

DATA-DRIVEN INSIGHTS: THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

*UN Women's Gender and Climate Data Works:
Extracted Compilations*

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT FOR INCLUSIVE CLIMATE ACTION

Climate change is intensifying the frequency and severity of hydrometeorological hazards. As temperatures change, rain patterns become erratic, and severe weather intensifies, livelihoods and ecosystem are increasingly affected. Immediate climate action is needed, and women and girls must be at the forefront of these efforts.



IMPACT OF THE CLIMATE CRISIS ON PLANET AND PEOPLE



FLOOD

The number of people exposed to flood-prone areas has risen by **almost a quarter** since 2000, including **extreme rainfall, rising sea levels and more intense hurricanes**. Several low-lying nations, such as Kiribati, Maldives, Marshall Islands and Tuvalu face existential threats due to sea-level rise and climate change. Floods are known to affect the availability of clean drinking water, thus worsening women's collection and treatment burdens.



DROUGHTS

Today, 53 out of 191 countries and areas globally, home to **1.5 billion women and girls**, or 37.2 per cent of the world's female population, face a high or very high exposure to droughts. Under a high-emissions scenario, projections suggest that exposure to this phenomenon could affect an additional 9 to 17 per cent of the world's population by 2030, and 50 to 90 per cent by 2080. Intensifying droughts and aridity correlate with worsening child marriage and adolescent birth rates in many countries.



SPECIES EXTINCTION

Risk of species extinction increases with every degree of warming. At +2°C an estimated **99 per cent of coral reefs will vanish**. At +3°C **41 per cent of mammals on Earth will lose half their habitat**. Available survey data indicates that women are more likely than men to rely on forest products and shallow marine harvesting as their main source of income. As such, they are more adversely impacted by biodiversity loss.

Women and men face differentiated climate impacts, yet policy frameworks generally omit or inadequately address women's specific needs. Women also remain largely under-represented in climate action bodies and fora.



HARNESSING GENDER

Only 55 national climate action plans make a specific reference to gender equality and **only 23 recognize women as agents of change** in accelerating progress on climate commitments. At **COP 27** women only made up 35 per cent of party delegates and 20 per cent of heads of delegation.

POVERTY AND HUNGER ARE EXPECTED TO RISE AS A RESULT OF CLIMATE CHANGE, ESPECIALLY FOR WOMEN

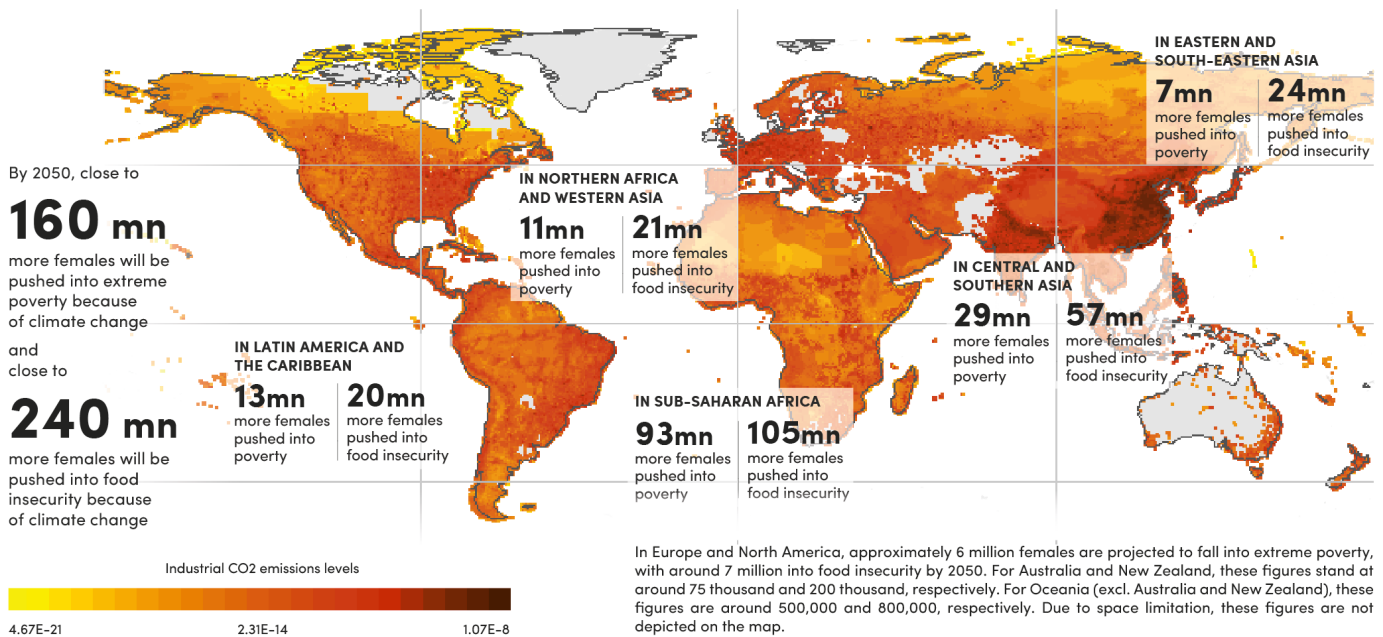
Unabated climate change will derail progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The magnitude of its effects, including on female poverty and hunger, remains unknown but is expected to be substantial.

To understand the impact of climate change on women and girls, we examined two possible climate futures, a *Current Path* scenario where average temperature rises by 2°C but stabilizes by the year 2100, and a *Worst-case Climate Path* scenario where average temperature rises are worse than the current path suggests (i.e., by 3–4°C by 2100).

The findings are sobering. In a *Worst-case Climate Path* scenario, by 2050 close to **160 million women and girls** globally may be pushed into poverty as a direct result of climate change. Food insecurity caused by climate change is also projected to increase by close to **240 million more women and girls**, compared to 131 million more men and boys.

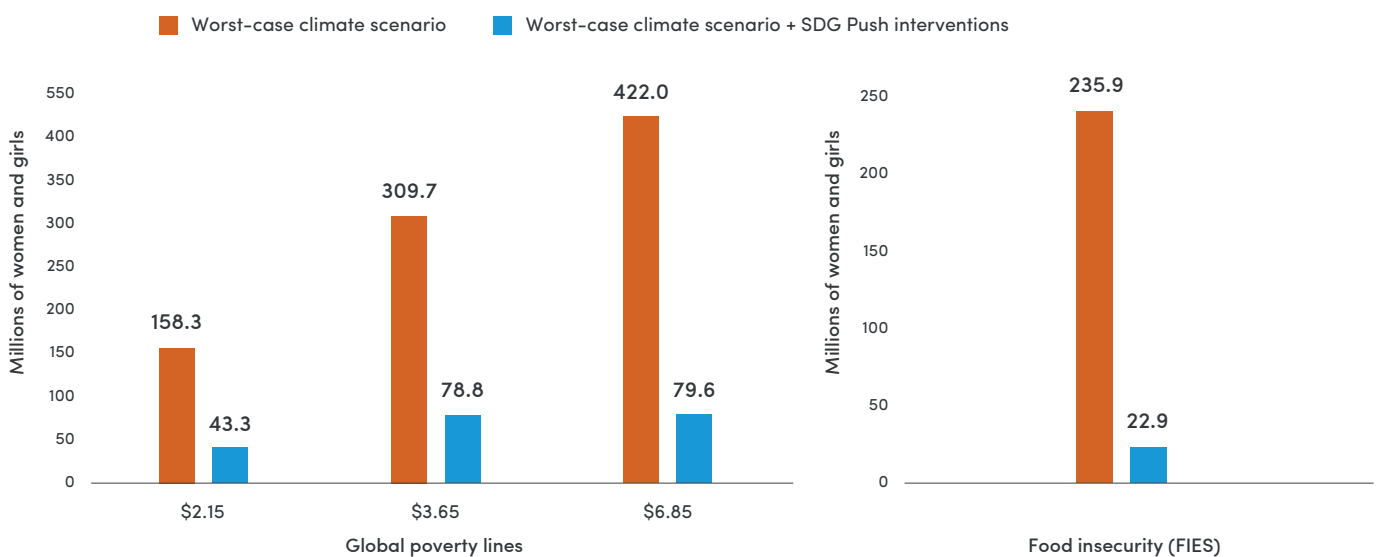
Investments in a comprehensive SDG stimulus package would help to mitigate this effect, reducing the number of additional women falling into extreme poverty from 158 million to 43 million. But the impact of this package will still be less than what could be achieved if the world abates climate change now, before it gets exponentially worse.

Projected impacts of climate change on poverty and food insecurity among women and girls, worst-case scenario, 2050 (millions)



Note: The carbon emissions presented in the map are for combustion and processing industries for Representative Concentration Pathway 6.0, which corresponds to an average 2.2°C increase in global temperature by 2100. For further details, see Table 2.1 in [IPCC, 2023](#).

Climate-attributable women pushed into poverty and food insecurity in a Worst-case Climate Path scenario and the potential mitigation effect of SDG push interventions, 2050

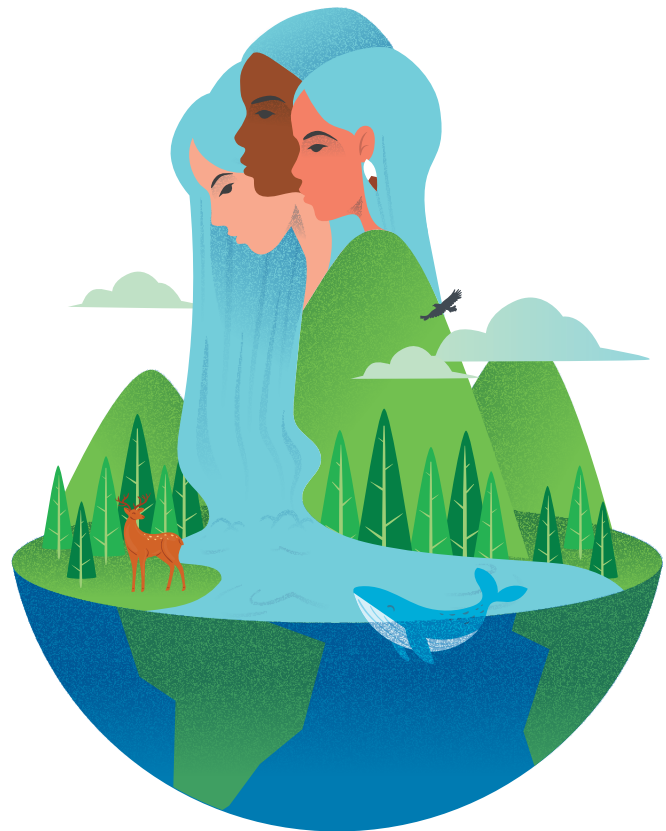


Note: The SDG Push scenario is drawn from previous work modeling policies that improve SDG outcomes (see Hughes et al. (2020)) to explore how developmental costs of climate change modeled in the Worst Climate Path scenario can be offset by additional development policy strategies, including policy strategies particularly focusing on gender equality.

EQUALITY & ECOLOGY: THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Indigenous women, often holders of traditional ecological knowledge, with strong ties to Nature, have long advocated for respect, reciprocity, and sustainable utilization of the Earth’s resources. But, gender inequality, pervasive, across countries, means these perspectives are often sidelined. Despite these obstacles, women have persistently been at the forefront of water and land protection and preservation efforts and led activism on social and environmental concerns.

Protecting our planet and ensuring the rights and wellbeing of women and girls go hand in hand. Women in all their diversity must have equal leadership roles at decision-making tables where climate challenges and solutions are being discussed. Data and research on climate change and climate solutions must include a gender assessment, where the impact on women and girls, particularly those furthest behind, is surfaced. To this end, improving the production and use of statistics on the gender-environment nexus is critical. This includes enhanced gender data production and use efforts in the areas of climate change, environmental conservation and



pollution, in order to effectively tackle the triple planetary crisis. Investments in gender-responsive climate mitigation and adaptation policies are vital as we work together to build a more resilient future.

This brief draws directly from the following recently released publications, for citation and to learn more go to:

- Building Climate Resilience: Country and Regional Fact sheets: data.unwomen.org
- Gendered Analysis of the Impact of Climate Change on Poverty, Productivity and Food Insecurity: A technical report: <https://bit.ly/gender-snapshot-2023>
- Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot: <https://bit.ly/gender-snapshot-2023>
- Spotlight on Goal 6: From Commodity to Common Good: A Feminist Agenda to Tackle the World’s Water Crisis: <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/from-commodity-to-common-good-a-feminist-agenda-to-tackle-the-worlds-water-crisis-en.pdf>
- Gendered Impacts of Climate Change: Evidence from Asia: <https://data.unwomen.org/publications/gendered-impacts-climate-change-evidence-asia>