



# POLLUTION, BIODIVERSITY LOSS AND WOMEN

**FOCUS ON  
GENDER, CLIMATE, PEACE AND SECURITY**

By Michelle Benzing

# Introduction



Photo | Pamela EA

- Programme Analyst on Gender, Climate, Peace and Security
- Part of the Peace and Security Team at UN Women HQ
- Conducts analysis to support the development of gender-responsive climate risk assessments and facilitates collaboration for gender-responsive environmental peacebuilding
- Previous work experience in various national and multilateral institutions and civil society organizations working on gender equality, peace and climate justice

# Women Environmental Human rights defenders

As of 31 January  
2022,

97

women environmental  
defenders were murdered for  
their advocacy across 81  
conflicts spanning 29  
countries.





Women and girls in all their diversity are not only victims of conflict and the climate crisis – they are **key agents of change** for peace and climate justice.





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These [Yemeni] women's stories—of determination amid vanishing fish, ruined crops, and deferred dreams—highlight their unwavering strength as they confront the harsh realities of climate change. As we approach International Women's Day and mark the anniversary of the Beijing Platform, it is imperative that we prioritize the impacts of climate change and conflict on achieving gender equality.

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**Nesmah M. Ali**  
Peace Track Initiative

## How are gender, climate change and security linked?



### Climate change hazards...

- Droughts
- Sea level rise
- Extreme weather events
- Warmer temperatures



...can expose women and men to new risks or exacerbate existing challenges.



### Insecurity at multiple levels...

- Household
- Community
- State
- Inter-state and cross border



...can undermine women and men's ability to adapt, prevent, or recover from climate-related risks.

**Gender norms and power dynamics impact women and men's exposure to physical hazards and capacity to cope with risks, through differentiated:**

- Access, use and control of natural resources
- Control of economic assets
- Physical mobility & migration
- Decision-making power
- Household or community expectations

For example:

- Water scarcity can expose women to increased risk of gender-based violence.
- Faltering livelihoods can contribute to men's decisions to join armed groups.
- Drought can shift pastoralist migration patterns causing families to split, increasing household burdens for women and exposing men to insecure routes.

For example:

- Denying women resources limits households' capacity to cope with economic stress caused by agricultural shocks.
- Conflict or violence can limit access to resources necessary to cope with environmental stress and exacerbate gender inequalities.
- Weak or limited governance can reinforce exclusionary decision-making on land use planning and natural resource management.



# | Focus of UN Women's Work

## Informing decision making

UN Women is informing decisions through **gender-responsive climate risk assessments** and **knowledge production on Women, Peace & Security and Climate, Peace & Security**.

## Mobilizing resources

Research led by UN Women found that the amount of overall climate finance on climate, peace and security and gender remains miniscule - accounting for **just 0.035 percent** in 2021.

## Protection of WEHRDs

Women's leadership in climate security must be matched with **protection**. UN Women calls for integrated **climate risk and safety strategies** for women environmental human rights defenders ahead of **COP30**.



# International Frameworks and Funds on Gender, Climate, peace and Security



- UN Security Council Resolution 2242 (2015) on WPS highlights the need to integrate gender considerations into climate-related security risks.
- CEDAW General Recommendation No. 30 and No. 37
- Declaration on Climate, Relief, Recovery and Peace at COP28
- UN Security Council peacekeeping mandate for South Sudan (UNMISS) calling for “gender-sensitive risk assessments on the negative impact of climate change”
- UN Peacebuilding Fund 2023 Thematic Review on Climate Security and Peacebuilding
- Women and Climate Security Initiative of the Women, Peace and Humanitarian Fund



# Women, Peace and Security and Climate Security

## Participation

- Women and girls leadership in natural resource and land governance, peace processes and decision making on climate, peace and security

## Prevention

- Preventing climate-related insecurities and conflict through the promotion of gender-responsive measures

## Protection

- Protection of women environmental human rights defenders and peacebuilders, including through the establishment of report and accountability systems

## Relief and Recovery

- Gender-responsive approaches to post-conflict recovery and disaster relief

# Protection of Women Environmental Human Rights Defenders

- **Gender Action Plan under the UNFCCC:** The tracking and addressing of gender-based violence and women's safety and security in the context of a changing climate, including in conflict settings, should be part of the new GAP.
- **Learnings from Escazu Agreement:** A regional agreement in Latin America and the Caribbean that has potential for global replication.
- **Urgent need for reliable data:** Cases of gender-based violence, gendered disinformation campaigns, bullying and harassment are often underreported.
- **Sharing of context-specific best practices:** For instance, the UN Women programme *Mujeres cambiando su mundo*.



**“The climate crisis fuels conflict, social unrest, and migration. The women environmental and human rights defenders are leaders on the front line of this crisis. The local knowledge, lived experience, and leadership that these leaders bring must be at the centre of all decisions made at local, national and regional levels for protecting the environment and maintaining peace.”**

**Bibiana Aído, UN Women Representative in Colombia**