

Key Messages and Recommendations on the Intersections of Sexual and Reproductive Rights and Climate Change

For the International Conference on Family Planning November 2022

Overview

The Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and Climate Justice (SRHR & CJ) Coalition is a global network of more than 60 civil society organizations committed to collective action and coordinated advocacy to advance SRHR and gender equality in the context of climate change from an intersectionality and climate justice approach.

The coalition emerged from the need to create a space where we can break down silos between the SRHR and the Climate Justice organizations and movements, facilitate knowledge sharing, jointly mobilize, and amplify the voices and priorities of grassroots organizations, led by women, youth, girls, the LGBTQIA+ community, and Indigenous people from the Global South, particularly those most affected by climate change and without continuous access to high-quality SRH services.

Climate change poses a serious challenge to the realization of sexual and reproductive rights and health (SRHR), including people's rights to determine when, how and whether to bear children, control their bodies and sexuality, access essential sexual and reproductive health information and services, and be free from violence. SRHR must be considered as a key component of climate adaptation and resilience action and of climate justice.

Key Messages

A human rights-based approach to climate action includes ensuring universal access to the full range of SRHR. Narrowing the focus to family planning ignores the whole person and sexual and reproductive health needs throughout the life course, which are associated with many health services beyond contraception. To advance SRHR, gender equality interventions must address the structural barriers embedded in norms, laws, and policies that contribute to inequality and injustice and that exacerbate the impacts of climate change. This must happen beyond the health sector, including in climate policies. Climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programs must be developed and implemented with an intersectional, equitable lens, and a human rights-based approach.

Contraception should not be seen as a strategy for climate change mitigation.

Some stakeholders claim that contraception and girls' education are important interventions for climate change mitigation since they reduce fertility, which leads to lower population growth, and lower levels of greenhouse gas emissions. Women and girls in lower-income nations, where fertility rates are comparatively high, are the main focus of such harmful narratives. However, this is an instrumentalist and non-rights-based approach. Climate change mitigation necessitates tackling unsustainable consumption and production, particularly in high-income countries. The promotion of contraception as a climate mitigation solution, regardless of the emphasis on bodily autonomy, places the burden of solving the crisis on those who are least responsible for it but are most affected by its consequences.

Climate change has differential and negative impacts on women, girls, and gender-diverse people, including on their ability to exercise their SRHR, as a result of structural discrimination and intersecting inequalities that contribute to marginalization and vulnerability.

Recommendations

Address the gaps in research and evidence on the linkages between SRHR and climate change.

- Conduct more research. Research initiatives that bring together climate, health, and gender experts can help to promote more integrated analysis by breaking down silos.
- Invest in research that takes an intersectional lens and addresses the evidence gaps, and integrate analysis of SRHR and climate data.

Support opportunities to strengthen knowledge of and integrate action on the intersections between climate change and SRHR. Continue raising awareness on the intersections between climate change and SRHR through communications and outreach.

Commit robust and feminist financing for the climate and SRHR intersection.

Recognize the lack of financial resources and other resources supporting women's and feminist organizations' climate work overall, and especially at the intersection of SRHR and climate, and allocate the funding needed to implement holistic and integrated efforts that cut across the climate, health and gender equality sectors, including:

- Investments that address underlying systemic causes of vulnerabilities to the climate crisis, including for women, girls and Indigenous people
- Funds that are directed to feminist and women's rights organizations
- Investments in climate-resilient health systems
- Social protection and public services, and UHC, including SRH in essential services, and
- Support and training for community health workers specializing in SRH to address climate-related health impacts.

Engage girls and women, in all their intersecting identities, and youth- and gender-focused organizations in climate processes and programs. Engaging those who are impacted the most by climate change in climate policy, processes, and programs ensures that their needs are recognized, prioritized, and addressed. This can be done through a range of actions from focused stakeholder consultations that support national climate policies to promoting women's leadership on these issues at the local, national, and global levels.

Promote collaboration between government and other entities working on climate change, gender, health, and SRHR so that SRHR considerations can be integrated in country-level climate policy and programs, and climate can be included in gender equality policy and programs. Hold spaces in global development processes such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) Conference of the Parties (COP), and the Generation Equality Forum follow-up, inter alia, to discuss and raise awareness on these issues.

How to Join the Coalition

To find out more about the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and Climate Justice Coalition, including how to join, please visit srhrclimatecoalition.org/.