

WOMEN SPEAK

The Lived Nexus Between Climate,
Gender and Security



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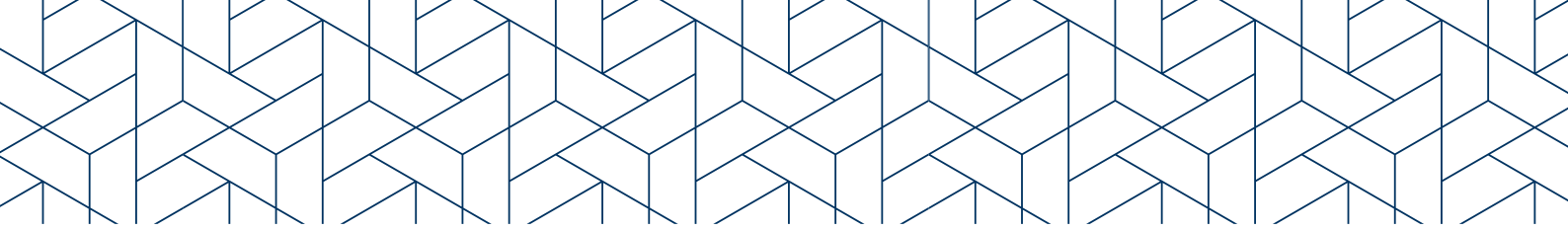
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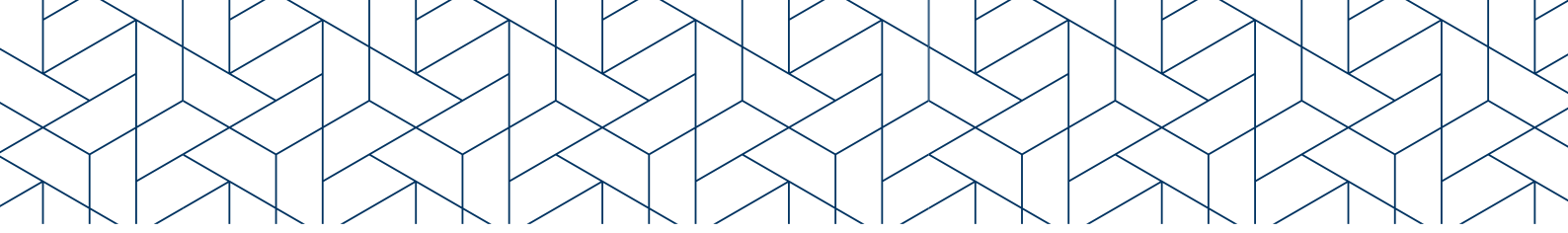
WOMEN SPEAK

The Lived Nexus Between Climate,
Gender and Security

DCAF Geneva Centre
for Security Sector
Governance







Contents

- Acknowledgements i
- Women’s perspectives on the climate/security/gender nexus 1
- **Women’s recommendations** 7
 - 1. Apply an intersectional human security lens to the conflict/climate nexus 7
 - 2. Address environmental damage alongside climate change 8
 - 3. Prioritize gender equality goals in all action on climate and environment. 9
 - 4. Address the linkages between climate and environment, peacebuilding and gender equality in an integrated way 9
 - 5. Avoid securitizing responses to the climate and environmental crisis 10
 - 6. Mitigate the security sector’s own climate and environmental impact 11
 - 7. Ensure women’s meaningful participation and women’s leadership 11
 - 8. Earmark resources for women in fragile and conflict-affected countries. 12
- **Colombia: Women taking forward the climate/security/gender nexus agenda** 17
 - Bringing women together. 17
 - What women see, know and say 18
 - Implications for peacebuilding and security sector reform 22
 - What women want. 22
 - Participating organizations 24
- **Mali: Women taking forward the climate/security/gender nexus agenda** 27
 - Bringing women together. 28
 - What women see, know and say 29
 - Implications for peacebuilding and security sector reform 31
 - What women want. 32
 - Women taking forward the gender, climate change and security nexus agenda 32
 - Participating organizations 34
- **Yemen: Women taking forward the climate/security/gender nexus agenda** 37
 - Bringing women together. 38
 - What women see, know and say 39
 - Implications for peacebuilding and security sector reform 40
 - What women want. 40
 - Women taking forward the gender, climate change and security nexus agenda 41
 - Participating organizations 42





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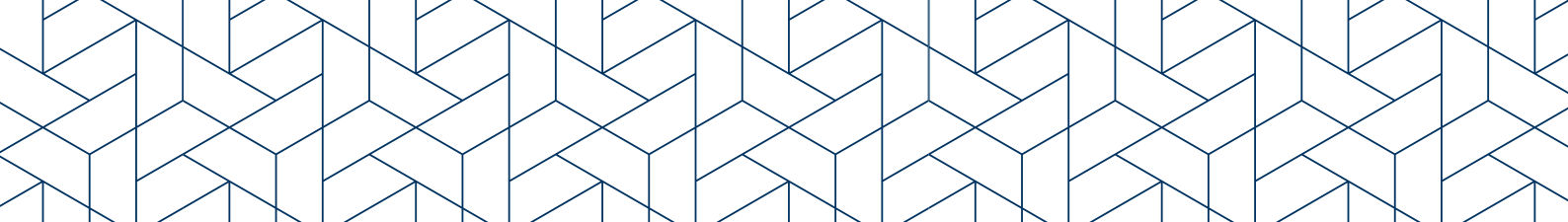
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The report is intended to accurately capture women's ideas, knowledge and messages, which do not necessarily reflect DCAF's views or position; however, DCAF aims to contextualize these messages within broader international and policy frameworks.

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Women's perspectives on the climate/security/ gender nexus

In many fragile and conflict-affected states, including Colombia, Mali and Yemen, the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation frustrate efforts to consolidate peace and stability. Floods, deforestation, reduced agricultural land and extreme weather events displace communities, destroy livelihoods and feed intercommunal tensions in ways that fuel or prolong conflict. National and international policy and programming directed at “climate security” and “environmental peacebuilding” strive to comprehend and intervene in these dynamics.

As our understanding of how climate change and security are interrelated has grown, so too has the recognition that women and men are often differently impacted by climate change, and that gender inequality limits communities' abilities to adapt to climate change, be resilient to climate shocks and slow environmental damage. The UN Human Rights Council, parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and the CEDAW Committee, among others, have clearly articulated women's significant contributions to climate change resilience, women's valuable local knowledge and the importance of women's participation and leadership in national- and local-level climate policy and action. Ambition for “gender-responsive climate action” has emerged.

With climate garnering attention in peacebuilding policy, this is a critical moment to amplify women's voices and experiences.

Women's organizations working in conflict-affected contexts have for years demonstrated how women make important contributions at the nexus of peacebuilding and climate change adaptation. In 2021 the UN Secretary-General's report on Women, Peace and Security finally took up their message, discussing the connections between peacebuilding, gender, climate, security

and women's participation in natural resources policymaking and planning. The Secretary-General called for support for the advocacy efforts of women's organizations and networks to address climate-related security risks. The report underscored the need for a gender perspective in relation to climate finance instruments and ensuring women's participation in the allocation of financial resources, especially in crisis and conflict settings. Some states are already doing this, with several Women, Peace and Security National Action Plans referring to building women's resilience to climate impacts and mitigating climate-related insecurities, and some states committing funds to gender/climate programming.

While these are important steps forward, there is much still to learn to shape effective policy and programming on climate and security with a gendered lens, and to give better support to women's interconnected peacemaking and climate activism. Given the specificities of climate security issues between and within regional and national contexts, research, policy and programming responses need to be informed by localized knowledge and experience. We need to hear from women as well as men from different places with different types of experiences, both because they have specific knowledge and because they have a right to be heard and their views taken into account. Policymakers and practitioners have shared the need for real stories, real examples and the lived experience of the conflict/climate/gender nexus, to inform policymaking better. When we interrogate "climate security", we need to have a better sense of what we would ask of the security sector: the police, environmental protection forces, private security providers and (in some countries) armed forces that are involved in climate and environmental action.

Women were targeted as they bear the burden of disasters caused by climate change. Ideas and solutions come from people affected by climate change.

Yemeni participant

DCAF has for more than twenty years been supporting women to have their voices heard in security sector reform processes. DCAF has also worked with police, armed forces and other security sector institutions to promote gender equality, including in countries engaged in peacebuilding and emerging from armed conflict. As DCAF develops analysis of the connections between security sector reform and governance and climate and approaches to environmental peacebuilding, we seek both to learn from women and to bring their voices more prominently into policy spaces. This collaboration with women's organizations and activists in Mali, Yemen and Colombia is grounded in this commitment. As said by a Colombian participant, the project aims to empower women "to become visible and show the importance of our role on the local, regional, national and international levels".

Bringing women together

In 2021 DCAF reached out to partners in Yemen, Mali and Colombia to explore their interest in collaborative learning and dialogue around the connections between climate change, gender and conflict. In each country partners responded with enthusiasm, aware of many organizations working on different aspects of women's rights and/or Women, Peace and Security, climate change and peacebuilding that would benefit from coming together and linking up. As the project reached out to women and women's organizations, many conveyed that although they knew about the impacts of climate change and environmental damage, as women's organizations they did not yet have a common vision of these impacts nor common messages about them. They sought a space to connect with other women advocating on climate and environmental issues, and explore how they could work cooperatively to create a more targeted and evidence-based advocacy approach.

This collaboration began with a mapping study conducted in Colombia, Yemen and Mali, involving a survey and interviews with women activists and women-led organizations, as well as desk research. The mapping studies documented the connections that women's rights organizations have already made between climate change and security, and the extent to which climate policy and advocacy recognized the importance of gender equality, gender mainstreaming and women's participation. Through the mapping, activists, collectives and diverse women-led organizations were identified and invited to participate in the project. Efforts were made to include women from different ethnic backgrounds, urban and rural groups and networks of younger and older women, and, more generally, to bring together diverse experiences and perspectives.

A series of workshops was held over November and December 2021, co-facilitated by DCAF and in-country partners (civil society organizations and gender experts). Sixty-eight women's rights organizations took part, representing a wide diversity of women, including grassroots, indigenous, rural and former politicians, and from various geographical areas of the three countries. In Colombia, 90 per cent of the workshop's participants came from outside the capital. In Mali, participants included women from the Timbuktu and Gao regions, heavily affected by both conflict and climate change. In Yemen, women gathered in five regional hubs across the country. The format and content of the workshops in the three countries varied according to the women's needs, priorities and interests, but each was grounded in the ethics of feminist principles. Each workshop blended creating space for women to share their experiences, building women's technical knowledge on advocacy for policymaking, and supporting an emergent advocacy agenda and cooperation mechanisms for the group. Filmmakers worked with DCAF and in-country partners to capture messages emerging from the discussions, as well as individual stories.

This report presents a summary from each of the three countries of Colombia, Yemen and Mali of what the participating women describe as the realities of the climate/security/gender nexus in their communities, and what they see as needing to happen next. In each context, women describe seemingly intractable problems and complex barriers to women's voice and influence, but also innovation, persistence and hope. Drawing together the threads of women's experience, insight and vision, the report offers eight overarching recommendations to guide international and national environmental and peacebuilding policy and programming.

Women's recommendations

1. Apply an intersectional human security lens to the conflict/climate nexus.
2. Address environmental damage alongside climate change.
3. Prioritize gender equality goals in all action on climate and environment.
4. Address the linkages between climate and environment, peacebuilding and gender equality.
5. Avoid securitizing responses to the climate and environmental crisis.
6. Mitigate the security sector's own climate and environmental impact.
7. Ensure women's meaningful participation and women's leadership.
8. Earmark resources for women in fragile and conflict-affected countries.

Next steps

In Colombia, Yemen and Mali this project has supported the formation of a network of women activists and women-led organizations, and the development of advocacy action plans on the nexus between climate and environment, conflict/peacebuilding and gender. Women from each country will over the coming months meet local climate and environment policymakers, security actors, UN officials and donors to present their insights, proposals and demands. Representatives from each country will engage with the UN and other international stakeholders at events in Geneva and New York. The women from Colombia, Mali and Yemen will also connect with each other, to share and compare their experiences and plans in recognition that building solidarity inspires continued commitment to advocacy.

What we lack is that we work on climate issues, we work on the issue of food security, but we have not necessarily made the link between human security and climate change, and this training has enabled us to understand that all of these concerns can find their answers at different levels.

Malian participant



Women's recommendations



A young woman with long, dark, curly hair is crouching on a patterned carpet in a conference room. She is smiling at the camera. She is wearing a light blue tank top and beige pants. Her hands are resting on the floor near the diagram.



Privatización de servicios
Asociaciones

Cambio de actitud
USA 1 hora

Falta de oportunidades
para la

Comunidades Transnacionales

Kale ebbel
Comunidades Transnacionales

SONO PLUS

DETERMINAR

Alta
Nivel de
Aplicación
Fidelidad
Innovación

FRAC

Women's recommendations

We have a planet to care for, and we have to secure a future for the next generations.

Colombian participant



1. Apply an intersectional human security lens to the conflict/climate nexus

Women in Colombia, Mali and Yemen describe myriad ways in which climate change and environmental damage contribute to conflict and insecurity and hamper peacebuilding. The displacement, instability and social tensions exacerbated by climate change and environmental damage are multilevel and pervasive. In Colombia, the impacts of climate change are reducing the productivity of agricultural land, thus exacerbating longstanding competition over land. Communities also struggle with armed groups illegally exploiting and smuggling natural resources, and with large corporations with permits for legal exploitation that devastates traditional livelihoods. Women describe how the economic hardship and displacement from the land connected with climate change and environmental damage can push men towards armed groups to secure a living for their families. In Mali, competition between villages for forest resources leads to recurrent conflicts between communities. Changing weather patterns, including rainfall variability, affect traditional livelihoods and provoke conflicts between herders and farmers. In Yemen, climate change is exacerbating shortages of water and other natural resources, which are a source of intercommunal conflict. This conflict causes influxes of IDPs (internally displaced persons, who are disproportionately women) into communities, leading to more stress on supplies of water and other natural resources. This, in turn, can cause resentment towards IDPs among the host communities, further feeding the cycle of conflict.

Yet women insist that while climate change and environmental degradation can be a direct driver of conflict, armed violence should not be the predominant focus in understanding the connections between climate and peacebuilding. **International and national policy need to apply a broad, human security concept of the connections between (in)security, conflict, gender, climate change and environmental damage.** In so doing, **an intersectional lens should be applied**, recognizing the different experiences of communities, depending upon factors such as ethnicity, rural versus urban life, social class and wealth, etc.

Malian women identify climate impacts upon the personal, political, community, economic, food, health and environmental dimensions of human security. They recount how the impacts of climate change include women needing to travel further from home to collect firewood and harvest products. In doing this, women face the risk of male violence, including from jihadists. These physical security risks shrink the space for women's mobility, thus reducing their educational, economic and social opportunities. Yemeni women describe how weak governance, political marginalization and corruption act as factors both driving conflict and limiting capacity to adapt to climate change. Colombian women articulate the impacts of the changing climate as increasing risks to women's autonomy: livelihoods, access to basic goods and services, access to and control over natural resources, connection to place, and physical threats. Public policy should be resourcing and financing environmental initiatives that are comprehensive and intersectional: incorporating all dimensions of human security, responsive to the diverse needs of communities, and meeting the specific needs of marginalized communities.



2. Address environmental damage alongside climate change

Women in Mali, Yemen and Colombia insist that the impacts of the changing climate on conflict and security cannot be isolated from the broad range of forms and effects of environmental degradation. In many cases, climate change impacts exacerbate environmental degradation caused by human exploitation, and often extraction of natural resources, which, in turn, contributes to global warming. Colombian women understand that climate impact is intimately connected with problems of deforestation, land grabbing and poorly regulated extractive activities. Environmental defenders are at the forefront of fighting these interconnected issues and are urgently in need of protection. Malian women link the impacts of climate change with water scarcity and desertification, as well as the exploitation of natural resources through excessive use of wood and gold mining. They are concerned about the impacts of pollution on health, including women's reproductive health. Women in Yemen likewise highlight petrochemical pollution, airborne diseases and destruction of natural habitat, causing displacement and ill health hand-in-hand with climate change.

International and national policy and strategies need to commit to preventing and reversing environmental damage, just as actively as they engage with the issue of climate change. This demands commitment and action to protect environmental and ecosystem integrity. It requires commitment and action to halt environmental damage caused, in particular, by mining, large-scale agro-industrial activities and fossil-fuel extraction.



3. Prioritize gender equality goals in all action on climate and environment

Women in Yemen, Colombia and Mali see in their day-to-day lives and those of their communities how gender inequality renders women and girls more vulnerable to climate-related insecurities, and how climate change impacts exacerbate gender-based violence and inequality. Yemeni women described how during flash floods and other natural disasters, women – especially those who were pregnant or with small children – were more likely to die. Colombian women identified several vicious circles of harm: changing environmental conditions push women to migrate to other regions, a process wherein they face risks of sexual violence and human trafficking; and in opposing the large-scale exploitative activities that destroy traditional livelihoods and push communities off their land, women increased their insecurity and risk of sexual violence. In Mali, too, the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation increase women and girls' vulnerability to conflict-related sexual violence, prostitution, polygamy (legal in Mali) and abduction, and maternal mortality. In each country, these impacts differ between different types of communities and groups: rural versus urban, rich versus poor, different ethnic groups, etc.

International and national policy and action related to climate and environment, including environmental peacebuilding, should prioritize supporting gender equality, recognizing gender equality as essential for climate change resilience and adaptive capacity. This requires dedicating funding to gender equality measures and ensuring that women lead and benefit from climate and environmental programmes at every step and every level. This requires all climate and environmental policies and projects to demonstrate gender mainstreaming using an intersectional lens, including setting objectives related to gender and monitoring of gendered impacts.



4. Address the linkages between climate and environment, peacebuilding and gender equality in an integrated way

In Colombia, Mali and Yemen there are many stakeholders, programmes and mechanisms – national and international – working to support peacebuilding. Women in each country, however, argue that peacebuilding processes do not make sufficient links with climate change and environmental damage.

Peacebuilding policy and programmes, by both national and international actors, should expressly consider and seek to address the linkages between climate and environment, conflict and stability, and how these are gendered at every level. The concept of “environmental peacebuilding” can be useful, but must be actively responsive to gendered needs and roles, and include a focus on women's participation.

Women have many proposals as to how these linkages can be made. On a national level, there is a need for cross-governmental policy and coordination mechanisms addressing climate adaptation and mitigation, environmental protection and natural resource management that are strongly gender-responsive and recognize the connections with peace and security. Colombian women underscore the need for better data to inform peacebuilding and climate policy, suggesting that

national and local governments work with academia and local women to systematize empirical evidence and data on the climate change-gender-peace and security nexus. Such research should be highly participatory, prioritizing the experiences of women at the front lines of the climate crisis. Malian women call for a national gender, security and climate change policy. Yemeni women envision a new, independent and impartial national body to manage natural resources and address climate change impacts in a way that is inclusive, fair and empowers local actors – especially women-led organizations. They identify the need to train both men and women in disaster response and risk management to increase climate resilience. With a peacebuilding lens, they suggest establishing resolution and mitigation programmes oriented to the impacts of climate-change-related conflicts.



5. Avoid securitizing responses to the climate and environmental crisis

Women in Mali, Yemen and Colombia observed that security actors can play a range of roles, positive and negative, in the implementation of climate and environment policy and natural resource management. They regarded the security sector reform processes in their countries as an important entry point to seek to ensure that the security sector's roles concerning the environment are shaped and executed following principles of good governance, accountability, transparency and access to justice. Women in Mali feel that security sector actors apply a narrow perception of “security”, which limits their capacity to make connections between their work and environmental issues.

Colombian women are more immediately facing security sector personnel (from both some state security agencies and private security companies) being involved in environmental initiatives that threaten human rights and communities. They recounted how security personnel related to clean-energy projects are at times a threat to female environmental defenders and are associated with a threat of sexual violence to women. When military personnel are used in disaster relief operations, their presence can increase rather than decrease women's perceptions and experiences of insecurity. In some areas, laws and policies to protect the environment are criminalizing local communities, including indigenous communities, that rely on the forest for their livelihood. Such laws can result in community members being harassed and imprisoned for pursuing subsistence farming in increasingly restricted and policed settings, while failing to stop illegal armed groups clearing land to grow illicit crops or prevent exploitation permits being corruptly awarded to big energy or mining projects.

Securitization or militarization of climate policy and response should be avoided. Specific regulatory and oversight measures need to be in place to prevent intimidation or abuse of communities, and especially of environmental defenders, by public and private security providers. With regard to all such abuses, there need to be mechanisms to ensure accountability and recourse to justice. Measures to enforce environmental protections should be collaboratively developed with communities concerned so as to avoid misdirection of security resources and undue use of force.



6. Mitigate the security sector's own climate and environmental impact

Women in Yemen, Mali and Colombia had no access to data on the impact of the security sector's own activities upon their countries' climate and environment, but this issue is one they are concerned about. One women's organization in Mali is researching the health and environmental impacts of the actions of armed groups, including the impacts of foreign forces present in Mali. This resonates with demands from scientists and activists all over the world to address militaries' carbon footprint.

The security sector should be required to take steps to mitigate its climate and environmental impacts. Military greenhouse gas emissions, especially, should be transparently monitored (whether at home or abroad) and reported, and not exempted from multilateral climate action commitments. UN peacekeeping has been described as “the highest contributor to climate change within the UN system”.¹ UN peacekeeping missions should scale up and accelerate their work to report on and reduce their climate and environmental impacts.

Women are determinant agents because we have carried the largest burden in the conflict, in one way or another. Of course, women have always been contributing with initiatives and ideas, as well as with our everyday action, either as housewives or as social leaders.

Colombian participant



7. Ensure women's meaningful participation and women's leadership

Women in Mali, Yemen and Colombia call to participate in the process of designing, implementing and monitoring climate and environmental policies, as well as peace and security processes, at all levels. Women in Mali have organized themselves into the Coalition Malienne Genre, Sécurité et Changement Climatique, seeking to influence planning within the Ministry of the Environment and having a role as a “citizens' watchdog”. They advocate for building the capacity of rural women and girls on the nexus of gender, security and climate change, and for action to involve women's and girls' platforms, networks and groups further in emerging policy processes. Yemeni women underscore the work already being done by female leaders in peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance and environmental management at the local level: women have structures within communities and credibility among their constituencies that they can bring to work on climate change and with natural resource management entities. Women in Colombia demand safe and effective spaces for their public participation, in particular for female environmental defenders.

1. Richard Croker, UK Minister-Counsellor at the UN (2021) “Supporting Effective Missions through UN Peacekeeping”, United Nations 75th General Assembly, Fifth Committee Second Resumed Session, New York, 3 May.

The Women, Peace and Security agenda has catalysed commitments and action in many conflict-affected countries to increase women's participation and leadership. However, women in Colombia, Yemen and Mali did not necessarily see processes connected to Women, Peace and Security national action plans as the most relevant in addressing their climate-related security issues. Rather, they sought to engage with new actors at national and local levels capable of promoting gender-responsive climate resilience: ministries of environment, natural resources and planning, offices of sanitation and the like.

In fragile and conflict-affected countries, measures should be taken to ensure the full and meaningful participation and leadership of women in climate policies, environmental management and disaster preparedness and response mechanisms. This requires all these climate-related policy spaces and their associated institutions, mechanisms and communities of practice to embrace commitments to women's participation and take concrete steps to realize them. Diverse women should be empowered across different communities, with attention paid to women from marginalized groups. Women should be supported to influence decisions over critical areas that can address root causes of climate change, environmental destruction and insecurity, such as poorly regulated natural resource use and extraction, infrastructure, job creation and military spending.

It is very important to have a partnership between the countries affected by climate change and the countries that cause climate change.

Yemeni participant



8. Earmark resources for women in fragile and conflict-affected countries

As the foregoing makes clear, women in Colombia, Yemen and Mali have the expertise, structures and connections within their communities to contribute significantly to natural resource management, climate change adaptation and climate resilience. Their work deserves and needs to be supported by their governments and multilateral actors and funds. Colombian women, for example, call for economic and technical assistance to feminist and environmental movements. Malian women likewise look for technical capacity-building for women on climate and environmental policy processes. They argue that climate adaptation streams of the climate-related funds being disbursed in Mali should support women's small-scale initiatives to enhance agricultural production and develop alternative livelihoods. Yemeni women identified the need for awareness on the nexus and why it matters during peacebuilding within a humanitarian crisis, and for further measures to ensure that climate finance is in practice accessible to women by helping women's organizations to navigate the bureaucratic barriers to eligibility.

Multilateral climate funds, other international climate-related development finance, UN peacekeeping missions and all related climate and environmental programming should earmark substantial funding for women's climate leadership and action in fragile and conflict-affected countries. Structures should be in place to ensure direct funding reaches women's organizations, cooperatives and enterprises, including women's informal businesses and women from marginalized communities and groups. Investing in women-led climate adaption and resilience programmes has been shown to be efficient and effective. Investing in women's grassroots conflict mediation and resolution activities offers opportunities to make progress at the critical nexus of climate, environment, gender and conflict.

I think the United Nations are there in support as financial and technical partners and it is us and the people most affected who will have to take part in the action.

Malian participant



**Women taking
forward the
climate/security/
gender nexus
agenda**





Colombia

Women taking forward the
climate/security/gender
nexus agenda



Colombia is affected by different forms of insecurity, including those related to a legacy of over 50 years of internal armed conflict. In 2016 a peace agreement between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia was signed, outlining both targets and expectations for a transition towards a more peaceful society. The country's peacebuilding process faces numerous challenges and opportunities, including those brought by the climate crisis.

Colombia has the highest occurrence of extreme weather events in South America, including floods, hurricanes, storm surges, droughts and heatwaves. Landslides, the effects of sea-level rise and earthquakes are also serious problems.¹ The rate of deforestation has drastically increased since the signing of the Peace Agreement, as well as violence against environmental and human rights defenders. There is evidence demonstrating that economic hardships resulting from changing environmental conditions facilitate recruitment into armed groups, which seem to offer economic opportunities in a context of climate-driven precarity. Conflict over natural resources and tensions between armed groups over territorial control of resource-rich regions have been reported as increasing in at least 11 municipalities.² There is also growing evidence of gendered impacts of this: for example, in the Amazonian region, Afro-Colombians and indigenous women report higher levels of impacts of climate-related displacement and conflicts over resources than do men.³

Bringing women together

Over 2021/2022, DCAF and Colombian NGO Centro de Estudios sobre Justicia, Derecho y Sociedad (DeJusticia) have collaborated to bring together women working at the nexus of women's rights, peacebuilding and climate and environmental action. DeJusticia is a Colombia-based research and advocacy organization dedicated to strengthening the rule of law and promotion of social justice and human rights in Colombia and the global South.

1. "World Bank Climate Change Knowledge Portal", <https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/>, accessed 2 February 2022.

2. Javier Cárdenas, Cristal Downing and Juanita Vélez, *Climate-Driven Recruitment and Other Conflict Dynamics in Colombia* (United Nations University, 2021).

3. Ibid.

The process facilitated by DCAF and DeJusticia aimed to articulate the links between gender, climate and peace and security in Colombia, and to strengthen the capacity of women's rights organizations to advocate for a women's rights perspective, gender and climate to be included in the peace and security processes in the country. DCAF has a particular interest in developing an understanding of the links between good security sector governance, security sector reform and climate from a gender perspective.

The project commenced with DeJusticia documenting a baseline around the intersections of gender, climate change and peace and security in the country, and noting how these intersections were being incorporated at the policy level. DeJusticia then conducted 26 semi-structured surveys of women's organizations and women-led environmental organizations to understand and document their knowledge and work on the gender/climate/conflict nexus. This informed the design of a workshop to bring these diverse organizations together.

These are women coming from different backgrounds: those from the environmental movement have found the impact of gender very interesting as a way of, say, seeing something that has not been close to their usual focus. The women's organizations have seen how environmental issues intersect their focus of interest as feminists. I think this will create a bond.

Colombian participant

The three-day workshop, titled "The nexus between climate change, gender and peace and security", was held in Bogotá on 16-18 November 2021. Twenty-four women participated, most of whom came from outside the capital. The group included women living in rural and urban areas, indigenous women, women of African descent and women of different ages. It combined activists in the women's movement with an interest in the climate change agenda, environmental leaders and women leaders in environmental movements. A list of the participating organizations is provided at the end of this section on Colombia.

Over the three days the women identified issues they saw as embodying the climate change-gender-peace and security nexus. They considered actors and scenarios with which they could interact to address their concerns and mapped out a collective advocacy strategy. The discussions and priorities identified by the women throughout the workshop are the basis for the analysis and recommendations in this report.

What women see, know and say

The Colombian women involved in this project see multiple linkages between climate change and security. Climate change is acting as a threat multiplier, causing environmental changes that exacerbate societal tensions and hence threaten the conditions that sustain peace and prevent conflict. They see, too, that changing environmental conditions are increasing insecurity in ways that are not gender-neutral: due to pre-existing inequalities, they often disproportionately affect

women while exacerbating women's conditions of vulnerability. For the women participating in this project, "security" is understood as the ability to act autonomously in the absence of risk. Hence insecurity in a changing climate manifests as increased and new risks to autonomy by environmental alterations and extreme weather events. These risks differ greatly in different parts of the country, but the following were identified as some of the most pervasive manifestations.

- Changes in rainfall and hotter and more frequent heatwaves related to climate change directly impact on land and livelihoods. Rural women have seen that as land productivity declines due to changes in rainfall, profits from agricultural production decline. Thus these women are experiencing increased economic hardship and barriers to access to basic goods and services, including food. Changing environmental conditions have pushed women to migrate to other regions, a process in which they face risks such as sexual violence and human trafficking. For indigenous women, the degradation of the environment and their livelihoods is seen as a direct threat to their bodily autonomy, as under their cosmology a division between the body and the environment does not exist.
- Extreme weather events - expected to increase in frequency and intensity - likewise exacerbate conditions of insecurity for women. Women and children are more likely to die in floods, landslides, earthquakes, cyclones and the like, and those who survive have a reduced life expectancy. Gender-based violence tends to increase after such events. The often long interruption to access to basic goods and services, such as health and education, also has gendered consequences, pushing many women to migrate.



- Environmental damage related to the continuation of the armed conflict was also highlighted during the workshop. Women denounced the presence of illegal armed groups controlling economic activities, often illicit. These may offer families an income alternative in a context of economic precarity, but negatively affect the environment. Women also denounced the environmental damage caused by forced eradication of illicit crops by glyphosate spraying, which affects the health of local communities, including women's sexual and reproductive

health, and creates conflicts with communities whose livelihoods depend on these crops. Implementation of the voluntary substitution programmes provided for in the Peace Agreement was deemed necessary.

The Colombian women also identified climate/security links in the impacts of mining, large-scale agro-industrial activities, fossil-fuel extraction and clean-energy projects.

- These activities displace communities and produce environmental damage which results in increased risks and decreased autonomy. Many women who participated in the workshop described how, as mining activities were introduced in their territories, their environments were harmed and their livelihoods deteriorated as a consequence. For example, participants from the Cauca region assert that because water sources were contaminated by these activities, women and their families had to migrate to other regions. Similar problems were identified in relation to so-called clean-energy projects. Female environmental defenders from the regions of Santander, Antioquia and La Guajira denounced how clean-energy projects have led to forced displacement in their territories, generated land degradation and increased barriers to accessing clean water.

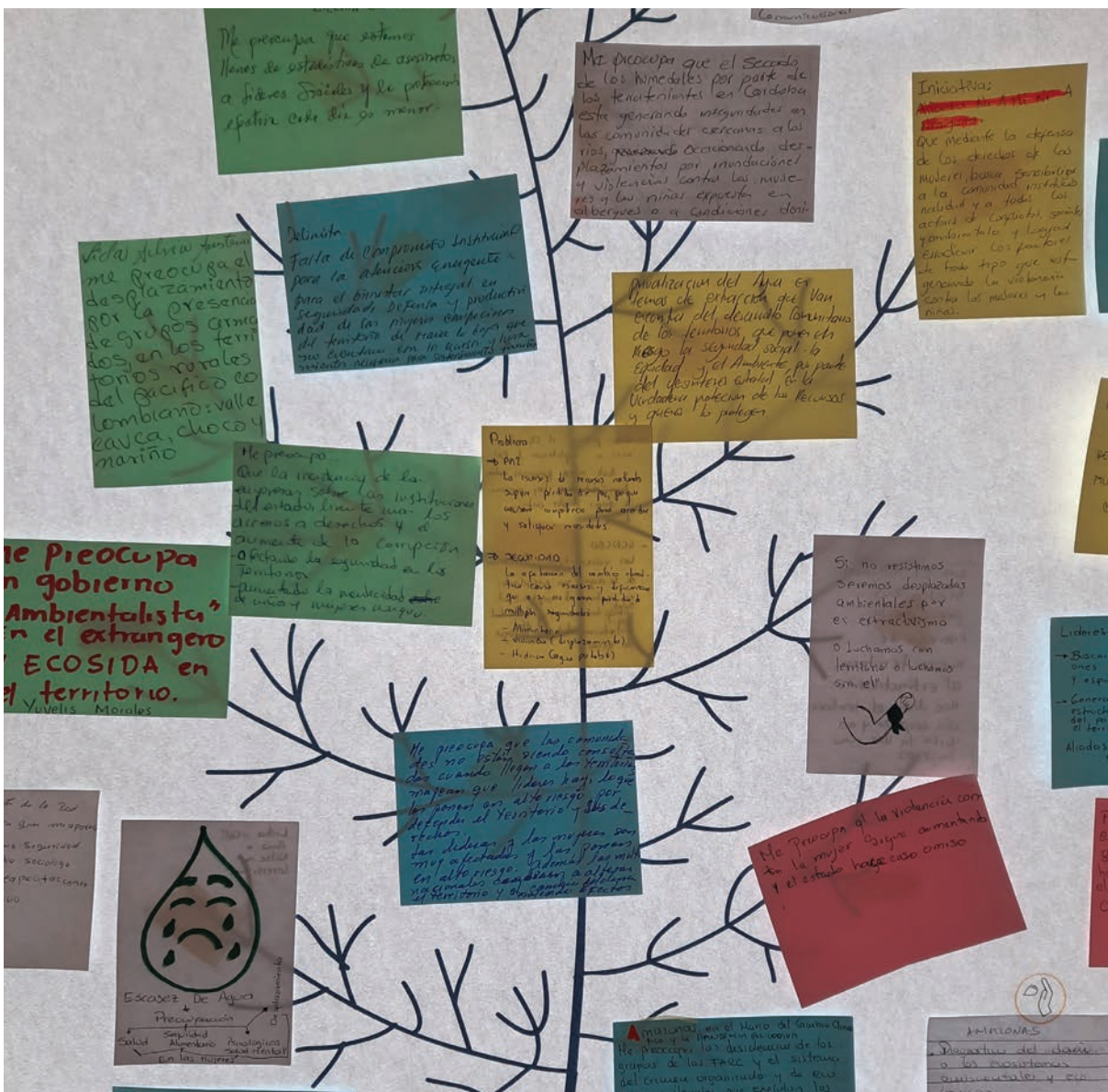


Photo: Problem tree from group work during workshop in Bogotá, Colombia, November 2021 © DCAF/En Algún Lugar.

- The problematic impacts of poorly regulated extractive and energy projects are exacerbated by the lack of real and effective mechanisms for environmental participation, which would allow free, prior and informed community consent to extractive and energy projects as well as meaningful involvement in the risk analysis and mitigation approaches around these projects. Information on existing projects is poorly accessible due to bureaucracy and the highly technical language environmental studies tend to use. There are no mechanisms by which communities can decide whether or not they agree to these projects taking place.
- Mining, agro-industry, fossil-fuel and clean-energy projects often bring with them external security agents. These companies and their security actors at times come into conflict with female environmental defenders, threatening their families and intimate lives, and more pervasively post a threat of sexual violence and exploitation to women in affected communities. Indeed, over the period 2019-2020 Colombia has been for the last two years the country with the highest number of environmental defenders assassinated, according to NGO Global Witness.⁴ Women understand this as part of a broader problematic securitization of and highly militarized approach to climate action and policy, which brings a new series of risks to women, together with forced displacement caused by illegal activities from criminal actors.

Since we are the most affected, since our grandmothers ... have lost children [and] parents, we have adopted [the] baton of empowering ourselves, to get recognition and agency in different spaces... As indigenous women [we must] become visible and show the importance of our role on the local, regional, national and international levels.

Colombian participant

Substantiating the women's concerns around militarized approaches to climate action, a series of interviews with local women led by DeJusticia has documented how Colombia's military forces have, in some regions, been incorporated in adaptation, mitigation and disaster-relief efforts under the climate change imperative, creating new risks perceived by women. Women from the island of Providencia felt that the presence of the military for disaster relief after Hurricane Iota made them feel less secure. Operation Artemisa, a joint government task force between the Ministries of Environment and Defence to combat environmental crimes inside national parks, has resulted in the criminalization of *campesino* and indigenous peoples for small-scale, mostly subsistence deforestation activities, while those mainly responsible for mass deforestation remain untouched.

4. "Global Witness reports 227 land and environmental activists murdered in a single year, the worst figure on record", press release, Global Witness, 13 September 2021.

Implications for peacebuilding and security sector reform

The women taking part in this project were not generally aware of the debates and processes concerning security sector reform taking place in Colombia. Likewise, while the Colombian police have been working on gender mainstreaming and environmental peacebuilding, the women involved in this project were not aware of this. This signals the need for broader dialogue between police and other security sector institutions and women's organizations, including around how the intersections between gender, climate change and environmental degradation impact on women's security and peacebuilding.

What women want

The Colombian women involved in this project identified a range of priorities for national and local climate, environment and natural resource management policy and planning, for approaches to the Women, Peace and Security agenda and the involvement of international actors. Throughout, the need for women's full and meaningful participation is strongly reiterated.

I. National and local governments should promote efforts to gather empirical evidence and data on the relationships between gender, climate change, peace and security

While feminist organizations and female environmental leaders have identified various ways by which climate change and gender, peace and security dynamics impact on each other, a broader understanding of how these linkages operate is necessary. Better empirical evidence and data (disaggregated by sex, age, rural/urban, ethnic group, indigeneity and other factors) are needed to craft and monitor effective policies to counteract the negative impacts of these dynamics on women. Such research processes should be highly participatory, prioritizing the experiences of women at the front lines of the climate and environmental crisis.

II. National and local climate policy and action plans should include a gender perspective when assessing climate-driven security risks and promote gender equality

Climate and environmental actions and policies should carefully identify existing climate-related risks for women and ways in which they could be prevented, and note how in doing so conditions for gender inequality can be simultaneously promoted. This effort requires the participation of women, particularly from feminist and environmental organizations, in the process of designing, implementing and monitoring climate policies.

III. National and local governments should promote norms and agreements towards effective environmental democracy

Extractive activities and large-scale renewable-energy projects have proven to have wide-ranging detrimental impacts on women's rights and security if not properly regulated and overseen. In most cases, this is related to a lack of mechanisms to enable meaningful consultation with and consent by communities to such projects, and then lack of mechanisms to enable communities to report environmental damage and abuses to authorities and receive effective solutions.

Local and national governments should develop and promote real and effective environmental participation mechanisms. Social, gender and environmental safeguards

should be established that guarantee full participation of affected communities and promote women's rights. They should push forward the implementation of international agreements which secure safe environmental democracy and protection of environmental defenders, including by ratifying and implementing the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (Escazú Agreement).

IV. National and local governments should reverse the securitization of climate action and policy, instead prioritizing addressing root causes and the principle of “do no harm”

Women taking part in this project were critical of military involvement in climate action, such as military operations against deforestation. Such operations respond to the symptoms rather than the root causes of environmental crime. Moreover, they risk criminalizing the subsistence activities of marginalized communities such as *campesinxs* and indigenous people while (partly due to loopholes in legal frameworks) allowing those responsible for large-scale environmental crimes to go unpunished.

Women argue that military enforcement of climate and environmental laws should be regarded by both the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development and the Ministry of Defence as the last resort. Rather, national and local governments should prioritize integrated action which attends to the root causes of climate-change-related issues. Where military involvement is proposed, the “do-no-harm” principle must be at the forefront of operations and strict limitations maintained on military roles.

V. The national government should adopt a Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan and include climate considerations

In strategizing to address the relationships between conflict, gender, climate and environment in policy, Colombian women reiterate that the consolidation of a Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan must become a government priority. Twenty years after UN Security Council Resolution 1325 was adopted, and despite persistent calls from feminist organizations, Colombia has no Women, Peace and Security National Action Plan.

Colombia's slow progress in agreeing such a plan can, however, be an opportunity to learn from other countries' experiences and ensure that the climate change, environment and security linkages are made. Women insist that safe and effective spaces for their participation in this policymaking, especially for feminist organizations and female environmental defenders, are guaranteed.

VI. The national government should prioritize the development and implementation of a Climate Change Gender Action Plan

Colombia has a series of general and sectoral policies related to the link between gender and climate change, including the *Programa de fortalecimiento de capacidades para la integración del enfoque de género en la gestión del cambio climático* (Capacity-building programme for integration of a gender approach in climate change management), as well as some sectoral guides. However, it lacks a Climate Change Gender Action Plan (ccGAP - based on the methodology established by the International Union for Conservation of Nature). The ccGAP methodology is highly participatory, incorporating mechanisms for

the active participation of women from both environmental and feminist movements, and is a tool for integrated and coordinated policymaking on gender and climate change. Developing a ccGAP in Colombia would be a critical step towards gender-responsible climate action. Furthermore, ccGAPs from countries such as Liberia and Ghana have successfully incorporated the security dimension of climate change and its gendered impacts, which exemplifies how developing a country ccGAP can provide a pathway for mainstreaming considerations on the gender-climate-security nexus in climate policy.

VII. International funding and support should be directed towards initiatives that ensure women's rights in the context of climate change/security linkages

There are three clear priority areas where international support could enable strong progress in addressing the gender/climate change/peace and security nexus.

(i) Providing economic and technical assistance to feminist and environmental movements to enable the climate change/gender/peace and security agenda to be promoted and strengthened, putting both movements' experiences in environmental protection and peacebuilding at the forefront.

(ii) Providing economic and technical assistance to the Colombian government, academia and NGOs for further research on the gender/climate change/peace and security nexus, for subsequent policy development and policy implementation and monitoring.

(iii) Providing funding for research on the links between security sector reform and governance, climate change and environmental management to inform measures to strengthen good governance, access to justice and transparency in the security sector's engagement in climate and environment.

Participating organizations

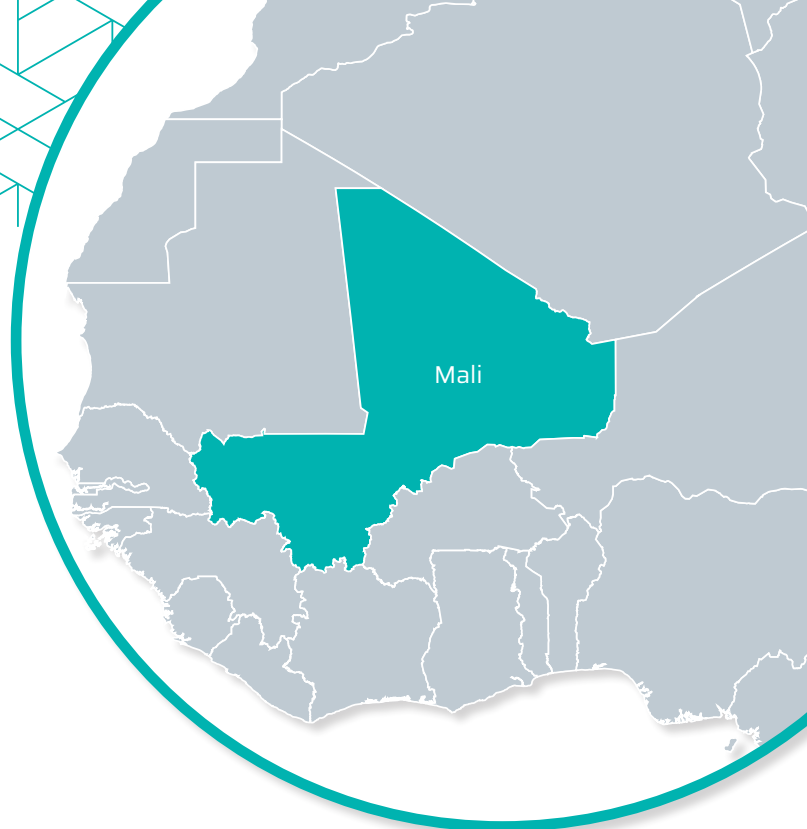
1. Alianza Colombia Libre de Fracking (Cesar)
2. Mujeres Trenzadoras
3. Alianza Colombia Libre de Fracking (Antioquia), Comité Defensa Ambiental
4. Asociación de Mujeres Negras, Indígenas y Campesinas (AMUNIC)
5. Consejo Comunitario La Toma
6. Comité por la Defensa del Agua, la Vida y el Territorio - AGUAWIL
7. Liga Internacional de Mujeres por la Paz y la Libertad (LIMPAL)
8. Fuerza de Mujeres Wayuu
9. Colombia Diversa
10. Organización Grupo Femenina
11. Mesa Nacional de Mujeres Negras, Afrocolombianas, Raizales, Palenqueras
12. Resistencia a la Minería
13. Guardianas de la Naturaleza
14. Red de Mujeres Municipal El Paso (ANUC)
15. Organización Nacional Indígena de Colombia (ONIC)

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Mali

Women taking forward the climate/security/gender nexus agenda



Mali is one of the poorest countries in the world, with over 60 per cent of the population living in poverty.¹ Mali's low economic development, limited land suitable for agriculture and poverty make it particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, which are a significant threat to the country's development and its people's nutrition and health. Key challenges include erratic and reduced rainfall, increased crop pests and desertification – two-thirds of the country's surface is occupied by the Sahara, which steadily increases in size.²

The political and security crisis of 2012 as well as the volatility and instability in northern Mali led to the departure of public administration from these areas, leading in turn to an absence of elementary basic services for these populations, with school closures and limited access to healthcare. Initially concentrated in the northern regions, insecurity has spread to the centre of the country. The main security threats come from the merger of several jihadist groups responsible for multiple attacks against the population, civilian actors and Malian and international defence and security forces. The impact of this crisis has been manifested in increased levels of extreme poverty and massive population displacements. Women and girls were particularly affected by many forms of violence during the conflict, such as kidnappings, individual and collective rapes, forced and/or early marriages and sexual slavery. In this context of generalized crisis, community conflicts around access to natural resources are strongly present, aggravated by the impacts of climate change.³

1. People living on less than one dollar a day.

2. Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery et al., "Vulnerability, risk reduction and adaptation to climate change: Mali", Climate Risk and Adaptation Country Profile (World Bank, April 2011), https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/sites/default/files/2018-10/wb_gfdr气候_change_country_profile_for_MLI.pdf, accessed 14 February 2022.

3. Mali, Plan d'action national pour la mise en œuvre de la Résolution 1325 et des résolutions connexes du Conseil de sécurité des Nations Unies sur l'agenda Femmes, paix et sécurité au Mali, 2019-2023.

Bringing women together

Over 2021/2022, staff of DCAF's offices in Bamako and Geneva worked with a national consultant, Aida Keita M'bo, to bring together women working at the nexus of women's rights, peacebuilding and climate and environmental action. Ms Keita was Mali's minister of environment from 2016 to 2019. Among other responsibilities, she is now president of Réseau Energia Mali, an NGO promoting equal access to energy and sustainable development. The process aimed to articulate the links between gender, climate and peace and security in Mali, and to strengthen the capacity of women's rights organizations to advocate for a gender-climate lens to be included in the country's peace and security processes. DCAF has a particular interest in developing an understanding of the links between good security sector governance, security sector reform and climate from a gender perspective.

They do it but without realizing that they are in the gender, woman peace and climate change nexus. It was when we did the first day of the workshop that they realized that in fact they are working on these issues without realizing it.

Malian participant

The project commenced with Ms Keita documenting a baseline around the extent to which the gendered impacts of climate change were as yet being taken into account in Mali's peace and security policies, mechanisms and processes. She then conducted mapping and surveys of women's rights organizations to understand and document their knowledge and work on the gender/climate/conflict nexus. The mapping and surveys identified a relatively large number of initiatives by civil society organizations working on one or other of the dimensions of the nexus. Yet the relationship between gender, climate change and security has not yet been articulated as a public policy issue, nor connected to Mali's peacebuilding process. Women's rights organizations did not feel equipped to integrate the conflict/climate/gender nexus in their advocacy; yet, when approached, they responded enthusiastically to the opportunity to explore further the connections between these issues. Thirty-three of the organizations invited to participate in the project did so. This mapping and survey process informed the design of a workshop to bring these diverse organizations together.

The three-day workshop, titled "*Genre, sécurité et changement climatique*", was held in Bamako on 14-16 December 2021. Of 36 women invited, 33 participated; they included former ministers as well as current and former parliamentarians. A list of the organizations participating is provided at the end of this section on Mali. Over the three days, the women identified issues they saw as embodying the climate change-gender-peace and security nexus. They considered actors and scenarios with which they could interact to address their concerns, and mapped out a collective advocacy strategy. Since the workshop they have continued to work together to build an informal national coalition on gender, climate change and security, and conduct research documenting the manifestations of the impacts of climate change and environmental degradations on women's human security in Mali.

The discussions and priorities identified by the women throughout the workshop are the basis for the analysis and recommendations in this report.

What women see, know and say

The Malian women involved in this project see the impacts of climate change all around them, in their own lives and their communities. Yet they highlight that policy needs to take into consideration the whole range of environmental degradation, beyond climate change alone. Climate change and its manifestations (drought, lower agricultural yields, lower water levels, flooding, shrinking agricultural production areas, etc.), taken in isolation, certainly have an impact on human security. But this impact cannot be considered separately from the impact caused by other environmental damage, such as deforestation, rapid urbanization, overexploitation of gold mines, poor waste management, abusive use of chemicals and pesticides, and pollution. It is consideration of climate change *and* other environmental stresses that best captures women's life experiences and the link between environmental issues and human security.

Women were in agreement that the impacts of climate change contributed to community tensions. An anecdote concerning a well illustrates this.

“The link between peace, security and climate change was perceived during our interventions because there was strong pressure on the exploitation of a well which our organization had provided to satisfy the water needs of the community and the animals. The exploitation of this water point has been a source of conflict between communities because of the scarcity of water in the area. The community conflicts are the consequences of this effect of climate change.”

The most important message of this process ... is that you are never strong alone. Our strength lies in coalitions and networking ...

Malian participant

Women also described a wide range of ways in which climate change and environmental degradation impact on women's insecurity: internal displacement; decreased income; reduced access to education; increased incidents of polygamy (legal in Mali), prostitution, gender-based violence and abduction; shrinking space for mobility; and increases in malnutrition and waterborne diseases. Women described shrinking fertile land being captured by a few people, mostly men, with women being particularly vulnerable to being stripped of their land. The aridity and floods caused by climate change reduce agricultural yields and women's income, affecting their economic and food security. Pollution impacts on women's reproductive health, and other environmental factors worsen maternal and child mortality.

Stories shared by women during the workshop illustrate how the interplay between the impacts of climate change and insecurity have particular impacts upon women.

“In the rural areas where our NGO operates, the scarcity of firewood and harvested products means that women travel long distances to meet their daily needs (for firewood and harvested products, etc.). On these journeys, they are exposed to violence caused by men with bad intentions or by jihadists. In addition, it should be noted that the fact that they exploit the forest resources of other neighbouring villages leads to recurrent conflicts between communities. All these phenomena of which they are victims are the consequences of climate change and persistent insecurity in these areas.”

“Our organization has accompanied women in fish farming in order to improve their income following the effects of climate change. The products were intended for the weekly fairs. Because of the insecurity on the roads between the villages and the fairs, the products can no longer be sold. So, the insecurity combined with the effects of climate change has seriously affected the economic life of women.”

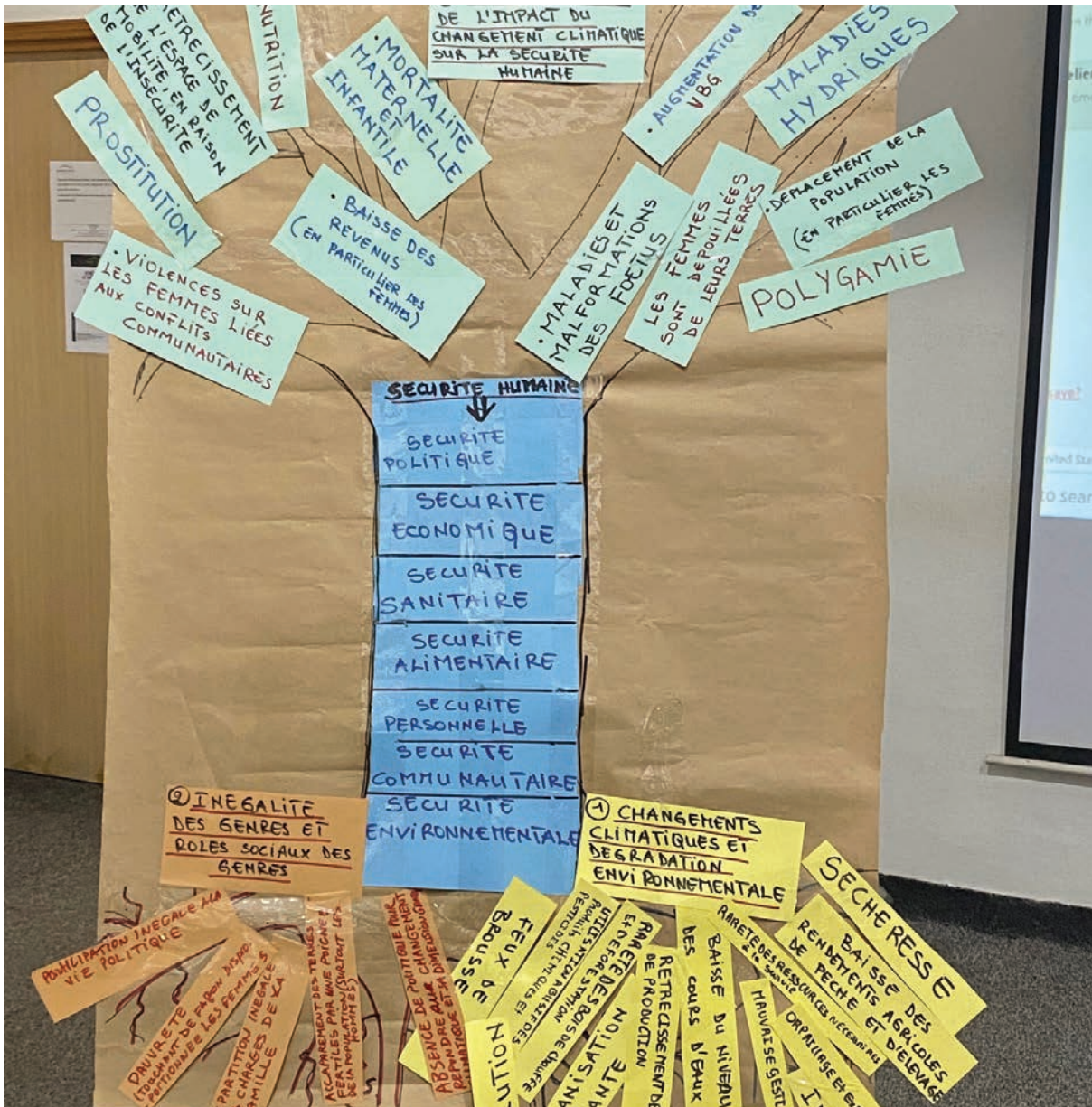


Photo: Problem tree from group work during workshop in Bamako, Mali, December 2021 © DCAF/Malinium Pictures.

Women insist that the nexus between gender, climate change and security can only be conceptualized and articulated by adopting a broad understanding of the concept of security. A narrow conception of what security means that is centred around the security of states and/or the personal security of citizens does not comprehensively capture the ways in which gender inequality, climate change and security interact. Rather, a human security framing is needed, embracing the seven dimensions of personal, political, community, economic, food, health and environmental security.

Implications for peacebuilding and security sector reform

Women are still little involved in monitoring the implementation of the peace and reconciliation agreement resulting from the Algiers peace agreement signed in June 2015 between the Malian government and an alliance of rebel groups in the north of the country. As yet, the link between climate, environment and security issues is not - or barely - conceptualized by peacebuilding actors, nor considered within the framework of this process.

For women, the challenge has a double dimension. To put the gender, climate change and security nexus on the agenda of the peace process, it is necessary to strengthen the place given to women's voices in this process, while at the same time putting climate and environmental issues on the agenda.

The woman is the pillar, let's say, of the universe. Without women, we cannot build. Above all, we cannot build peace, there is no security. So, in a country where the nexus is not taken into account, women are neglected.

Malian participant

Likewise, the nexus between gender, climate change and security is not yet on the agenda of the ongoing security sector reform process in Mali. Security sector actors still have a narrow perception of security, which limits their capacity to draw connections between their work and climate and environmental issues. Yet women are concerned about certain impacts of the security sector. One of the NGOs involved in the project has been advocating around the dangers posed by military flights used by foreign forces to the environment, habitats and people's health in Gao.

Articulating the gender, climate change and security nexus around the concept of human security could, however, facilitate this agenda setting because the security sector reform process is also based on promoting the concept of human security with regard to the role of the security sector. Actors in charge of the security sector reform process might therefore tend to welcome messages articulated around this concept.

What women want

The Malian women involved in this project identified a range of urgent priorities for Mali's national government ministries, set out below. In all these measures they look for a participatory and inclusive political-level process, with measures to ensure the full and meaningful participation of women.

- I. The government is to integrate the gender, security and climate change nexus into policies and programmes at the national level, including policies to reduce the impact of climate change on women.
- II. The government is to adopt a Gender, Security and Climate Change Policy, developed by the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and the Family and other sectoral ministries with the involvement of women's civil society.
- III. The Ministry of Environment is to integrate a gender, security and climate change programme into planning.
- IV. The Ministry of Environment and ministries responsible for security are to support the inclusion of women in the climate change adaptation process by developing policies to reduce the impact of climate change on women.
- V. The Ministry of Environment, ministries responsible for security and the Ministry for the Promotion of Women, Children and the Family are to promote the full participation of women in policymaking related to the gender, climate change and security nexus.
- VI. Water and power services (regional directorates) are to control illegal logging better.

What I can say to the leaders of this country is that they should really take climate change seriously. It is a fact that is there, that exists, that is destroying most of our lands. So they have to put this issue of climate change on the table for us to discuss; to make the link between peace, gender and climate change.

Malian participant

Women taking forward the gender, climate change and security nexus agenda

The Malian women involved in this project identified the need to put the gender, climate change and security nexus on the agenda of three existing arenas of discussion at the national level:

- the arena relating to the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda;
- the arena relating to climate change and environmental issues; and
- the arena relating to peace negotiations and security sector reform.

In parallel, women see advocacy at local and international levels as critical. Local perspectives are needed to inform national advocacy messages, and the local community is a space for legitimizing them.

Women identified the need to involve women's and girls' platforms, networks and groups further on the nexus of gender, security and climate change, and to build the capacity of rural women and girls to be part of these discussions. They envisioned the potential for a "citizens' watchdog" to monitor government actions on the nexus.

To progress this vision, the women committed to form and continue to work together as the Coalition Malienne Genre, Sécurité et Changement Climatique. The objective of this coalition is to advance recognition of how climate change and environmental degradation have an impact on human security, especially women's security. Key entry points for this are identified as processes related to the development and implementation of the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security; the Peace Agreement Monitoring Commission; and the security sector reform process.



A communication platform for coalition members has been established, and other organizations working on the nexus have been invited to join. A next priority for the coalition was agreed to be further research to develop empirical evidence and data concerning the gender impacts of climate and environment on the seven dimensions of women's human security. A working group in charge of research has been formed to lead this work, proposing to review existing literature and conduct interviews with women in local communities.

Participating organizations

1. Association des Femmes pour les Initiatives de Paix (AFIP)
2. Réseau des femmes pour les droits environnementaux (REFEDE)
3. Réseau des Femmes Africaines Ministres et Parlementaires (REFAMP)
4. Réseau Ouest Africain pour l'édification de la Paix (WANEP) et sa branche WIPNET
5. Réseau FEMNET
6. Plateforme des femmes du G5 Sahel
7. Institut Malien de Recherche Action pour la Paix (IMRAP)
8. Coordination des Associations et ONG Féminines du Mali CAFO (CAFO)
9. Al baraka
10. Réseau Paix et Sécurité pour les femmes de l'espace CEDEAO (REPSFECO)
11. Cadre de concertation des femmes des partis politiques (CCFPP)
12. Association pour la Promotion de la Femme et de l'Enfant au Mali (APROFEM)
13. Association pour le progrès et la défense des droits de la femme (APDF)
14. Femmes Droit et Développement en Afrique (WILDAF Mali)
15. Collectif des Femmes du Mali (COFEM)
16. Association pour la Sauvegarde de l'Environnement et le Développement au Sahel (ASEDS)
17. Développement Intégration et Valorisation du rôle de la Femme (DIVAROF)
18. Coalition de la société civile pour la Paix et la lutte contre la Prolifération des Armes Légères (CONASCIPAL)
19. Association Recherche Action Femme et Développement (ARAFD)
20. Association des Femmes Entrepreneures du Mali (AFEM)
21. Association Malienne d'Appui aux initiatives locales (AMAIL)
22. Groupe de Recherche, d'Etude, de Formation Femme d'Action (Greffa)
23. Forum des femmes actives pour les objectifs de développement durable et l'émergence (FAODE)
24. Observatoire des Droits de la Femme et de l'Enfant (ODEF)
25. Pôle des Actions d'Intégration des Droits Humains en Afrique (PACINDHA Mali)
26. Union pour Avenir Écologique et Solidaire (UAVES)
27. Association pour la Défense des Droits de l'Environnement et de l'Homme (ADDEH)
28. ONG Jiguiseme
29. Plateforme Nationale des Acteurs de la Société Civile sur le Climat, l'Environnement et le Développement Durable (PNASC-CED)
30. Association de Formation et d'Appui au Développement (AFAD)
31. Association des Femmes Leaders de Tombouctou
32. Fédération des Associations de Femmes Rurales
33. Fédération Nationale des Collectifs d'Organisations Féminines du Mali (FENACOF)

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Yemen

Women taking forward the
climate/security/gender
nexus agenda



Yemen has been in conflict for nearly eight years and is suffering the world's worst humanitarian crisis: 80 per cent of its population need humanitarian assistance.¹ The conflict exacerbates fatality rates from Covid-19 and other diseases, and from natural disasters such as floods. These, in turn, damage already fragile and limited infrastructure, especially regarding natural resources such as water and agriculture. The result is further reduced access to basic services such as health, education and shelter, disproportionately affecting women and girls - who are consequently also at a higher risk of gender-based violence and displacement. Migrant and refugee women and women from other marginalized groups are particularly at risk.²

There is a severe water crisis in Yemen, compounded by the severe direct and indirect impacts of climate change: both drought and extreme flooding, pest and disease outbreaks, changed rainfall patterns, increased frequency and severity of storms and rising sea levels. Drought and desertification add more complexity to the protracted humanitarian crisis, the armed conflict and the collapse of the economy. Access to water is "weaponized" - used by warring parties to weaken the other side through siege and blockades. The combined impact of climate change and conflict multiplies the risks for populations already in crisis, especially women and girls.

Despite the immense challenges, Yemeni women are not solely victims of conflict or climate threats - they are also uniquely placed to respond given their localized knowledge and perspectives. Throughout the conflict, Yemeni women-led civil society organizations have been working relentlessly to fill the gaps left by authorities and international organizations, especially in providing assistance to communities in remote and front-line areas. Yemeni women community leaders and activists provide food and essential services; facilitate negotiations to open humanitarian corridors and the release of detainees; and work to demilitarize schools and divert youth from taking up arms. Women-led organizations continue to carry out this work with extremely limited resources and financing.

1. OCHA, 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan Monitoring Report: Yemen (October 2021), p. 6.

2. Ibid., 23

Bringing women together

Over 2021/2022, DCAF collaborated with local Yemeni consultants Dr Nadia Al-Sakkaf, a former politician, and Muna Luqman, a human rights advocate, peacebuilder and inclusivity consultant for DCAF's broader programme in Yemen. We sought to bring together women working at the nexus of women's rights, peacebuilding and climate and environmental action. The aim was to start a process to strengthen the capacity of women activists and women's rights organizations to advocate for a gender-climate lens to be included in their country's peace and security processes. DCAF has a particular interest in developing an understanding of the links between good security sector governance, security sector reform and climate from a gender perspective.

The project commenced with Nadia Al-Sakkaf and Muna Luqman documenting a baseline around the extent to which the gendered impacts of climate change were being taken into account in Yemen's peace processes, and conducting mapping and needs assessment of how Yemeni organizations working on the Women, Peace and Security agenda were engaging with climate issues. The mapping covered the period between January 2019 and July 2021, and involved a desk review, survey results from 25 women from different organizations, and interviews with over 35 men and women, including environmental specialists, academics and local NGOs and civil society organizations, either as organizational representatives or as independent experts/activists. The mapping showed that women's rights organizations undertaking climate change advocacy work do not always emphasize gender considerations and tend not to use the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Correspondingly, it suggested that for women's rights organizations involved in the peace process, climate advocacy has not been a focus.

This mapping and a needs assessment were used by DCAF and the experts to shape a participatory gender, climate and security learning and advocacy workshop for Yemeni women's rights organizations. The needs assessment revealed a strong interest in building a shared evidence base for use in advocacy and awareness-raising and building a network to increase the coherence and impact of advocacy efforts targeting the peace process.

The workshop was held over three days in November 2021. The 21 participants were from 20 women's organizations from seven different Yemeni governorates: Aden, Hadramout, Marib, Sana'a, Shabwa, Socotra and Taiz. A list of the organizations participating is provided at the end of this section on Yemen. To overcome the challenges of travel, insecurity and unstable electricity and internet connectivity, workshop participants gathered in four "clusters" in Aden, Taiz, Marib and Socotra and the workshop was facilitated in a "hybrid" format. It combined morning online sessions and afternoon face-to-face breakout discussions and work assignments, with local facilitators working with each cluster. Two prominent climate change experts and advocates, Tareq Hassan and Bilkis Zabara, shared their knowledge as part of the online sessions. This hybrid format was perceived by participants as very effective, and enabled participation beyond what could have been achieved through asking everyone to gather in one place.

What women see, know and say

Yemeni women highlighted several examples of climate change impacts, such as rising temperature, rising sea level, unstable monsoon seasons, droughts, floods and other devastating weather events. They described how these affect the livelihood of the communities by increasing food insecurity, causing displacement, increasing the risk of epidemics and on many occasions posing a direct risk to lives through natural disasters. Industry is also damaging the environment in Yemen; examples include factories with poor waste management, petrochemical pollution and irresponsible industrial fishing.

Yemeni women often bear the larger burden of climate- and environment-related hardships because they are disadvantaged in terms of access to resources, protection and basic services, and have less ability to withstand difficult conditions. Women are less physically able to withstand dangers caused by natural disasters such as floods, especially if they are pregnant or with young children.



Women described how competition over natural resources, especially water, contributes to Yemen's armed conflict. Additionally, influxes of people displaced by the conflict into other communities increase the strain on natural resources, which causes resentment among the host communities and contributes to further conflict. People who are displaced suffer a double burden: displacement, and rejection by the host communities.

Mismanagement of resources and corruption exacerbate the impacts of climate change, while the conflict renders the state dysfunctional and unable to plan and deal with climate change impacts. For both local and outside actors, the humanitarian crisis is perceived as more urgent because it is more visible and direct. The conflict not only hampers adaptation to climate change but can exacerbate its impacts by negatively affecting the environment: whether directly through chemical pollution from warfare or indirectly by destruction of natural habitats.

Yemeni women see important roles for civil society to engage at the climate/conflict nexus. These include building their own capacity and expertise concerning climate policy and planning, creating advocacy networks and alliances, and empowering the youth and communities most affected by climate change and conflict. Women's experience in community resilience and peacebuilding at the local level has given them a foundation within communities and credibility among their constituencies.

Implications for peacebuilding and security sector reform

The gender/climate/peace and security nexus is not yet being comprehensively addressed in peacebuilding activities in Yemen. Yet there is significant scope for national and international peacebuilding actors to incorporate targeted climate change issues, given the existence of several initiatives that make clear recommendations on the nexus. These include the Feminist Peace Roadmap in 2021, which proposed several gender-responsive recommendations addressing climate change effects related to the peace process; and the High-Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen in 2019, which called on the international community to focus on livelihood programmes that include sustainable development and environmental protection in humanitarian aid delivery.

What women want

Through this project, Yemeni women developed a series of recommendations to national, regional and international stakeholders for effectively addressing conflict-climate dynamics in a gender-responsive manner. These are outlined below.

- I. Including climate considerations and their gendered dynamics in any future political agreements, at both national and governorate (regional) levels.
- II. Enhancing gender-responsive, impartial coordination in the national-level mechanisms to manage natural resources and address climate change. These mechanisms should be inclusive, fair and empower local actors, especially women-led organizations.
- III. Integrating gender-responsive climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning, and establishing local-level committees to handle natural resources and deal with urgent environmental problems.
- IV. Humanitarian and development programming that strengthens local social and institutional capacity to manage climate and conflict risks in a gender-responsive manner, including support for effective adaptive capacities and conflict management mechanisms. The programming should balance addressing immediate humanitarian needs with reducing vulnerability in the longer term.

- V. Gender-inclusive and gender-responsive crisis response planning to coordinate the actions of security providers and build local capacities, frameworks and programming to withstand climate shocks. This would include having tools and guidance on gender analysis and on strengthening the agency, voice and capacities of women's networks and organizations, civil society and gender advocates to engage effectively in planning and programming.
- VI. Strengthening human and institutional capacity (including through education and training) on gender-responsive climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.
- VII. Ensuring that women are part of decision-making circles and policymaking, including decisions made by, between and with respect to security and humanitarian actors (such as police, civil defence and health providers), and increasing women's access to livelihood support and participation and leadership opportunities.
- VIII. Promoting positive coping mechanisms and sustainable livelihoods for marginalized women, and educating women and girls to deal with climate shocks.
- IX. Increasing resilience in the agriculture sector to improve food security chains, from farming techniques to markets and money management.
- X. Implementing economic empowerment measures, including building capacity of both men and women in accessing resources and services such as bank accounts and savings schemes.
- XI. The international community supporting and funding measures to ensure gender, security and climate are addressed in peacebuilding, and that peacebuilding and gender issues are addressed in support for climate adaptation and resilience. More specifically, supporting women's civil society to access climate funds dedicated to Yemen (which tend to require that the applying entity has institutional and capacity levels beyond the reach of most local organizations), and funding studies on gendered impacts of climate change.

It doesn't have to come from influential people in the long run. The solutions to climate change possibly come from the simple young people.

Yemeni participant

Women taking forward the gender, climate change and security nexus agenda

Yemeni women involved in this project agreed on some key steps to evidence and progress recognition of the connections between climate change, gender and security. They formed the Yemen Climate Change–Women, Peace and Security Nexus Network, the first such network in Yemen, through which to continue to work together. They aim to highlight the intersections among climate change and sustainable development, gender inequities and climate risks, gender-related vulnerabilities to climate change, and the positive and important roles that women play in climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts to ensure sustainable peace and prevention of local conflicts and violence.

A first objective of the network is to evidence and communicate about issues relevant to the climate change and Women, Peace and Security nexus that affect local communities, so to influence decision-makers at local, regional and national levels to adopt a more effective and inclusive approach to managing the nexus. The network will explore gaining accreditation for some member organizations to participate in international platforms related to climate change.

A second priority for the network's advocacy is to evaluate the effectiveness and inclusiveness of Yemen's existing mechanisms at national, local and regional levels to mitigate disaster management and climate change impacts. Network members will start to engage with these mechanisms at local and regional levels. The outcomes of this engagement can then inform more specific policy demands that the network might present to mandated authorities and influential entities with respect to both management of natural resources and engagement in peacebuilding activities.

Participating organizations

1. Peace School of Development
2. Sanad
3. Enjaz Foundation for Development
4. Green Hands Initiative
5. Woogood Foundation for Human Security
6. Al Aidaroos Women's Development Association
7. Yemeni Women's Union - Abyan
8. Southern Women for Peace Group
9. To Be Foundation for Rights and Freedoms
10. Food for Humanity Foundation
11. Al-Ikha Association for Development and Peace
12. Kainuna International for Development
13. Meemz Art Initiative
14. Strategic Research Centre for Women and Child Support
15. Change Horizon Forum
16. Nature Conservation Initiative
17. Cleaning and Development Fund
18. Marib Girls Foundation
19. Yemeni Women's Union - Marib
20. Socotra Woman Foundation for Development and Response
21. Socotra Women's Association

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WOMEN SPEAK:

The Lived Nexus Between Climate, Gender And Security

DCAF - Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance is dedicated to improving the security of states and their people within a framework of democratic governance, the rule of law, respect for human rights, and gender equality. Since its founding in 2000, DCAF has contributed to making peace and development more sustainable by assisting partner states, and international actors supporting these states, to improve the governance of their security sector through inclusive and participatory reforms. It creates innovative knowledge products, promotes norms and good practices, provides legal and policy advice and supports capacity- building of both state and non- state security sector stakeholders.

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