



# Evicted by Climate Change: Confronting the Gendered Impacts of Climate-Induced Displacement ■

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR POLICYMAKERS

### Tackling the triple injustices: Gender, climate, social

Climate-induced displacement is an option of last resort. It preys on those who are unable to adapt to the ecological and social consequences of climate change, whether due to lack of resources or other inequities. For most of these people, climate-induced displacement is triggered by direct physical harm from extreme weather events or slow-onset impacts, but also by indirect consequences on food insecurity and conflict over natural resources and land rights. According to UNOCHA, 8 of the world's worst food crises are linked to both conflict and climate shocks<sup>1</sup>. Out of the 33.4 million newly displaced people in 2019, 70% were due to climate-related disasters. Over the past 10 years (2008-2018), 90% of the people displaced by disasters (approx. 23 million people) have had weather-related triggers.

The vast majority of those forced from their homes as a result of climate change live in developing countries. Responsible for less than 4% of climate change-causing greenhouse gases, these countries lack resources to support alternative forms of climate adaptation - such as drought-resistant seed varieties, floodwater management and early warning systems. And developed countries are collectively failing to live up to their promise to deliver 100 billion USD in new and additional climate finance.

Climate change displacement is further compounded for women and girls in developing countries who are disproportionately impacted. For example, in 2018 more than half of the 41 million people internally displaced were women. The world is grounded in an exclusive system of inequality; white men are often leaders and decision makers in industry, business, politics, and all major institutions. Women, particularly women of colour, are systematically underrepresented in decision making spaces at all levels that prevent or respond to climate change.

Women also bear the brunt of the impacts of climate change. Prevailing gender inequality often intersects with other forms of vulnerabilities which limit women and girls' access to resources and decision-making power, inhibiting their ability to withstand the impacts of climate change, access basic services and recover from climate-related disasters. Thus, gender-transformative approaches that put women and girls at the centre are not an option, but a must.<sup>11</sup>

Climate-induced displacement must be understood, and policy responses developed, through the intersecting lenses of gender justice, climate justice and social justice. Climate-induced displacement can be minimized through ambitious and immediate actions to increase resilience to the disruptions caused by climate change, while promoting more inclusive and

sustainable communities and societies. It can be managed to ensure positive outcomes for communities that host those who have fled their homes, as well as those that have been left behind. When climate-induced disasters cannot be avoided, inclusive and gender-transformative approaches can ensure a more efficient and effective emergency response and recovery.

### Climate crisis: Driver of displacement

Scientists and climate experts expect forced displacement to be one of the most common and damaging impacts on the world's most vulnerable populations if we fail to keep global average temperature rise below 1.5°C, as envisaged by the Paris Agreement. Under current policies, the world is heading towards a 3 to 4°C increase above pre-industrial levels within 80 years, with increasingly disastrous consequences; this could leave significant areas of the planet uninhabitable, with estimates that by 2070 three billion people may face Saharan heat levels. Science indicates that globally we need to at least halve global carbon emissions by 2030, particularly by shifting away from harmful fossil fuels and targeting the world's biggest offenders of climate change. These offenders have caused the majority of current and historic emissions, and are comprised of richer countries and male-dominated parts of societies. The World Bank estimates that the number of internally displaced people due to climate change may be four times as high in 2050 in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Latin America at the current rates of warming compared to a scenario compatible with the Paris Agreement. Other studies estimate that 250 million people will be displaced internally by 2050 in the absence of strong climate adaptation.

### Women and girls: the discriminatory causes and impacts of climate change

The impacts of climate change are felt differently based on one's gender. Three key factors explain why women and girls are more vulnerable than men to the impacts of climate change. First, the climate crisis exacerbates gender inequality and makes it harder to achieve gender justice. Women and girls often have an unequal and demanding responsibility to care for children and the elderly which makes it harder and more cumbersome to leave home. Women displaced by disasters also face an increased risk of gender based violence, including domestic violence, forced marriage and trafficking. Second, social and cultural norms and barriers mean that women are less likely to be involved in decisions about how to prevent, mitigate and cope with climate change, including leaving their homes. Third, women and girls do most of the subsistence farming in poor countries and are the primary providers of food, water and fuel, which become scarce due to climate change. Women are also on the frontlines when it comes to combating climate change. They help protect the

food and nutrition security of their families and communities, and play a critical role in overcoming the challenges of the climate crisis.<sup>111</sup>

### Act with care: A gender-just approach to building climate resilience

Given that the impacts of climate change are felt differently based on one's gender, so must the approaches for addressing these impacts. CARE and our partners help displaced people, both through direct humanitarian aid in regions where climate change exacerbates natural risks and conflict, as well as through longer-term, gender-transformative climate resilience measures. Food aid, resilience and livelihood measures, and water and sanitation infrastructure help deal with the immediate consequences of climate change. In CARE's experience, effective gender-transformative climate change adaptation can help reduce climate-induced displacement by supporting people's resilience.

### A gender-transformative response to climate displacement

Immediate action is needed to put women and girls at the centre of concerted efforts to build communities' resilience to climate change, and to help those who have already been affected by climate-induced displacement. CARE has long been advocating for ambitious international climate policies in support of the most vulnerable and the implementation of the Paris Agreement, and supports the Grand Bargain and other global humanitarian agreements.

**In order to tackle climate-induced displacement in a gender-transformative and human-rights based way, CARE calls on all relevant actors, particularly governments, decision-makers and humanitarian and development actors, to do their part to build a safer, more equitable, inclusive and resilient future that harnesses the power of women and girls within their communities:**

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**Ensure that women and girls play meaningful leadership roles and shape more ambitious policies and localised programs. Ensure that systems are in place so that women and girls can hold decision-makers accountable in the context of climate-induced displacement.**

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» **Humanitarian actors and policymakers must revisit planning and programming mechanisms at all levels** when addressing climate-induced displacement to ensure women friendly spaces and mechanisms suitable to the local circumstances are created at all levels. This will enable gender-responsive needs assessments, humani-

tarian programming plans and accountability mechanisms, such as peer reviews and after action reviews, to genuinely include women's and girls' perspectives.

- » **Actions to address the climate and displacement context must be grounded in sound gender analyses.** CARE pioneered initiatives like the Rapid Gender Analyses (RGAs), gender and conflict analyses, and the Gender Marker are now well tested. These must be adapted to climate crises, including mass displacement events, as well as used in complex crises. Ensuring that women-friendly spaces are available to ensure we seek women's and girls' inputs, and influence and listen to their recommendations without them fearing backlash.
- » **Organisations that represent women and girls and that promote gender equality must play an influential role in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and plans relevant to climate and displacement.** This means ensuring that they play a leading role to influence and shape climate policies and national climate plans.
- » **Governments must better integrate gender equality efforts and displacement considerations in national adaptation and disaster risk reduction action plans,** an important contribution to the implementation of the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan adopted at COP25. Where people and communities are vulnerable and at particular risk from being displaced and harmed by climate change, targeted adaptation, disaster risk reduction, rehabilitation and recovery measures should receive particular attention.

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### **Scale up climate action and public climate finance for developing countries, particularly adaptation finance, to address displacement drivers with locally led actions.**

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- » **All countries are expected to submit new and enhanced national climate plans (NDCs) in 2020,** with particular responsibilities for major emitting countries, such as the G20. Collectively, the climate plans should aim to at least halve CO2 emissions globally by 2030 to be compatible with the 1.5°C limit and reduce the exacerbation of climate-induced displacement drivers. These plans should also guide economic recovery measures in response to COVID-19, including promoting renewable energies for sustainable livelihoods in displacement settings.
- » **Provide proactive, gender-transformative adaptation, disaster risk reduction, early-warning, social protection and insurance measures** that effectively enable all community members, especially those who are most

vulnerable, to prevent and withstand climate shocks and reduce the pressure to leave their homes. As much as possible, local communities, including women and girls, need to be leading such measures.

- » **Developed countries must increase climate finance in line with the USD 100bn commitment,** and further scale-up beyond 2020, based on their particular responsibilities. International grant-based co-financing of such measures is a matter of justice, and currently only about 20% of the climate finance provided by developed countries is for adaptation, instead of the 50% indicated through the Paris Agreement.
- » **At least 85% of adaptation finance should target gender equality** as an explicit objective by 2023, at the latest. In most countries, climate projects supported by public finance do not adequately prioritise gender equality - this must urgently change.
- » **Governments must promote new sources of finance to generate truly additional finance.** To increase investments into gender-transformative adaptation and disaster risk reduction which helps to address displacement drivers, governments must promote measures such as carbon taxes, a fossil fuel extraction levy, and aviation and maritime transport levies.

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### **Direct at least 25% of humanitarian funding to local organisations, with a particular focus on women-led<sup>IV</sup> and women's rights organizations.**

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- » **Ensure aid is local as possible and as international as necessary by deliberately including women-led and gender justice organizations in decision-making.** The Grand Bargain commitments include ensuring direct funding for local organizations, including in refugee settlements and settings of Internally Displaced People. Women-led and gender justice organisations play a critical role in humanitarian response, as they are far more likely to invest in interventions that reflect women's and girls' needs and priorities, including protection from gender-based violence; access to services for gender-based violence survivors; access to critical sexual and reproductive health and rights services; emergency obstetric care; support for pregnant and lactating women; and menstrual hygiene management interventions.
- » **Existing coordination mechanisms currently dominated by international agencies need to open for more national actors,** including women led organizations.

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**Develop an institutional and legal architecture that provides protections from climate-related displacement, particularly for women and girls.**

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- » **End the legal vacuum for climate-displaced people, and take into account the specific needs and circumstances of women and girls.** The situation where people displaced by climate change find themselves in a legal No Man's land must be ended. Countries and actors most responsible for climate change have a particular responsibility to support those affected to ensure their rights.
- » **The international community should embark upon a process to identify synergies and gaps between existing institutions and legal frameworks** in the displacement and climate change context in order to ensure a comprehensive and effective response. This should include the UN Security Council, UNFCCC Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage, the Global Compact on Migration, the Global Compact on Refugees, the UN Human Rights Council Ruling, and other fora. This must also improve the coordination of humanitarian actors and those involved in climate change action on the ground, within and beyond the UN system.
- » **National level institutions must enhance collaboration and coordination across standard thematic boundaries.** A multi-faceted challenge, such as climate-induced displacement, requires collaboration and coordination amongst a large number of stakeholders, both within governments as well as with outside stakeholders, and every country should ensure it has appropriate coordination mechanisms in place.

*These recommendations are not CARE's attempt to provide a comprehensive answer, but to highlight some key areas of concern, where much more ambitious action can make a true difference to the lives of those affected by climate-induced displacement.*

## Endnotes

- I UNOCHA (2020): Global Humanitarian Overview 2020. [https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/GHO-2020\\_v9.1.pdf](https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/GHO-2020_v9.1.pdf)
- II IDMC (2020): <https://www.internal-displacement.org/publications/women-and-girls-in-internal-displacement>
- III CARE (2020): COVID19, Food & Nutrition Security, and Gender Equality. [https://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/covid\\_food\\_security\\_and\\_gender\\_equality.pdf](https://www.care.org/sites/default/files/documents/covid_food_security_and_gender_equality.pdf)
- IV Women-led organisations are any non-governmental, not-for-profit and non-political organisation where two-thirds of its board (incl. chair) and management staff/volunteers (incl. Executive Director) are female, and it focuses on women and girls as primary target group of its programming.

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