NILE STATE

RECOMMENDATION #4

Support women's leading role in water diplomacy, disaster risk reduction, and hazard mitigation.

WHY?

Women are already using their expertise in agriculture and water management to lead actions that reduce vulnerability, increase resilience, and resolve local conflicts over access to natural resources in their communities. These activities should be strengthened and expanded to benefit from women's capacities and expertise.

HOW?

- Support women to lead initiatives related to hazard mitigation and conflict resolution, drawing on their existing expertise on issues such as water and resource management.
- Support the engagement and leadership of women and girls in disaster preparedness and response. This includes bringing women to the table in policy discussions, in risk assessments, in the development of early warning strategies, and in building out a response. Community-based women's groups may also play an important role in leading local risk reduction.
- Support networks that strengthen women's capacities in water diplomacy and water management, such as the Arab Women Network for Water and Sanitation; the Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Voluntary Stakeholder Group on Disaster Risk Reduction in the Arab States; and the Women in Water Diplomacy Network.
- Ensure local disaster risk reduction action plans include safety planning for vulnerable and at-risk groups, such as female-headed households and women with disabilities, based on their protection needs. This could include development of specific safety plans for female migrants or women left behind.



IRAQ, DOHUK, 02-11-2022. WORKERS ARE HARVESTING PEPPERS IN HARFA MUSSA MOHAMMED FARM