



At the crossroads of Climate, Gender and Peace: Integrating Climate and Security across the UN Policy Agendas

Summary Note

Background

On 24 March 2022, the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), Shifting the Power Coalition, Women's Intercultural Network, and UN Women, in partnership with the Permanent Mission of Australia to the United Nations organised an informal dialogue titled "*At the crossroads of Climate, Gender and Peace: Integrating Climate and Security across the UN Policy Agendas*" (henceforth, "the dialogue"). The dialogue took place on the margins of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66) and shared the key takeaways from the CSW66. The dialogue aimed to bridge the gap between various UN agendas and ensure that the discussions at the CSW66 are reflected on by the global peacebuilding and development experts.

The Triple Nexus is at the core of the discussions on Gender-Sensitive Climate Action

Climate change is increasingly recognised as a driver of conflict and instability. While by itself climate change does not cause conflict, it exacerbates pre-existing inequalities, sources of communal instability that as a result of climate change turn into conflict. For example, in the Pacific, repetitive tropical cyclones, in addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, create economic insecurity, especially for women-led households. The lack of employment opportunities and raising prices fuel domestic, community and inter-communal violence.

While women are disproportionately affected by climate change, they are also the first respondents within communities. They provide not only emergency relief but also advocate for redefining the concept of security, maintain social cohesion and re-build social infrastructures. In Uganda, women train communities in using sustainable and eco-friendly ways of keeping their homes warm and light, preventing further competition over the resources. These women do not differentiate between humanitarian, development and peacebuilding action in their response to climate disasters. They also possess a unique intersectional analysis required to facilitate collaborative joint responses that result in peacebuilding, development and humanitarian gains, beyond "band-aid approaches" that only focus on one issue at the time.

Without women first respondents, national governments often see climate change as another humanitarian disaster that requires humanitarian support. They often miss to understand how exactly climate change drives conflict and, therefore, develop responses based on macro-level data. However, women can change their perspectives and improve response, if and when they are meaningfully included in the decision-making on humanitarian, peacebuilding and development priorities. In Colombia, women are fighting the illegal exploitation of natural resources. In the Pacific, women's policy engagement is exemplified in the collaboration between the United Nations (UN), civil society and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) that informed the Boe Declaration adopted in 2018.¹ The Declaration broadens the definition of security in the Pacific to include both human and environmental security, providing an opportunity to strengthen a transformational and integrated approach to addressing climate change.

Key Recommendations:

The work of women activists working at the community level demonstrates that there is no space for divisions between various agendas, and peacebuilding, development and humanitarian experts need to be part of all conversations that shape the future of the people. As such, they can diversify and strengthen their perspective. Diverse partners should not work in silos, but rather work together to address climate change.

The Agreed Conclusions of the CSW66 and the discussions surrounding the forum² present an opportunity for peacebuilding and development experts to adapt a variety of priorities for their own action. These include:

- *Developing sustained gender- and climate-sensitive financing strategies*

There is substantial evidence and the recognition by the various UN actors, including the Peacebuilding Commission, the Security Council and the Secretary-General that applying a gender lens to climate action by investing in women's leadership helps countries more effectively adapt to climate change and actually reduce the gendered impacts of the climate crisis. Women's initiatives however require sustained funding, which most of them do not have. Women often rely on short-term project grants and constantly divert their attention from the pressing needs of their communities to seek opportunities to support their work. In the Pacific – a region heavily impacted by climate change – only 1% of funding was found to be directed to Pacific women's organisations, and overall funding for women's empowerment in the Pacific has stagnated since 2012.

It is often the case that women take leadership in supporting their own work through the creative approach to small grants. GPPAC Pacific and Shifting the Power Coalition mobilise flexible funding for partners including through rapid response grants in times of crisis and by ensuring funds are secured for core support. Such initiatives should be supported by the donor community.

Beyond supporting intermediaries, there are several opportunities for the UN and its Member States to meaningfully support women peacebuilders addressing climate security concerns. These include 1) establishing gender-responsive funding guidelines, allocation criteria and

¹ PIF, 2018, The Boe Declaration on Regional Security, available at: <https://www.forumsec.org/2018/09/05/boe-declaration-on-regional-security/>.

² UN Women, 2022, CSW66 Session Outcomes, available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw66-2022/session-outcomes>

financial instruments; 2) publishing calls-for-proposals with an explicit gender-responsive criterion; 3) maintaining gender balance and gender expertise among fund decision-making bodies, staff and technical advisory bodies; 4) promoting meaningful inclusion and participation of women as key stakeholders and beneficiaries in fund-related country coordinating mechanisms; 5) facilitating partnership opportunities of local women's organisations with accredited implementing agencies and non-governmental organisations; and 6) conducting regular audit of the gender impacts of funding allocations.

- *Supporting the localisation of the global climate and security agenda*

Local and indigenous knowledge is imperative to responding to climate challenges. Climate change has extremely diverse impacts depending on a specific context. Some areas are facing conflicts over resource scarcity; in other areas flooding and sea-level rise force communities to relocate; in some, the conflict brings communities closer to an ecological catastrophe. In this, women have the local expertise and knowledge to address the Triple Nexus, but if their participation is not supported in decision-making, this expertise is lost and responses often are less-effective.

One interesting case for understanding the need for localisation of climate action through women's participation is the situation in Uganda. This country is currently experiencing dry spells, fights over water, and border disputes with both Kenya and South Sudan. The vicious cycle of food insecurity is an undercurrent when addressing all forms of violence. Construction in Uganda is often very wood intensive. Women are often pushed into selling wood as their main source of livelihood. It is important then to provide the resources for women to pursue alternative livelihoods, as well as the resources to replace cut down trees. Women are also integral to reducing incidents of male violence. In Uganda, marriages require a dowry, which is often paid in the form of animals. Conflicts arise when men feel pressured to try to find animals, potentially crossing disputed borders. This context speaks clearly to the need to localise the global development and peacebuilding agendas in an attempt to provide communities with tools and resources to respond to immediate needs and support long-term peaceful co-existence and sustainability of communities.

There are several opportunities for the UN and its Member States to meaningfully support the localisation of the global climate and security agenda. These include 1) meaningfully engaging diverse local women activists in the development of relevant interventions (i.e., ensuring that they contribute to the development of goals, activities and indicators for relevant programmes); 2) ensuring that the proposed interventions build on the initiatives that already exist within communities; 3) promoting broad local support for initiatives and being responsive to the feedback from local communities (i.e., organising periodic constructive dialogues to reflect on the status of implementation and the impact of action); 4) redesigning existing programmes to focus on localisation and gender-responsiveness; and 4) building infrastructures for peace that could sustain activities within communities beyond the scope of a specific project (i.e., creating local women's councils, early warning and early response systems, etc.).

- *Supporting feminist peacebuilding networks and coalitions*

Networks and coalitions should be the primary partners of global institutions looking to support and/or finance work in the climate-gender-security nexus. Networks allow programmatic activities to benefit many local groups as opposed to just one. Shifting the Power Coalition (SPC) is one of those coalitions that has reaffirmed women's collective leadership in climate and

security issues in the Pacific. SPC, for example, supported the establishment of Women Wetem Weta, which allows diverse Vanuatu women to better understand the link between climate and security and develop messages in their local language that reach more than 40% of the population on the Digicel mobile network. Another initiative supported by SPC – Women I Tok Tok Tugeta — creates a forum that gathers women leaders from across the islands of Vanuatu to discuss issues of concern to them and channel these issues to decision-makers.

There are several opportunities for the UN and its Member States to meaningfully support women's peacebuilding networks in advancing climate and security action. These include 1) providing financial and political support to locally-led networks that provide diverse expertise at the community level (i.e., investing in community-led approaches, consortia, coalitions to facilitate the inclusive involvement of different societal groups (i.e., young, differently-abled, indigenous women) and 2) incentivising network collaboration and engagement (i.e., supporting specific convening and conference grants to support women local peacebuilders to access greater diversity of knowledge and experience (i.e., of varied local contexts), expertise (i.e., in human rights, gender, the environment, economic development, law), and constituencies (i.e., different ethnic and religious groups, youth, women)).