

# Mainstreaming gender in climate action in the Arab region



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● Women and girls in the Arab region should be included more prominently in climate change policymaking, but also more broadly given the interlinkages between climate and other policy areas.

● Women's leadership and full participation in climate action are essential to design solutions and responses to climate emergencies so as to address their differentiated needs in the Arab region.

● Women's full contribution to national adaptation plans (NAPs) for climate change provides an opportunity to ensure the full participation of all members of society in climate adaptation initiatives.

● Mainstreaming climate concerns into national gender equality frameworks, action plans and strategies is an opportunity for the Arab region to comprehensively approach gender discrimination in climate change.

As extreme weather events increase in severity and frequency worldwide, climate change is a daily occurrence with real life consequences. For women in the Arab region, water scarcity, food insecurity and conflict, coupled with environmental degradation, resource scarcity and forced migration, further complicate the struggle to survive and compound the risk for increased inequality and violence. However, while women in the region play an important role in climate change responses and increasing climate resilience, their participation remains underrepresented in global and regional climate negotiations, and their solutions are drastically under-resourced. There are two ways to remedy this is at the policy level: to mainstream gender-based concerns through NAPs on climate change, and to mainstream climate concerns within gender equality frameworks.

## Climate-gender nexus: The gender-differentiated impacts of climate change in the Arab region and opportunities for women as agents of change

Climate change is acutely felt in the Arab region where extreme weather events and changes in temperature and precipitation patterns impact not only the ability to thrive, but the ability to survive. Women and girls in the region experience climate change in uniquely gendered ways owing to deeply entrenched gender inequalities that are coupled with risk multipliers such as limited resources; limited economic, social and political participation and access to information; chronic conflict and occupation; and mass displacement.

Water scarcity is a significant concern in the region. Women and girls are especially vulnerable to water scarcity, as they are primarily responsible for water collection and management in the household and are more likely to avoid going to school during their menstrual cycle if WASH facilities are inadequate.<sup>1</sup> Water scarcity can impact food security, health and livelihoods, with women and girls bearing the brunt. When coupled with



climate change and conflict, water scarcity further compounds vulnerabilities. This is evident in Somalia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, where extremes such as drought or flooding, combined with gendered expectations of women's increased care responsibilities, have resulted in greater displacement, increased gender-based violence, increased human trafficking, and death among women and girls.<sup>2</sup>

A significant number of women in the Arab region work in agriculture. As the sole source of livelihood for some,

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF Jordan and Economist Impact, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Hassan, Pant and Tarazi, 2021.

### Box 1. Lima Work Programme on Gender and its Gender Action Plan

At the twentieth Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP20) held in 2014, parties established the Lima Work Programme on Gender (LWPG) with the objective of advancing gender balance and integrating gender concerns into the work of the parties. At COP25 in 2019, parties agreed to a five-year enhanced LWPG and Gender Action Plan. The Gender Action Plan identifies objectives and activities in the following five priority areas: capacity-building; gender balance and women's participation and leadership in the work of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC); coherence (integrating gender considerations into UNFCCC work); gender responsive implementation; and monitoring and reporting.

Following the adoption of the enhanced LWPG and the Gender Action Plan, the United Nations Secretariat, in June 2022, launched a synthesis report highlighting various activities that have advanced women's full, equal and meaningful participation. The report also promoted gender-responsive climate policy and the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the implementation of UNFCCC, and identified areas for improvement and further work. Notably, no Arab State contributed to this report.

**Source:** UNFCCC, n.d.; UNFCCC, 2022b.

agricultural work may place women and girls in precarious situations when extreme weather conditions compromise production, as experienced by Syrian refugee women in Lebanon.<sup>3</sup> In Yemen, climate shocks in rural areas have led to greater numbers of men migrating to cities, leaving women to perform farming activities in areas where the land is degraded and where women's land ownership is often severely limited, making them susceptible to various forms of violence and exploitation.<sup>4</sup> Vulnerabilities are further amplified for women who are refugees, displaced or non-citizens; are of ethnic or linguistic minorities, have disabilities; are pregnant; or are older persons.

Women and girls have an important role to play in climate change mitigation and adaptation in the Arab region, yet women's political participation and representation in the region is one of the lowest globally.<sup>5</sup> Research indicates that higher female representation in parliament can lead to countries adopting more climate-friendly policies and lowering emissions,<sup>6</sup> and potentially taking climate change more seriously.<sup>7</sup> In addition, women, through their engagement in agriculture and natural resource management, possess local knowledge that is important in developing tailored climate change actions. Therefore, women and girls in the Arab region should be included more prominently in climate change action and other forms of policymaking, given the relevant interlinkages with climate and other policy areas.

## Gender in UNFCCC processes: national adaptation plans on climate change

NAPs on climate change were established under the Cancun Adaptation Framework. They are intended to help countries identify their medium- and long-term science-based adaptation needs and priorities, channel resources, and implement adaptation actions. NAPs can be used to inform and update countries' nationally determined contributions, which are obligated under the Paris Agreement.

The process of drafting NAPs presents a key opportunity to address the gender dimensions of climate change.<sup>8</sup> A gender-responsive and intersectional approach requires the consideration of gender throughout all aspects of the NAP process, including planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. Furthermore, gender should serve as cross-cutting in capacity development, institutional arrangements, information sharing and financing,<sup>9</sup> such as by involving the ministry responsible for gender in the climate adaptation planning process,<sup>10</sup> and implementing gender-responsive budgeting.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Luqman and Al-Sakkaf, 2022.

<sup>5</sup> Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2022.

<sup>6</sup> Mavisakalyan and Tarverdi, 2019; The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), 2022a.

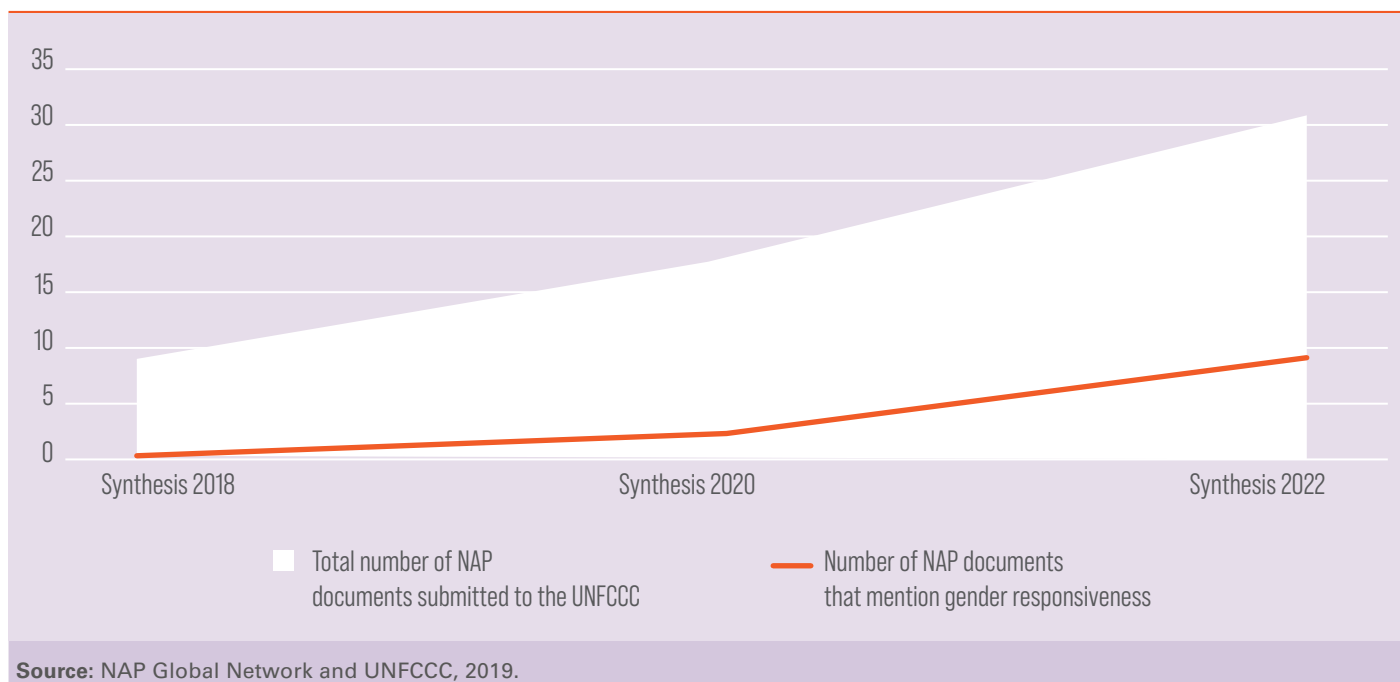
<sup>7</sup> Zainulbhai, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> NAP Global Network and UNFCCC, 2019.

<sup>9</sup> Dazé, 2020.

<sup>10</sup> Dazé and Hunter, 2022.

<sup>11</sup> Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), 2019; Several entities have published guides on mainstreaming gender in the NAP process, including the International Union for Conservation of Nature, 2011, and the NAP Global Network (Dazé and Hunter, 2022).

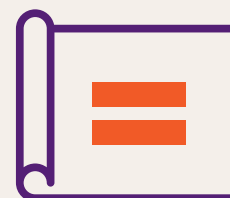
**Figure 1. Gender responsiveness**

Increasing number of NAPs mention gender responsiveness nearly

**30%** in 2022

versus

**0%** in 2018



According to an analysis by the NAP Global Network, an increasing number of NAPs mention gender responsiveness: nearly 30 per cent in 2022 versus zero in 2018 (figure 1).

## Global good practice on mainstreaming gender in NAPs on climate change

A serious consideration of gender from the start of the NAPs on climate change process provides an opportunity to ensure full participation of all members of society in climate adaptation initiatives, as highlighted by the NAPs from Fiji, Suriname, Sierra Leone and Kiribati. While the NAPs of Fiji, Sierra Leone and Suriname are first generation, the second NAP of Kiribati was drafted to ensure a more significant gender lens (figure 2).

**Figure 2.** Global examples of good practices on mainstreaming gender in NAPs on climate change



# Gender mainstreaming in national adaptation plans on climate change in the Arab region

In the Arab region, the only States that have NAPs on climate change to date are Jordan, Kuwait, the State of Palestine and the Sudan. However, as more Arab States

begin to draft their NAPs, it is important to ensure that a holistic approach is adopted and that gender and other intersectional needs and identities are mainstreamed to guarantee full realization of UNFCCC and ensure that no one is left behind. An analysis of existing NAPs (concerning gender balanced participation in planning processes, the gender-differentiated impacts of climate change, and the gender-responsiveness of each plan and related resource allocation) can illuminate the gaps in and opportunities for gender-sensitive engagement (figure 3).

**Figure 3.** Regional examples of good practice on mainstreaming gender in national adaptation plans on climate change



### Gender responsiveness of the plan and related resource allocation



The NAP of the **State of Palestine** incorporates an analysis of climate sensitivity and adaptive capacity for women in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, respectively, including barriers such as a lack of data and the effects of the occupation. Adaptation measures also include a gender component that is scored and costed. Significantly, Government departments that require support to act on these measures are also specifically mentioned, which increases transparency of NAP resource allocation.



The NAP of the **Sudan** outlines gender-responsive adaptation measures, specifically policy objectives and measures related to capacity-building and women's empowerment (for the Eastern and Central states), with some of these being costed. Such resource allocation improves the implementation and usefulness of the NAP moving forward. In addition, specific adaptation measures are proposed, such as establishing a rural women's development programme (in North Darfur), raising women's awareness of hygiene, environmental health and harmful social practices (in South Kordofan), supporting agriculture home gardens for women, and organizing women's cooperatives to provide relevant services (in Blue Nile state).



The NAP of **Jordan** highlights two hindrances to working on the linkage of gender and climate change, namely weak collection, collation and analysis of sex-disaggregated data and information, and a lack of sustainable funding to work on these issues. The NAP identifies concrete actions to remedy this, including adopting a gender lens towards planning, documentation, prioritization of adaptation options, data collection and accessibility, and monitoring. The NAP also includes an overarching financing and evaluation strategy.

**Sources:** Government of Kuwait, Environment Public Authority, 2019; Kingdom of Jordan, Ministry of Environment, 2021; Republic of the Sudan, Ministry of Environment, Natural Resources and Physical Development, Higher Council for Environment and Natural Resources, 2016; State of Palestine, Environmental Quality Authority, 2016.

## Way forward: mainstreaming climate change into gender equality frameworks

Taking a broader view of climate policymaking and moving beyond NAPs on climate action, Jordan is the first Arab country to address climate change in multiple national strategies, including its second generation Jordanian National Action Plan for the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2022–2025). Of the four outcomes in the Action Plan, outcome 2 (with a budget of 2,150,000 Jordanian dinars) relates to climate change. Jordan, therefore, provides an example of climate mainstreaming across national development priorities and frameworks concerning gender equality and women's empowerment.

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## Box 2. Jordanian National Action Plan for the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2022–2025)

Recognizing the importance of gender-sensitive response plans, outcome 2 of the Action Plan states: “Women actively participate in decision-making frameworks for prevention and response to crises, climate change and emergencies (including natural disasters, pandemics and armed conflicts), and ensure the consideration of gender needs”.

Related outputs within the Action Plan focus on increasing skills for women and girls, and building the capacity of national institutions to facilitate the meaningful participation of women in designing, developing and coordinating gender-sensitive measures and emergency response plans to prevent and respond to climate change.

This holistic approach provides an example of good practice for other Arab countries on mainstreaming climate change into State priorities and plans concerning gender equality and women’s empowerment, and highlights a comprehensive way forward.

Source: Kingdom of Jordan, 2021.

## What Arab countries can learn from global good practices: recommendations to gender mainstream national adaptation plans on climate change

Women can make substantive contributions to global climate policymaking through their knowledge and experience on climate change issues. Women’s leadership and full participation in the climate movement are essential to designing solutions and responses to the climate emergency that reflect their contribution and address their differentiated needs in the Arab region. An opportunity to address this is through the development of NAPs on climate change that explicitly mainstream gender and intersectional concerns, and mainstream climate change into broader development priorities and strategies concerning gender equality and women’s empowerment.

As more Arab countries develop their NAPs, it is important to undertake the following:

- Develop contextual and regional knowledge through knowledge sharing and examples of good practice.
- Increase access to relevant data, either quantitative or qualitative, as a prerequisite to ensuring that

opportunities, benefits and losses from adaptation actions are equitably shared. In particular, more sex-disaggregated climate data are needed to better understand the gaps and challenges that exist with respect to gender and climate change.

- Build an enabling institutional environment by strengthening collaboration and coordination between all stakeholders and/or establishing a gender task force to ensure substantive participation and inclusion of women’s voices in decision-making processes.
- Ensure gender-responsive climate change adaptation by mainstreaming gender into all aspects of NAPs on climate change processes: planning and budgeting, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.
- Mainstream climate change into action plans and strategies focused on gender equality and women’s empowerment, such as national strategies on violence against women, national strategies on gender equality, or NAPs on women, peace and security.
- Build synergies and linkages between the monitoring frameworks (targets/indicators) of NAPs on climate change and gender equality monitoring and evaluation frameworks.





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