



TAKING STOCK:
**SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE
HEALTH AND RIGHTS**
in CLIMATE
COMMITMENTS


**A LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
REVIEW SUMMARY**

Sexual and reproductive health and rights and rights-based approaches
in national climate documents: **A review of Nationally Determined
Contributions since 2020 in Latin America and the Caribbean**



INTRODUCTION

Climate change has lasting impacts on human health and disproportionately affects women and girls.



Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) is among the regions most at risk from climate change globally, with challenges including rising temperatures, extreme rainfall leading to floods and landslides, shrinking glaciers, rising sea levels, increasing food insecurity and worsening droughts. One significant example is the prolonged megadrought in Chile, the impacts of which are being experienced across the entire LAC region, from the Amazon to the Andes and from the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans to the snowy peaks of Patagonia. Despite recent economic growth and social progress, LAC is still characterized by wide income and social inequalities. This is reflected in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) outcomes. High maternal mortality rates, high adolescent fertility and gender-based violence (GBV) are some of the SRHR priorities that need to be addressed in the region, with these factors showing significant differences within and between countries.


Climate change directly and indirectly impacts women and girls and their sexual and reproductive health. Heat, air pollution and climate-related diseases all have adverse impacts on maternal and newborn health outcomes. In addition, climate-related loss of livelihoods increases poverty and food insecurity, which worsen maternal and newborn health and well-being. The impacts of climate change often result in disruptions

to essential services while simultaneously creating conditions of vulnerability that increase the risk of GBV and harmful practices such as child marriage. As one of the regions prone to extreme weather events, LAC requires region-specific interventions that address underlying structures and vulnerabilities, which, if left unaddressed, are likely to further worsen existing gender and health inequalities.

A Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) is a national climate plan, submitted by all signatories of the Paris Agreement, for reducing carbon emissions and adapting to and building resilience to climate change. As the NDCs support countries in a transformative shift towards a more sustainable future, they have the potential to create greater social inclusion and address the disproportionate impacts of climate change on women and girls.



PURPOSE OF THE STUDY




This study, commissioned by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in collaboration with Queen Mary University of London, aims to provide an overview of the integration of SRHR, GBV, harmful practices and related themes in the NDCs.

The findings provide an entry point for dialogue and action at the global, regional, national and local levels on the intersections between climate change, SRHR, GBV and harmful practices. This study also

identifies the necessary actions for their more meaningful inclusion in climate policy and action, highlighting gaps, opportunities and best practices to allow for stronger language on the aspects of gender and climate negotiations at the global level.

METHODOLOGY

This review involved a systematic content analysis of the inclusion of SRHR, GBV, harmful practices and five related thematic areas (health, gender, population dynamics, youth and human rights and participation) in NDCs submitted in or after 2020.



The UNFPA Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Office covers 41 countries; however, only 26 were included, as 15 countries did not

have an NDC or an NDC update published in or after 2020 at the time of completion of the analysis in August 2022.

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FINDINGS

Sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender-based violence and harmful practices

SRHR is integrated into 10 NDCs (Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Costa Rica, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), including references to maternal and newborn health, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC), GBV, contraception, SRHR education and adolescent SRHR. The context for which SRHR issues are addressed in these NDCs varies, with some acknowledging the impacts of climate change on SRHR and others including adaptation measures to address these impacts.

Examples of best practices include the following (see table 1, next page):

- Costa Rica recognizes the need to strengthen the evidence base for the impacts of climate change on vulnerable groups. It includes measures in its NDC to collect and analyse disaggregated data on the transgender community, women, youth, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and older persons (Costa Rica NDC, 2020: p. 53). In addition, the NDC includes an intervention to develop spaces for dialogue and participation for the transgender community and other vulnerable groups (Costa Rica NDC, 2020: p. 50).
- El Salvador wants to ensure that women and girls have equal access to its sustainable transportation and technologies

as well as ensure preferential access to identified groups, including adolescents, in a society free from violence against women (El Salvador NDC, 2021: p. 93).

- Paraguay integrates SRHR into strengthening of the health system by including an adaptation measure to improve the capacity of family health units in emergencies associated with extreme weather phenomena (Paraguay NDC, 2021: p. 51).
- The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela acknowledges the importance of SRHR information and awareness. The NDC includes an intervention to integrate “environment and comprehensive health” into the national education curriculum to develop students’ understanding of health from all aspects, including sexual reproduction (the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela NDC, 2021: p. 112).




TABLE 1:
 Nationally Determined Contribution from Latin America and the Caribbean cited in this brief

Country	Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) reviewed	Submission date	Original language
Costa Rica	Updated NDC	29 Dec. 2020	Spanish
El Salvador	Updated NDC	4 Jan. 2022	Spanish
Paraguay	Updated NDC	16 July 2021	Spanish
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Updated NDC	9 Nov. 2021	Spanish

Health

All the NDCs reference health and nearly all (23) recognize health as a sector vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. Most countries (24) refer to extreme weather events and/or disasters; 14 countries describe health surveillance, including early warning systems; and eight countries recognize the need for further research on the health-related impacts of climate change.

Gender

All the NDCs reference gender, with 23 referencing gender mainstreaming and/or sensitivity (the ability to acknowledge and highlight existing gender differences, issues and inequalities and consider them in the design and implementation of strategies). However, only nine countries include a measurement, an accountability mechanism or an indicator to track gender-sensitive progress. Of the 26 NDCs, 16 refer to female participation and 14 describe the capacity-building of women.

Population dynamics, human mobility and urbanization

A total of 24 NDCs mention aspects of population dynamics. The most frequently described aspect is migration and human displacement, referenced by 14 countries.

Youth

Twenty-two countries reference youth in their NDCs, with 15 acknowledging the disproportionate impacts of climate change on young people and 10 recognizing young people as vulnerable to the health impacts of climate change. Eighteen countries reference youth participation in climate action, 10 countries refer to youth in relation to education and/or awareness and five countries reference water and/or food insecurity in relation to youth.

Leaving no one behind: human rights, participation and consideration of vulnerable groups

The majority (22) of the NDCs recognize the disproportionate impacts of climate change on segments of their population, with women, young people, Indigenous groups, people of African descent, older persons, persons with disabilities and sexual minorities most mentioned. Nearly all (25) of the NDCs acknowledge the importance of a participatory process in climate policy and/or NDC development. Most (19) countries reference community participation in sustainable local resource management, such as reforestation, mangrove restoration and fisheries, and 13 NDCs reference human rights.



RECOMMENDATIONS

General recommendations

Data and evidence

- 1. Strengthen the national-level evidence on the impacts of climate change on SRHR, GBV and harmful practices.** This should include improving data systems to better account and forecast for the differentiated impacts of climate change on SRHR, GBV and harmful practices, including through the conduct of gender-responsive climate vulnerability and risk assessments that integrate SRHR and GBV. Detailed country-level research, preferably led by local researchers, on the intersections between climate, SRHR and GBV is required to better support communities at the local and national level but also to contribute to the global evidence base.
- 2. Scale up efforts to collect and use disaggregated data and account for the differentiated impacts of the climate crisis.** The demonstration of such efforts in the NDCs is encouraging. Gender-disaggregated data supports the identification of groups that are more vulnerable to climate impacts and can help mobilize more sensitive and accurate climate action. This better represents the differentiated impacts of the climate crisis while supporting research, data, planning and intervention to reach better outcomes. This also enables gender-sensitive budgeting, including for components related to SRHR and GBV.



Financing and accountability

3. **Increase support, funding and evaluation for adaptation and resilience-building efforts, including within NDCs and in the development of climate policies.** While adaptation sections are increasing in frequency and detail within NDCs, greater support, evaluation and financing are required to ensure these policies reflect the needs of underserved populations and topic areas, such as SRHR and GBV.
4. **Strengthen the integration of costed SRHR and GBV interventions across sectors in climate policy and action.** Include SRHR and GBV issues in domains such as gender and health, as these represent entry points for their inclusion in national climate policies. Costed action, tied to monitoring and indicators that reflect impacts on gender, health and SRHR and GBV, requires more financial and technical support. Many existing interventions, particularly related to gender and health, could begin to provide or increase the integration of programming on SRHR and GBV.
5. **Strengthen health systems' resilience to climate change by ensuring the inclusion of SRHR and GBV.** This includes ensuring the inclusion of SRHR and GBV in vulnerability risk assessments, disaster preparedness plans and health information management systems. Ensure appropriate human resources are available for health, monitoring and evaluation indicators, the allocation of funds and a coordination mechanism.

Gender equality and representation

6. **Scale up and strengthen gender-transformative climate action through the inclusion of SRHR, GBV and harmful practices issues.** This includes the



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appointment and strengthening of the role of a National Gender and Climate Change Focal Point to be placed in the relevant ministry, as recommended by a decision of the 2019 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP25); the review of existing gender-related climate policies; and the integration of gender-transformative approaches in all aspects of climate change policies and programmes/interventions, based on a solid foundation of context-specific analysis.

7. **Recognize the impacts of climate change on the drivers of GBV and harmful practices.** Support the development of best practices for responding to GBV and harmful practices, and for ensuring the resilience, including financial, of essential services to prevent and respond to GBV. This can be achieved through partnership with gender and rights actors such as organizations of persons with disabilities, women-led organizations, Indigenous peoples, youth-led organizations and front-line responders.





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8. Ensure inclusion and a minimum standard of representation in the development and implementation of climate policy at multiple levels. This includes the inclusion and representation of women, people with diverse SOGIESC, youth, Indigenous peoples, older persons, persons with disabilities and others as relevant.

Human rights and leaving no one behind

9. Improve the understanding of the impacts of climate change on SRHR and GBV for people with diverse and underrepresented SOGIESC. There is insufficient understanding and recognition of the impacts of climate change on people with diverse SOGIESC. Increasing this understanding will require specific, local and sensitive action that is participatory, accountable and calls on existing best practices.

10. Mobilize and support young people.

Support youth climate networks and establish a permanent youth engagement mechanism on climate change at the national level to ensure the mainstreaming of youth priorities across the design and implementation of national climate policy and action.

11. Take an intersectional approach to develop, review and implement climate policy that recognizes the structural drivers of inequality and accounts for multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Climate policy and action must recognize how many of the people who already face barriers to SRHR and GBV services and the realization of their reproductive rights are likely to be disproportionately affected by climate change.



12. Enhance recognition of climate change impacts on GBV and harmful practices in NDCs and relevant climate policies.

National climate policies should more meaningfully account for the delivery of GBV services during climate-related events. This includes strengthening the engagement with national gender/GBV-focused mechanisms (e.g. ministries, parliamentary caucuses, civil society networks) as well as climate-focused national mechanisms to present regional and national analysis of the interlinkages between climate change, GBV and harmful practices, and collectively develop a consensus on policy advocacy and programming strategies and interventions. This could be achieved through the creation of a common platform for meaningful dialogue, with key mechanisms, networks and leaders engaged in addressing GBV and climate change.

13. Ensure that climate policies are based on human rights and reflect the principles of the ICPD Programme of Action, including protecting the rights of women, children, refugees, displaced persons and persons with disabilities, in climate policy development. A human rights-based approach that supports individuals to make the reproductive choices that best suit their personal circumstances is core to achieving SRHR. Population dynamics are relevant for climate policy and planning and the NDCs reflect on urbanization, changing population size and structure and the need for population dynamics analysis for forward planning.

Region-specific reflections

14. Strengthen references to SRHR, GBV, harmful practices and climate change within programming, indicators and costings and take specific and detailed



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action. LAC NDCs recognize the impacts of climate change on diverse SOGIESC, GBV, maternal health and education. This is encouraging, particularly in relation to sexual rights and health. However, there is no recognition of impacts on harmful practices in the NDCs reviewed, despite increasing evidence showing such impacts. Strengthening references within programming and costing, together with specified and detailed action, is required.

15. Strengthen the linkages between health, gender and SRHR across LAC NDCs.

This will help ensure greater consideration for those left furthest behind and a comprehensive integration of gender and SRHR dimensions. While health issues are well represented in LAC NDCs, there is a need to enhance the costings and expand the focus on access to health services, particularly for vulnerable groups, while also recognizing the crucial intersection with gender and SRHR.



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16. Strengthen anticipatory action for disasters and extreme weather events by integrating comprehensive provisions for SRHR, the elimination of GBV and the prioritization of vulnerable groups.

Recognize that extreme weather events can cause significant disruptions to health services, displacement of populations and heightened vulnerability, underscoring the urgent need for humanitarian responses to include robust SRHR and GBV services. Furthermore, outreach efforts must address the needs of groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. To ensure effective and principled humanitarian preparedness and response, pre-position population statistics and data for accurate and targeted interventions that address the specific vulnerabilities and challenges faced by marginalized communities.

17. Significantly enhance measures and mechanisms to facilitate and promote more meaningful and inclusive youth participation in climate action. Although LAC NDCs acknowledge the impacts of climate change on future generations, highlighting linkages to health, livelihoods, employment and the disproportionate impacts on girls, it remains imperative to ensure the availability of high-quality, accessible and culturally appropriate SRHR and GBV services to strengthen youth resilience. Although there is recognition of the importance of involving young people in climate action, it is crucial to establish robust frameworks for implementing, financing and measuring youth engagement, creating concrete pathways for their active involvement in shaping climate policies and strategies. This will ensure that the voices, concerns and aspirations of youth are effectively integrated into decision-making processes, fostering more inclusive and effective climate action across the region.





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18. Translate positive examples of recognizing vulnerability, human rights and participation into practice and increase linkages to SRHR, GBV and harmful practices.

NDCs recognize the disproportionate impacts on particular groups such as people of African descent and Indigenous peoples, and are generally strong on human rights. There are encouraging examples of engagement with vulnerable groups. While some NDCs describe concrete actions linked to these examples, others need to support references with more meaningful action such as indicators, costings and implementation mechanisms.

19. Prioritize and significantly strengthen the generation, analysis, use and disaggregation of data to comprehensively account for the differentiated impacts of the climate crisis on various populations.

Disaggregated data plays a crucial role in identifying and understanding the vulnerabilities of different populations to climate impacts, enabling the design and implementation of more targeted and effective climate actions, emergency preparedness and response and resilience measures. It is essential to apply and operationalize human rights principles and leave no one behind in all data exercises, ensuring that marginalized and disadvantaged communities are not overlooked or excluded. By harnessing the power of accurate and inclusive data, decision makers can foster greater equity, informed policymaking and strategic resource allocation to address the urgent challenges posed by the climate crisis while safeguarding the rights and well-being of all individuals.

20. Allocate a substantial and specific portion of the Loss and Damage Fund to interventions addressing SRHR, GBV and harmful practices.

Recognizing the heightened vulnerability of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and Caribbean countries, which face recurrent and severe climate change impacts that significantly affect their economies, it is crucial to ensure that a significant proportion of the funds allocated to each country is earmarked for interventions in these critical areas. By dedicating resources from the Loss and Damage Fund to SRHR, GBV and harmful practices, countries can effectively mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change on vulnerable populations, safeguarding their health, well-being and rights. This targeted allocation of funds will support comprehensive and responsive interventions that address the specific challenges faced by communities disproportionately affected by climate change. This will foster resilience and enable sustainable development.





United Nations Population Fund

605 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10158
1-212-297-5000
www.unfpa.org

**United Nations Population Fund
Latin America and the Caribbean**

Gonzalo Crance Street, Buildings 178 and 180,
Ciudad Del Saber, Clayton, Panama

Tel: +507 305-5500
Website: lac.unfpa.org
Email: lacro.office@unfpa.org
X: @unfpa_lac
Instagram: @unfpa_lacro

Facebook: UNFPA América Latina
y el Caribe
LinkedIn: UNFPA Latin America
and the Caribbean