



REPORT IN-BRIEF

**Gender in Civil-Military Climate Security and Disaster Response:
Co-Creating Gender-Transformative Approaches
Amid the Global Climate Crisis**

Cover image: Heri Mardinal

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ABOUT THE GENDER IN HEALTH AND CLIMATE SECURITY PROJECT

This Report In-Brief is a summary of the Major Report *Gender in Civil-Military Climate Security and Disaster Response: Co-Creating Gender-Transformative Approaches Amid the Global Climate Crisis* ((English only). This report, together with the *Proactive Resilience and Opportunities for Gender Equity in Security & Sustainability (PROGRESS) in the Asia-Pacific: The index for gendered health security amid climate change* report, provide a brief overview of the *Gender in Health and Climate Security Project* ('the Project') produced by Pacific Forum International, a Honolulu-based U.S. think tank, in partnership with the Office of Women, Peace & Security (WPS) at the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM).

The Project centered around holding a series of virtual and in-person / hybrid workshops on the gender-health-climate-security nexus. These workshops brought together civil society organization (CSO) representatives, defense and security force personnel, and civil servants from seven Indo-Pacific countries: Fiji, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Thailand, Vanuatu, and Vietnam. The workshops aimed to foster collaborative efforts in developing country-specific Action Plan priorities for inclusive, contextualized, and gender-transformative disaster responses. A core focus thereby was to enhance civil-military (civ-mil) mutual learning, support, engagement and transformative response co-creation across the multiple phases of disaster prevention, preparation, and management, as well as in diverse climate crisis contexts.

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This Report In-Brief is a summarized version of the Major Report: [Gender in Civil-Military Climate Security and Disaster Response: Co-Creating Gender-Transformative Approaches Amid the Global Climate Crisis](#). Please see the Major Report for a complete list of contributors to the Gender in Health and Climate Security Project.

Disclaimer: This report reflects the views and opinions of the authors, as well as those who are directly quoted, and should not be construed as a consensus document. Neither the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command nor the Pacific Forum take an institutional position on the issues discussed herein.

HOW TO USE THIS REPORT In-Brief

We have developed the *Gender in Civil-Military Climate Security and Disaster Response: Co-Creating Gender-Transformative Approaches Amid the Global Climate Crisis* Major Report (English only) along with this shortened *Report In-Brief* version, as guides for institutions and organizations navigating the multiple intersecting and overlapping challenges of the triple nexus of gender, climate change, and security. This ‘how-to’ section provides a quick overview for leveraging this *Report In-Brief*. The Major Report was developed to provide a detailed understanding of the complex interplay between intersectional gender insecurities, the climate crisis, and security risks, and thereby to aid CSOs, defense and security forces, and government policymakers in co-creating more collaborative and inclusive disaster responses. Recognizing the importance of accessible gender equality programming tools, this Report In-Brief represents a succinct version of the Major Report, and is therefore a practical tool for addressing harmful gender norms and advancing gender equality in your climate security work.

Chapter 1: Exploring the Climate-Security Nexus in the Indo-Pacific: The climate crisis, predominantly driven by human activities, poses one of the greatest threats to global and human security, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region. As climate change leads to more frequent and severe natural disasters, there is an increasing need for Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR). This section explores climate-security risks.

Chapter 2: Gender-Climate-Security: Exploring the Triple Nexus: Understanding the intersection of gender, climate, and security is crucial for addressing human security concerns. Moreover, human insecurities are frequently tied to and can escalate into national and international security issues. This section explores the triple nexus in detail, covering both **Human Security Indicators** and **National/International Security Indicators**.

Chapter 3: International Laws and Frameworks: This section draws on international laws and frameworks in underscoring policy avenues for integrating the triple nexus into security planning. It includes a focus on the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda and WPS action plans, as well as ongoing opportunities and challenges in mutual recognition between customary laws and common laws.

Chapter 4: The Phenomenal Expertise, Capabilities, and Leadership of Women and Women’s CSOs in Southeast Asia and the Pacific: An effective, if underexplored pathway for integrating an intersectional gender perspective into disaster management planning is through civil-military cooperation which elevates the knowledge and leadership of women and women’s CSOs. This chapter explores the vital need for ensuring inclusive, effective and human security focused disaster response and climate adaptation strategies, and offers suggestions for best practices.

Chapter 5: Towards Gender-Transformative Action Plans and MEAL Processes: This chapter provides an overview of the creation of gender-transformative action plans and Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) processes. Having offered guidance for how to thematically develop these plans throughout the report, we finish by emphasizing the importance of women’s leadership in co-creative civil-military partnerships for disaster response.

Appendices: Links are provided to the three appendices in the report, including **Appendix 1** on the Project’s **community survey**, **Appendix 2** on **Equity in Discussion Guidelines**, and **Appendix 3:** the **Gendered Risk Assessment and Action Plan Tool (GRAAPT)**, which is adaptable to diverse scenarios based on local circumstances, and can be used to generate place-based and context-specific strategies that respond to the intersectional, gendered needs of all persons across the phases of disaster -- before, during, and after.

EXPLORING THE CLIMATE-SECURITY NEXUS IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

The overwhelmingly human-caused climate crisis is one of the greatest threats to humankind, disproportionately accelerated – and largely inadequately addressed – by well-off countries extracting and burning fossil fuels, and causing unsustainable levels of greenhouse gas emissions. The climate crisis is also contributing to the occurrence of more frequent, intense and severe weather events, natural disasters and humanitarian crises globally. Alarming, the worsening impacts of the climate crisis are generating profound shifts in security from the local to the international level. The Indo-Pacific region is one of the global epicenters of climate-related insecurity. Southeast Asian countries and Pacific Island countries are among the most climate crisis vulnerable and disaster-prone in the world, posing major challenges to human rights, development, environmental stability, and sustainable economies. Climate hazards’ intensity and frequency have increased over time, with typhoons / tropical cyclones, flooding, and sea-level rise identified as amongst the most serious natural hazards for these sub-regions.¹ In providing a baseline for the Project, an overview of the climate-security threat faced in each participant country, and a brief comparison between Southeast Asian and Pacific countries, is outlined below.

GROWING REGIONAL NEED FOR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE AND DISASTER RELIEF (HA/DR)

With the growing frequency, intensity, and severity of climate crisis events and disasters, defense and security institutions will be increasingly called upon to provide humanitarian aid and disaster relief (HA/DR),² and to mitigate the escalation of conflict and violence in the wake of climate-fuelled disasters across Southeast Asia and the Pacific. Globally, humanitarian need is continuing to surge, with nearly 300 million people requiring assistance in 2024.³ As climate change intensifies, national defense and disaster response systems will in turn be challenged by strained resources and readiness. The *World Climate and Security Report 2021*, produced by the International Military Council on Climate and Security (IMCCS), noted that climate security risks will continue to intensify across all regions of the globe, and that militaries will be increasingly overstretched. Critically, the report noted that “the global governance system is ill-equipped to deal with the security risks posed by climate change.”⁴ In June 2022, the Military Responses to Climate Hazards (MiRCH) platform was launched by the Washington DC-based Center for Climate and Security (CCS) (an institute of the Council on Security Risks) to track the deployment of military and paramilitary personnel and equipment in response to climate-related natural disasters and hazards, including heatwaves, flooding, drought, extreme precipitation, and storms and hurricanes.⁵ In early 2024, an analysis of MiRCH data from June 2022 found military deployments proceeded on every continent (from 68 countries globally) in response to climate-related disasters. Significantly, the analysis noted that such demand has stretched capacity, causing many to question military readiness for the increased pace and intensity of climate-crisis and disaster deployments.⁶

This burgeoning demand for HA/DR in disaster and climate crisis contexts underscores the importance of strategic forward thinking and planning. However, it also introduces practical and philosophical questions. Indeed, it has been

¹ UNESCAP, “The Disaster Riskscape Across Asia-Pacific: Pathways for Resilience, Inclusion and Empowerment. Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2019 (APDR 2019)” (Bangkok: United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 2019), <https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/IDD-APDR-Subreport-Pacific-SIDS.pdf>.

² Also known as *Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response*.

³ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Global Humanitarian Overview 2024,” May 25, 2024, <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/world/global-humanitarian-overview-2024-enarfres>.

⁴ Steve Brock et al., “The World Climate and Security Report 2021,” Center for Climate and Security, an Institute of the Council on Strategic Risks (International Military Council on Climate and Security, June 2021), <https://imccs.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/World-Climate-and-Security-Report-2021.pdf>.

⁵ Tom Ellison, Erin Sikorsky, and Ethan Wong, “MiRCH Update: Key Takeaways from Tracking Climate-Related Military Deployments,” *The Center for Climate & Security* (blog), January 18, 2024, <https://climateandsecurity.org/2024/01/mirch-update-key-takeaways-from-tracking-climate-related-military-deployments/>.

⁶ Ellison, Sikorsky, and Wong, “MiRCH Update.”

noted that “the role of militaries in responding to natural disasters is both vexed and controversial.”⁷ Across different contexts throughout Asia and the Pacific and within states themselves, different perspectives of and relationships to the military and the role(s) of the military prevail. Thus as disasters worsen across the region, there is a growing need for civilians to engage in open discussions regarding the extent to which militaries might respond to natural disasters. It is important to consider questions such as, “... what their specific role should be, to whom they should be accountable, and which resources specifically should be deployed from which branch of the armed services or indeed reserve forces.”⁸

Of concurrent critical concern is the question of the significant impact of militaries in producing greenhouse gas emissions, accounting for approximately 5.5 percent of emissions globally.⁹ We are seeing evidence that military institutions are gradually acknowledging their fundamental responsibility towards reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and “global boiling.”¹⁰ Yet worldwide, increasing militarization and arms build-up fueled by war and regional tensions remains a concerning trend,¹¹ both with regard to directly increasing climate emissions *and* in terms of the ways in which this can weaken the conditions for an international and regional environment where human security, gender justice and climate justice are foregrounded.¹²

THE RISKS OF GENDER-BLIND HA/DR

As the threats posed by the climate crisis and its impacts are taken more seriously by defense and security actors across the Indo-Pacific region, it is crucial to assess how gender inequalities and insecurities are conceptualized, engaged with -- or ignored -- by those acting to mitigate and / or respond to disasters. Conventional state-centric conceptualizations of “climate security” often too narrowly frame climate discussions within the scope of “hard security” issues. Perceived threats to states, the geopolitical order and the socio-political and economic status quo continue to dominate in high level decision-making and resource allocation, particularly through narratives that securitize the climate crisis. Although military deployments in response to disasters are growing, dominant approaches to crisis response across the Indo-Pacific region in many cases remain in the “gender blind” or “gender aware” sections of the *Gender Integration Continuum*.^{*} That is to say, they do not comprehensively integrate a gender-responsive approach to inequalities, let alone seek to advance *gender-transformative*^{*} outcomes. As such, they do not adequately address the broader ecological, social, political, racial, and intergenerational dynamics that underpin human insecurities in climate crisis and disaster contexts.

⁷ Michael Brzoska and Matt McDonald, “Climate Change, Natural Disasters and the Military,” *Toda Peace Institute*, Policy Brief, no. 77 (n.d.), https://toda.org/assets/files/resources/policy-briefs/t-pb_77_brzoska-and-mcdonald.pdf.

⁸ Brzoska and McDonald, “Climate Change, Natural Disasters and the Military.”

⁹ John Coyne and Tariqul Hasan Rifat, “Armed Forces, Too, Must Help Fight Climate Change,” *ASPI The Strategist*, April 18, 2024, <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/armed-forces-too-must-help-fight-climate-change/#:~:text=Militaries%20account%20for%205.5,the%20US%2C%20both%20think%20tanks>.

¹⁰ Ajit Niranjana, “‘Era of Global Boiling Has Arrived,’ Says UN Chief as July Set to Be Hottest Month on Record,” *The Guardian*, July 27, 2023, <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2023/jul/27/scientists-july-world-hottest-month-record-climate-temperatures>.

¹¹ SIPRI, “Global Military Spending Surges amid War, Rising Tensions and Insecurity,” *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, April 22, 2024,

[https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2024/global-military-spending-surges-amid-war-rising-tensions-and-insecurity#:~:text=Global%20military%20spending%20surges%20amid%20war%2C%20rising%20tensions%20and%20insecurity,-22%20April%202024&text=\(Stockholm%2C%2022%20April%202024\),on%20year%20increase%20since%202009](https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2024/global-military-spending-surges-amid-war-rising-tensions-and-insecurity#:~:text=Global%20military%20spending%20surges%20amid%20war%2C%20rising%20tensions%20and%20insecurity,-22%20April%202024&text=(Stockholm%2C%2022%20April%202024),on%20year%20increase%20since%202009).

¹² Daniela Philipson Garcia, “Feminist Interventions: Resisting the Militarisation of the Climate Crisis,” Report (Women’s Environment and Development Organization, June 6, 2023), <https://wedo.org/security-for-whom-new-report-on-feminist-perspectives-on-militarism-climate/>.

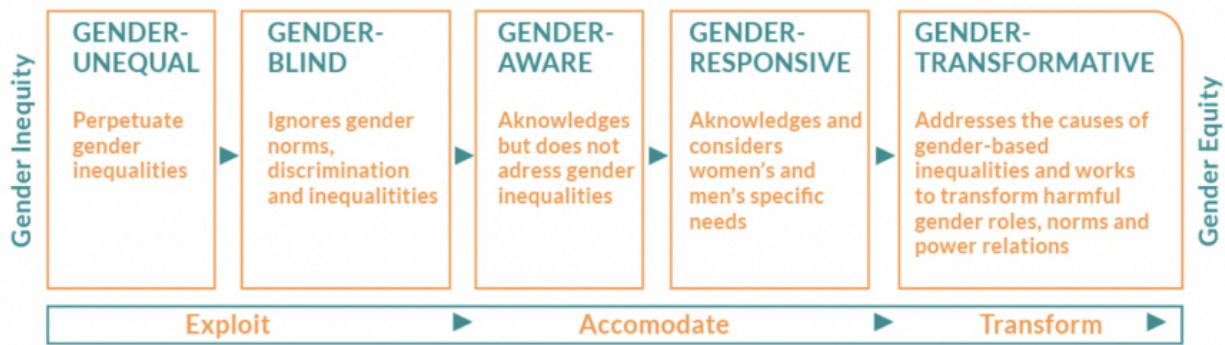


Figure 3: IWRM Gender Equality Continuum (Adapted from UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women, 2020)¹³

“The GIC describes a gradient from ignoring gender inequalities and other forms of exclusion (or even reproducing them through practices that intentionally or unintentionally reinforce or take advantage of negative gender stereotypes), to acknowledging the existence of differences, to the most advanced stage of enacting transformative change by taking into account the achievement of fully equal rights. The ultimate goal in a long-term perspective rests on being able to identify strategies to move a project along the continuum toward a gender transformative approach.”¹⁴

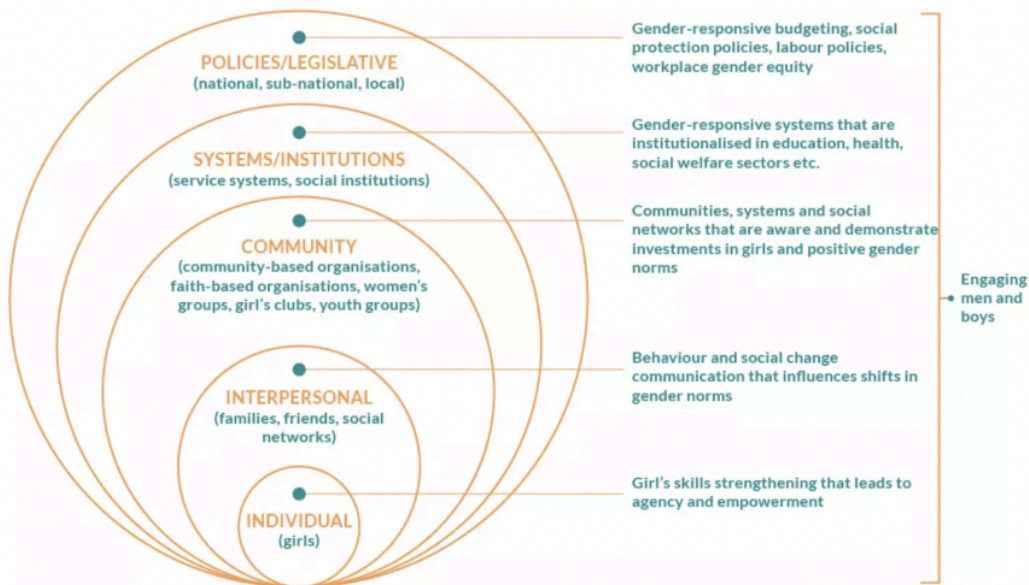


Figure 4: Gender Transformative Programming IWRM (Adapted from UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women, 2020)¹⁵

There are myriad interconnections and interdependencies between community, state and international security and (gendered) human security. As the following sections outline in detail, in delivering HA/DR in response to climate-related

¹³ Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), “Addressing Gender Inclusion,” IWRM Action Hub, 2024, <https://droughtclp.unccd.int/node/37/printable/print>.

¹⁴ Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), “Addressing Gender Inclusion.”

¹⁵ Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), “Addressing Gender Inclusion.”

disasters, the very nature of defense and security activity needs to shift to center on meeting the diverse gendered and intersectional human security needs of those (impacted by disasters and climate-induced devastation. In doing so, drawing on feminist guiding principles can help ensure the application of gender-responsive, and ideally gender-transformative, approaches, elevate the experiences, knowledge, decision-making, and leadership of diverse groups of women, and bring about positive multi-level change in gender norms.

Gender-Transformative Approaches

Transformative approaches go beyond a focus on “gaps” and simply acknowledging gender differences or adding women to a process. “Structural change” is the keyword in gender-transformative programming. Evidence shows that gender transformation needs sustained investments over time to change individual agency; gender roles, norms, and structural power dynamics; as well as legislative and institutional structures. Empowering women and girls and promoting them in positions of social and political influence is intrinsic to transformative change. People of all genders, in particular men and boys, can and should be actively involved as gender equality allies and agents of transformative change. Combined action across scales from the individual level through communities to systems is imperative.

GENDER-CLIMATE-SECURITY: EXPLORING THE TRIPLE NEXUS

Not only is climate change differentially caused and exacerbated by different groups and states – thus heightening the moral responsibility of those actors and states to immediately act to *halt and address* the devastating effects of the climate crisis – but the impacts of climate change and worsening disasters are not experienced uniformly by people, communities, or states across the globe.

ADOPTING A HUMAN SECURITY PERSPECTIVE

In 1994, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defined Human Security as comprising two main aspects: first, safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease and repression; and second, protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life – whether in homes, jobs or communities: “Human security means that people can exercise these choices safely and freely--and that they can be relatively confident that the opportunities they have today are not totally lost tomorrow.”¹⁶ More recently, United Nations General Assembly resolution 66/290 stated: “Human security is an approach to assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of their people.”¹⁷ It calls for “people-centered, comprehensive, context-specific and prevention-oriented responses that strengthen the protection and empowerment of all people.” A human security / people-centered approach to policy making challenges us to rethink conventional or dominant

¹⁶ “Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security” (New York: UN Development Programme, 1994), <https://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-report-1994>.

¹⁷ United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security, “What Is Human Security,” United Nations, 2024, <https://www.un.org/humansecurity/what-is-human-security/>.

understandings of security by questioning the idea that security is a homogeneously experienced phenomenon, and by centering humans in security discussions to ask “*who* is (in)secure,” “*why* are they (in)secure,” and “*who* or *what* poses a threat to their personal security.”

Highlighting the importance of the human security* framing, government approaches to the climate-security nexus and disaster management will be insufficient where they do not integrate an intersectional gender perspective. During climate crisis events, there are frequently increases in sexual harassment, assault, and exploitation and trafficking in persons, with women and girls disproportionately affected. Women’s economic, health, infrastructure, food, and water insecurities also frequently increase following disasters, which further impairs the ability of already fragile communities to respond to, recover from, and prepare for future destabilizing events. However, simply looking at the identity characteristic of “gender” is not enough in seeking to address gendered insecurities or advance gender equality. Rather, we must also simultaneously apply an “intersectional lens.”

The concept of *intersectionality* draws on the work of scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, who in 1989 sought to show how black women in the United States were discriminated against and faced disadvantage due to being simultaneously oppressed and discriminated against as women (sexism) and as black (racism).¹⁸ Expanding upon Crenshaw’s black feminist theoretical framework to look at a multitude of identity characteristics, the Centre for Intersectional Justice (CIJ) has defined the concept of intersectionality as one which: “describes the ways in which systems of inequality based on gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, class and other forms of discrimination ‘intersect’ to create unique dynamics and effects.”¹⁹ Moreover, as the CIJ notes, “forms of inequality ... should be addressed simultaneously to prevent one form of inequality from reinforcing another. For example, tackling the gender pay gap alone – without including other dimensions such as race, socio-economic status and immigration status – will likely reinforce inequalities among women.”²⁰ Adopting an *intersectional lens** is critical to recognize and address how marginalized and discriminated against groups face heightened vulnerabilities to the impacts of the climate crisis. In particular, diverse groups of women and girls often bear the brunt of the climate crisis’ impacts, while concurrently being excluded from participation, decision-making and leadership on critical climate, environment and disaster issues. In particular, differential vulnerabilities and gendered insecurities become clearer when we consider the intersections of gender inequality with discrimination based on an individual’s age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, citizenship status, disability status, marital status, motherhood status, and so on. Understanding intersectionality is critical to ensuring policymaking and programming seeking to achieve gender equality concurrently supports and promotes the achievement of social equality and social justice *for all*.

In the next section, we consider individual and community levels of human (in)security through the “Gender-Climate-Security Indicators” Framework.

¹⁸ Crenshaw, Kimberlé. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Policies.” University of Chicago Legal Forum 1989, no. 1 (1989): 139-167.

¹⁹ Centre for Intersectional Justice, “What Is Intersectionality?,” 2024, https://www.intersectionaljustice.org/what-is-intersectionality?bbeml=tp-3zSM8cXu3k-DeCWmrukkCQ.jpFRkyVd2Vkux0tAwPYHMMg.ri7gUg8DZaEm_HqbDTn_B1g.lA0kmw1EYo0mmAmYexxeGBg.

²⁰ Centre for Intersectional Justice, “What Is Intersectionality?”

GENDER-CLIMATE-SECURITY INDICATORS

Drawing on the work of Maryruth Belsey Priebe,^{21 22} workshop participants discussed a set of twelve indicators in which the gender-climate-security nexus analysis is particularly pertinent over the course of the in-person workshops. These indicators include Early Warning, Healthcare, Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), Food Security, Recent Shocks, Employment and Poverty, Standard of Living, Life Expectancy, Education, Infrastructure, State Fragility²³, and Long-Term Adaptation. In turn, building on the discussions and insights forged during both the virtual and in-person workshop sessions, CSO representatives, civil servants, and defense / security personnel collaborated in country groups to co-construct a detailed list of priorities to address in the **Gendered Risk Assessment and Action Plan Tool (GRAAPT)**. These sessions enabled participants to interact and share their own unique domestic and regional expertise, perspectives, and suggestions for gender-transformative disaster response, while in turn drawing on experiences and perspectives shared throughout the workshops from the other countries' representatives.

The following section provides a brief overview of the indicators and some examples (see the GRAAPT in Appendix 3 of the Major Report (English only) for the full set of risk assessment questions and actions per indicator), whereby an intensification of human insecurities may be evident before, during, and/or following a disaster or climate crisis event. For brevity, the sections that follow refer to 'women', however women are not a homogenous group. It is imperative that an intersectional lens is applied with regards to the indicators, in order to understand and address the complex impacts on *diverse groups* of women and girls, as well as on people of all genders.

Early Warning: Women face significant barriers in accessing and responding to early warning systems for climate disasters. Gender-based inequalities such as lower education levels, limited financial resources, and illiteracy hinder their use of electricity, mobile phones, and the internet. These challenges, compounded by gendered cyber violence, limit women's engagement with social media, which is often a critical platform for receiving early warnings. Moreover, societal norms may restrict women's decision-making abilities regarding evacuation, with many relying on male family members for such critical decisions.

Healthcare: Climate change exacerbates gender-specific health vulnerabilities, particularly impacting women. Disaster response planning often neglects women's needs, resulting in lower participation in recovery efforts and higher mortality rates. Increased carbon emissions worsen health conditions and drive up healthcare costs, which are burdensome for women in poverty. Pregnant women face heightened health risks during climate events, including preterm birth and hypertension. Cultural barriers limit women's access to sexual and reproductive health services, increasing unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and maternal and infant health risks. Gender inequalities in food distribution also heighten food insecurity for girls and women.

²¹ Disclaimer: The "Gender-Climate-Security Indicators" and "Appendix 3. Gendered Risk Assessment and Action Plan Tool (GRAAPT)" sections of the "Gender in Civil-Military Climate Security and Disaster Response: Co-Creating Gender-Transformative Approaches Amid the Global Climate Crisis Major Report" were originally developed by: Maryruth Belsey Priebe, "Gender All the Way Down: Proposing a Feminist Framework for Analyzing Gendered Climate Security Risks" (Master's Thesis, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University, 2022), <https://dash.harvard.edu/handle/1/37373596> The GRAAPT was updated with input from the Project Contributors who may freely use the content for their own purposes. Otherwise, all rights to these sections, including but not limited to their use, reproduction, and distribution, are reserved by Maryruth Belsey Priebe.

²² The "Indicators" were developed based on work by: Femke Remmits, Elisabeth Dick, and Michel Rademaker, "Climate Security Assessment: A Methodology and Assessment of the Nexus between Climate Hazards and Security of Nations and Regions" (The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, December 2020), <https://hcss.nl/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Climate-Security-Assessment-March-2021.pdf>.

²³ While included as an indicator in this project, it is important to note critiques which identify how conceptualisations of 'fragility' (as well as 'conflict', 'stability' and 'security') often fail to take into account cultural and political contexts, and therefore are often (problematically) informed by "value-laden judgment(s)". See: Rethinking State Fragility April 2015, [The British Academy](https://www.britishecademy.org/).

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH): Women and girls often bear the primary responsibility for water collection and sanitation in many communities. Climate-induced water scarcity and contamination disproportionately affect them, increasing their workload and exposing them to health risks. Inadequate access to clean water and sanitation facilities heightens the risk of waterborne diseases and limits their ability to maintain hygiene, especially during menstrual cycles.

Food Security: Climate change affects agricultural productivity, leading to food shortages and price hikes, which disproportionately impact women. Women often have less access to land, credit, and agricultural resources, making it harder for them to adapt to changing conditions. Gender norms also prioritize food distribution to men and boys, leaving women and girls more vulnerable to malnutrition and food insecurity.

Recent Shocks: Recent climate shocks, such as extreme weather events, disproportionately impact women due to pre-existing gender inequalities. Women often have fewer resources and less mobility, making it harder for them to recover from disasters. These shocks also increase the burden on women as primary caregivers, exacerbating their vulnerabilities.

Employment and Poverty: Climate change affects employment and income, with women being more vulnerable due to their overrepresentation in informal and low-paying jobs. Disasters can destroy livelihoods and deepen poverty, disproportionately affecting women who have less access to financial resources and social protection mechanisms.

Standard of Living: Climate impacts on housing, infrastructure, and basic services lower the standard of living, particularly for women. Women-headed households are often among the poorest and most vulnerable, facing greater challenges in securing safe and adequate housing, healthcare, and education for their children.

Life Expectancy: Climate change can lower life expectancy, with women being particularly affected due to compounded health and social vulnerabilities. Increased stress, malnutrition, and exposure to health risks during and after disasters contribute to poorer health outcomes and shorter lifespans for women.

Education: Climate-induced disruptions in education disproportionately affect girls. Families may prioritize boys' education when resources are limited, leading to higher dropout rates among girls. This limits their future opportunities and perpetuates cycles of poverty and gender inequality.

Infrastructure: Women rely heavily on infrastructure for access to health, education, and economic opportunities. Climate damage to infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, and schools, disproportionately affects women, limiting their mobility and access to essential services.

State Fragility: Climate change exacerbates state fragility, with women facing higher risks in unstable environments. Fragile states often lack the capacity to protect and support women during and after climate disasters, increasing their vulnerability to violence, exploitation, and neglect.

Long-Term Adaptation: Women play a crucial role in long-term adaptation strategies, yet their participation is often limited by gender norms and lack of resources. Ensuring women's involvement in planning and implementing adaptation measures is essential for building resilient communities.

Human (In)Security is Innately Linked with Community, Societal, National, and International (In)Security

Research has shown that higher levels of human insecurity are intrinsically interlinked with and mutually inform higher levels of national and international insecurity. Hudson, Bowen and Nielsen and colleagues developed a theoretical framework showing that, “societies that are highly subordinative of women end up with far worse governments, demographics, economic performance, environmental preservation and health outcomes.”²⁴ Moreover, “the higher the level of violence against women, the more likely a country may be to not comply with international norms and treaty agreements, and the less peacefully it will operate in the international system.”²⁵ Gender inequities and intersectional discrimination against women directly relate to and influence national insecurity: when it is acceptable to use violence in the home to solve disagreements, violence is more likely to be used for (inter?)national level disagreements. In communities where harmful gender norms continue to disadvantage women, individual and community level resilience and adaptability are harmed, including through reduced collective capacities to mitigate and withstand climate-related disasters and shocks. In regions where investments in women’s human security are insufficient, women will be less capable of contributing to system-level resources and tools that support climate security and aid in preventing climate-related conflicts.²⁶ These disparities are likely to further increase following climate disasters such as heatwaves, floods, forest fires, sea level rise and extreme weather. Positively, research has shown that more peaceful environments can be achieved through greater levels of gender equality: “higher gender equality corresponds with a country’s lower likelihood of using military force to resolve disputes with other countries, ... as well as with a lower severity of violence used in international conflict.”²⁷

Recognizing that gender norms are multitudinous and evolving in their expressions across the Indo-Pacific, the following is a brief discussion of the ways gender inequalities may intersect with other security conditions to increase national and international threats. The analysis is based on the same gender-climate-security framework developed by Maryruth Belsey Priebe, as referenced above.²⁸

Crime / small-scale violence

As climate change intensifies, criminal activities are expected to increase due to the exacerbation of economic and social stresses. Law enforcement may become overwhelmed by climate-related crises, leading to more overlooked crimes. Men predominantly commit violent crimes, but women's participation has also risen in recent decades. Organized crime and violent extremism often see men in leadership and violent roles, while women occupy auxiliary positions. Healthcare-related crimes may involve petty theft of medicines, counterfeit medical supplies, and corruption within medical systems. Food and water security crimes might include resource capture by elite or criminal groups, and the influx of climate adaptation funds could fuel corruption and organized crime.

Anti-state activities

Women and men engage differently in public uprisings, with women participating more often when conditions are relatively safe and men more likely to engage even in aggressive or violent behavior. The inability of men, particularly

²⁴ Valerie M. Hudson, Donna Lee Bowen, and Perpetua Lynne Nielsen, “The Effects by the Numbers: The Syndrome and Measures of National Outcome,” in *The First Political Order, How Sex Shapes Governance and National Security Worldwide* (Columbia University Press, 2020), 179–310, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7312/huds19466.11>.

²⁵ Catalina Crespo-Sancho, “The Role of Gender in the Prevention of Violent Conflict,” *World Bank* Background paper for the United Nations-World Bank Flagship Study, *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict* (2017), <https://blogs.worldbank.org/dev4peace/can-gender-equality-prevent-violent-conflict>.

²⁶ Erika Forsberg and Louise Olsson, “Examining Gender Inequality and Armed Conflict at the Subnational Level,” *Journal of Global Security Studies* 6, no. 2 (June 17, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogaa023>.

²⁷ Crespo-Sancho, “The Role of Gender in the Prevention of Violent Conflict.”

²⁸ Belsey Priebe, “Gender All the Way Down: Proposing a Feminist Framework for Analyzing Gendered Climate Security Risks.”

the young, to achieve culturally defined milestones can drive them towards violent demonstrations or recruitment into organized crime, gangs, and terrorist organizations. Climate crises and issues like water and food shortages can motivate both genders to engage in violent protests, challenging traditional gender norms.

Tensions between groups

Environmental conditions like flooding, forest fires, and resource scarcity due to climate change are likely to strain intergroup relationships, potentially leading to conflicts. Young men are at higher risk of being recruited into non-state groups or paramilitaries if they are frustrated by unmet gender-specific milestones. Additionally, disasters can exacerbate tensions and violence, highlighting the need for peace support, particularly for women's groups providing community services.

State-to-state conflict and war

Men have historically been the primary actors in state-to-state conflicts and wars. Women, while less common as combatants, have increasingly participated in paramilitary and armed insurgent groups. In 2022, women constituted only 16% of peace negotiation participants, and their needs were addressed in merely 33% of agreements. However, when women participate meaningfully in peace processes, the likelihood of a peace agreement failing decreases significantly. Studies indicate that disputes over natural resources, land claims, or population movements can escalate into conflicts, underscoring the importance of including women in peace negotiations to enhance the chances of sustainable peace.

As demonstrated in this section, adopting a *gendered intersectional* human security perspective, and centering those most discriminated against, encourages a more comprehensive understanding and response to the gender-climate-security nexus across multiple interlinked levels – individual, community, society, state and international. When diverse groups of women are excluded from climate security planning and policymaking, their myriad perspectives and needs are largely invisibilized. However, when women are recognized as leaders, empowered in consultations and meaningfully involved in disaster planning (as well as climate governance, diplomacy, and peacebuilding) individual and community vulnerability to disaster and climate-related insecurities stand to decrease. Including women in climate security planning can play a profound role in re-balancing gendered power structures, further stabilizing societies. In sum, given the complicated ways in which climate breakdown will impact human insecurities, and recognizing the centrality of human security to enhancing stability within communities during crises, it is imperative to adopt an intersectional gender perspective when seeking to address the risks and vulnerabilities of a community in disaster planning and management.

INTERNATIONAL LAWS AND FRAMEWORKS

International laws and frameworks play crucial roles in normatively and practically guiding how gender perspectives are applied within disaster management, climate policy and HA/DR policy and programming at the regional, national and local levels. Instruments including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Sendai Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) framework (2015) and Gender Action Plan to Support Implementation of the Sendai Framework (2024), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Sphere Standards emphasize the importance of considering gender dynamics in crisis contexts, including HA/DR planning and execution, and specifically provide guidance regarding how to address the needs of diverse women and marginalized gender groups in emergencies. Another major global gender equality and women’s empowerment framework, which we address in greater depth below, is the United Nations Women, Peace and Security agenda. By incorporating these legal and policy frameworks, communities’ and states’ HA/DR responses stand to become more inclusive, effective, and equitable. However, these laws and frameworks are by no means interpreted or adopted uniformly, nor may their adoption necessarily result in gender-transformative outcomes if the root causes of gender inequality and discrimination, and harmful structures and systems, are not simultaneously addressed.

The following laws inform gender-responsive HA/DR strategies and are covered in more detail in the full report:

- **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)**
- **The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 & Sendai Gender Action Plan**
- **Sustainable Development Goals**
- **Sphere & Sphere Standards**

THE WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY (WPS) AGENDA

As noted, the WPS Agenda is a major international Framework underpinned by ten United Security Council Resolutions. The WPS Agenda evolved from the UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325, adopted unanimously on October 31, 2000. UNSCR 1325 addresses both the disproportionate impacts of war on women, as well as “the pivotal role women should and do play in conflict prevention, conflict management and sustainable peace efforts”.²⁹ UNSCR 1325’s framework consists of four pillars—participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery. The WPS agenda recognizes the unique experiences of women and girls in crises and conflict situations, including their heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence. Under the relief and recovery pillar, it calls for the participation of women in all aspects of humanitarian response and reconstruction.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) encourages national-level implementation of UNSCR 1325 through National Action Plans (NAPs). NAPs are strategic documents outlining a government’s approach to localizing action on the WPS Agenda, addressing objectives such as securing the rights of women and girls in conflict, preventing violence, and ensuring women’s meaningful participation in peace processes. Since the first NAP was produced in 2005, 107 countries have developed subsequent generations of NAPs, and some regions have launched Regional Plans of Action, often aligning them with other national development and gender equality policies. Still, NAP approaches to planning, development, and implementation vary significantly in focus, timeline, content, and monitoring frameworks. Furthermore, the integration of climate crisis, disaster, humanitarian and environmental issues within NAPs varies significantly from state to state.

²⁹ “2023 Women, Peace and Security Strategy and National Action Plan” (2023), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/U.S.-Strategy-and-National-Action-Plan-on-Women-Peace-and-Security.pdf>.

WPS Regional Plans of Action

It has been noted that “the WPS agenda has shown that while there are different goalposts for different countries, regional challenges require regional cooperation.” There have been two WPS RPAs produced in Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands region: the Pacific Regional Action Plan on WPS (2012-2015) outlined strategies for advancing gender equality and women’s empowerment across the Pacific region, addressing issues such as violence against women, economic empowerment, and political participation. Meanwhile, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) adopted a Regional Plan of Action in 2022 to promote gender equality and women’s rights within its member states, aiming to enhance women’s participation in decision-making processes and eliminate gender-based violence, and address non-traditional security threats including climate change and disasters.

The WPS agenda also now comprises a WPS Humanitarian Action Compact. The Compact was launched in 2021 at the Generation Equality Forum and as of 2024 has more than 215 Signatories, “including countries, regional organizations, UN entities and civil society: women and youth organizations and networks, academic institutions and private sector.”³⁰ The Compact focuses on implementing WPS and humanitarian action commitments by:

- “Establishing a voluntary monitoring and accountability process to realize existing WPS-HA commitments.
- Strengthening coordination across existing WPS-HA mechanisms, systems, networks, partnerships and capacities.
- Promoting financing for and wider awareness and visibility of the women, peace and security agenda and on gender equality in humanitarian action.”

CUSTOMARY LAWS, DISASTER RESPONSES, AND WOMEN’S CLIMATE SECURITY

While in global policy circles formalized international laws and frameworks are arguably afforded primacy in discussions and debates, there is a need for substantially greater recognition, learning and understanding – by all members of a society or state – of domestic traditional and customary laws, including the unique meanings and significance that gender, environment, nature, and climate might hold. Self-determination is enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and customary law represents a form of self-governance, one which “is hugely empowering in many Indigenous communities because it is a form of social organization and justice that maintains and sustains traditions that go back millennia.”³¹ Significantly, “customary law is not frozen in the past, but a living, changing system that reflects its times, and will continue to grow and change, just as the common law continues to grow and change.”³² However, certain challenges in enforcing or maintaining customary laws in the Indo-Pacific region include legal pluralism, jurisdictional conflicts, and the erosion of traditional knowledge due to urbanization and globalization.

In some states, authorities seek to integrate customary laws with formal legal mechanisms and common law. This might be approached through capacity-building programs, community-based approaches, and policy reforms, and through dialogues and relationship-building between governments, civil society organizations, and Indigenous communities. In

³⁰ Compact on Women, Peace & Security and Humanitarian Action (WPS-HA), “The Compact,” 2024, <https://wpscompact.org/>.

³¹ Tom Calma, “Integration of Customary Law into the Australian Legal System: Calma” (Speech, National Indigenous Legal Conference, 2013), <https://humanrights.gov.au/about/news/speeches/integration-customary-law-australian-legal-system-calma>.

³² Calma, “Integration of Customary Law into the Australian Legal System: Calma.”

many contexts, harmonizing customary law with national policies may serve to strengthen the preservation and learning of Indigenous knowledge and practices, which may be invaluable for disaster response, climate change adaptation, and environmental protection.

However, there are also important problems associated with integrating common law and customary law. First, customary law may be insufficiently respected by (a substantial number of) members of the citizenry and / or governing authorities of a state. If the governing state does not recognize or preserve the standing of customary law(s), Indigenous persons and groups may feel (further) alienated and disempowered. Moreover, instances of non-compatibility or non-alignment between customary laws and national or international legal frameworks may exist, in particular with regard to understandings of and relationships to the land, environment, and climate. Integration may also be logistically challenging where a formal centralized repository of laws does not exist. As noted by Filipino participants in the workshops, the plurality of Indigenous groups with unique cultures and practices can also generate challenges for harmonizing engagements with legal systems among diverse groups.

Alongside these important issues, in countries across Asia and the Pacific, common discriminatory gender norms persist both within common law frameworks as well as within traditional socio-cultural and legal frameworks. Despite strides in gender and leadership inclusivity, some entrenched structures continue to pose challenges. For instance, in many contexts women are (still) often relegated to listening, rather than equally speaking out or leading. Common, if contextually different, issues such as these highlight the need for multi-stakeholder engagement to bridge formal, informal and traditional systems, to harness positive practices but also address pressing gender equity and social justice concerns, including in disaster and climate crisis contexts.

Ultimately, there is a need for the adoption of less prescriptive, more collaborative approaches in any effort to promote the coexistence of traditional and modern legal frameworks. Any alignment of customary laws together with common law requires adopting a people-centered approach that emphasizes Indigenous peoples' unique knowledge, needs, wants, and agency to self-regulate. It should also recognize and respond to the unique impacts which Indigenous groups may face – as determined by those groups – in the context of the gender-climate-security nexus also centrally advance the human rights and security of women, as well as their inclusion, participation and leadership in communities' disaster risk reduction and management efforts.

INDO-PACIFIC DEFENSE AND SECURITY CLIMATE ACTION & ADAPTATION PLANS

Despite the inextricable links between gender inequality, human (in)security, and national security, virtually no Indo-Pacific country has developed a defense and security climate action/adaptation plan that addresses gendered insecurities in a substantive manner, and there even remains a troubling lack of climate crisis integration in most Indo-Pacific Women, Peace and Security (WPS) NAPs.³³ Militaries may have a climate response action plan not only to prepare military infrastructure, operations, and personnel for the changing environment, but also for reducing the risk of climate-related disruptions and supporting national and global climate mitigation and resilience efforts. These plans could (but generally do not) include disaster management strategies. Even if they do, they rarely address gendered vulnerabilities in a substantive manner.

For instance, in the U.S. Department of the Navy Climate Action 2030, Line of Effort 5 calls for the enhancement of mitigation and adaptation through collaboration, noting in particular the need to, “work with allies and international partners, including security organizations and other stakeholders, to integrate climate into security cooperation and

³³ Maryruth Belsey Priebe, “Women Parliamentarians’ Impact in Indo-Pacific Gender-Responsive and Climate-Compatible Security Policy Making,” *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, March 12, 2024, 68.

affirmatively build climate resilience in areas of the world that are most susceptible to climate-induced conflicts, humanitarian disasters, or acute climate impacts such as water and food insecurity or migration pressures.”³⁴ However, it does not explicitly mention gender or the need to consult with women. Meanwhile, the U.S. 2023 Women, Peace, and Security Strategy and National Action Plan, which applies to all U.S. Department of Defense activities, does focus on partnerships, and Line of Effort 5 in the 2023 WPS NAP encourages the mainstreaming of WPS principles through support of “multilateral, regional, and local organizations including civil society and local women leaders.”³⁵ Taken together, the fifth lines of effort in both documents offer federal guidance that reinforces the need to consult with women and women’s organizations in planning for climate-related hazards. However, this consultation and inclusion should be mainstreamed through *all* climate and disaster policies.

The United States is not the only country in the Indo-Pacific lacking in a gender-sensitive defense and security climate adaptation or climate action plan for disasters. While all seven of the Project participant countries have developed some kind of climate adaptation / action plan (a few of which use a gender perspective), none have yet developed a climate adaptation / action plan for application in a defense or security context.

In addition to climate adaptation / action plans that address the broader and longer-term strategies required to mitigate and adapt to climate change impacts, given the large role the defense and security sector plays in disaster response, militaries must also have Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Response (HA/DR) plans that focus on immediate disaster response and relief operations. Such plans provide a structured approach for mobilizing resources, deploying personnel, and collaborating with other agencies, which is crucial for timely and organized disaster response efforts. In other words, these plans ensure improved readiness, reduced response times, and the ability to save more lives, and reduce suffering. Yet as with climate action plans, the vast majority of the disaster management plans developed by the participating Project countries do not include a thoroughgoing gender perspective.

Both climate action plans and HA/DR strategies are crucial: HA/DR plans ensure effective, immediate response to crises, while climate action plans prepare for and mitigate the long-term impacts of climate change. Importantly, both HA/DR and climate action plans must be gender-responsive to address the unique needs and vulnerabilities of all affected genders, particularly women and girls. Integrating intersectional gender perspectives ensures that aid distribution is more equitable, that all voices are heard in decision-making processes, and that the specific health, safety, and welfare needs of diverse women are met. Integrating an intersectional gender perspective in climate action and HA/DR plans leads to more inclusive, effective, and sustainable disaster response and climate adaptation efforts, ultimately contributing to greater resilience and community well-being. This Project therefore responds to the dearth of gender-responsive climate response and disaster management plans across the Indo-Pacific region.

³⁴ Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Energy, Installations, and Environment, “Department of the Navy Climate Action 2030,” May 2022, <https://www.navy.mil/Press-Office/Press-Releases/display-pressreleases/Article/3041221/departments-of-the-navy-releases-climate-action-2030/>.

³⁵ “US Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security,” June 2019, https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/WPS_Strategy_10_October2019.pdf.

THE PHENOMENAL EXPERTISE, CAPABILITIES, AND LEADERSHIP OF WOMEN AND WOMEN'S CSOs IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

The work of women and women's CSOs in Southeast Asia and the Pacific focused on advancing gender equality is both exceptionally diverse and phenomenal. In particular, there is a significant range of CSOs committed to addressing gender inequalities *and* mitigating and adapting to climate change; preventing, preparing for, and managing health crises and disasters; adopting climate-smart agriculture practices; defending the environment from damage and destruction; promoting environmental sustainability; nurturing land and marine habitats; and advancing the clean energy transition. Importantly, this work is carried out under overarching global conditions of pervasive, gender-unequal regimes. Across the region, women are coordinating and strengthening resilience networks, helping others build alternative livelihoods, diversifying their business models for resilience, advocating for inclusivity and a voice at the table, facilitating community training, and improving the health resilience of their communities.³⁶ The incredible work of the CSOs and representatives who took part in the Project workshops is a testament to the diversity and power of women's expertise, capabilities and leadership, and the importance of their centrality in all responses to the climate crisis and disasters.

CIV-MIL PARTNERSHIPS IN DISASTER RESPONSE: SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCING GENDER EQUITY

The preceding sections have highlighted the innate connections between human – community – society – national – international (in)security in the context of the climate crisis and intensifying disasters. As climate and ecological breakdown continues to compound and reinforce gendered insecurities around the world, there is a growing imperative to adopt a gender perspective, pursue intersectional gender equality within all policymaking, disaster planning and response, and promote the leadership, engagement, decision-making, and meaningful participation of diverse women and women's CSOs. Given the gender-blind nature of many national climate action and adaptation plans (including the few that have been developed for the defense and security sector) civil-military partnerships offer an important – and unique – vehicle for enhancing women's participation and leadership in climate and disaster planning and governance, and incorporating a gender perspective into states' climate disaster HA/DR strategies.

Civil–military relations broadly refers to “the interaction between militaries and a wide range of civilian actors such as INGOs, governments, legal practitioners, security agencies, human rights advocates, and development actors, and can be practiced for a wide range of purposes.”³⁷ As a United Nations system framework, Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination (UN-CMCoord) specifically refers to “the essential dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors in humanitarian emergencies that is necessary to protect and promote humanitarian principles, avoid competition, minimize inconsistency, and when appropriate, pursue common goals. Basic strategies range from coexistence to cooperation. Coordination is a shared responsibility facilitated by liaison and common training.”³⁸

Collaboration between civilian organizations (such as civil society organizations (CSOs)), governmental agencies, and local communities) and military forces offers opportunities to address complex challenges using a whole-of-society approach,

³⁶ UN WOMEN, *Accelerating Action for Gender Responsive Disaster Risk Reduction*, 2023, <https://wrd.unwomen.org/explore/insights/accelerating-action-gender-responsive-disaster-risk-reduction>.

³⁷ Alistair D. B. Cook and Sangeetha Yogendran, “Conceptualising Humanitarian Civil-Military Partnerships in the Asia-Pacific: (Re-)Ordering Cooperation,” *Australian Outlook* (Australian Institute of International Affairs, February 17, 2020), <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/conceptualising-humanitarian-civil-military-partnerships-in-the-asia-pacific-re-ordering-cooperation/>.

³⁸ United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, “Humanitarian Civil Military Coordination,” 2024, <https://reliefweb.int/topic/humanitarian-civil-military-coordination>.

which is especially important for humanitarian emergency response to natural disasters. At the fundamental level, civil-military (civ-mil) partnerships can leverage the unique strengths and resources of multiple sectors to enhance the effectiveness of disaster response efforts and promote sustainable solutions. Civilian organizations often provide expertise in areas such as community engagement, humanitarian aid delivery, and long-term development, while military forces contribute logistical support, security, and specialized capabilities for rapid response and crisis management.

Crucially, by integrating a gender perspective, civ-mil partnerships can enhance the effectiveness, inclusivity, and sustainability of their response efforts, ultimately contributing to more equitable outcomes for all affected populations. Incorporating a gender perspective into civ-mil partnerships involves recognizing and addressing the specific needs, vulnerabilities, and capacities of people of all genders in crisis-affected contexts. This incorporation can include ensuring the participation of women and marginalized gender groups in decision-making processes, mainstreaming gender considerations into program design and implementation, and addressing gender-based violence and discrimination. Significantly, civ-mil partnerships adopting gender-transformative approaches may help maximize the potential of bringing about gradual disruptions and structural changes in harmful gender norms as they manifest in and inform certain institutions and systems.

LIMITATIONS AND CHALLENGES FOR CIV-MIL RELATIONS

Despite the significant benefits of civ-mil partnership engagements, they also present complex challenges rooted in historical contexts and contemporary dynamics. One pressing issue is the neutrality of civilian organizations and individuals in such collaborations. Maintaining impartiality is often crucial to upholding CSO integrity and ensuring they serve the broader public interest above all else, including political and geopolitical goals. Problematically, humanitarian actors (including militaries) often have access to affected populations but may be challenged to localize HA/DR strategies to address the needs of those actually affected by the crisis.³⁹ Therefore, to promote effective, non-harmful humanitarian response and disaster relief, sustained dialogue and interaction among civil-military actors are crucial.⁴⁰ Strained civ-mil relationships arising from past tensions or violence may present obstacles to collaboration and meaningful partnerships. This challenge is particularly elevated in states across the Indo-Pacific with a history of military intervention in governance. Additional obstacles to civ-mil cooperation include that civilian and military actors often “adopt different goals and principles, they compete over domains of responsibility, and they have incongruent ideas about the need for militarized approaches in emergencies and disasters.”⁴¹

Drawing on a feminist perspective of peace and security, civ-mil partnerships might risk embedding hierarchical relationships of power, and result in the exploitation of the knowledge, time, labor, and/or wellbeing of women and women’s CSOs. Indeed, it has been argued that “the militarization of crisis response is not in the interest of armed forces, nor in that of civilian crisis organizations or society at large.”⁴² Overcoming these challenges requires a delicate balance of transparency, accountability, and a commitment to upholding democratic principles and addressing diverse human security needs to begin bridging gaps between the military and civilian spheres.

³⁹ Cook & Yogendran, “Conceptualising Humanitarian Civil-Military”

⁴⁰ Cook & Yogendran, “Conceptualising Humanitarian Civil-Military”

⁴¹ Myriame Bollen and Jori Pascal Kalkman, “Civil-Military Cooperation in Disaster and Emergency Response Practices, Challenges, and Opportunities,” *Journal of Advanced Military Studies* 13, no. 1 (2022): 79–91.

⁴² Bollen and Kalkman, “Civil-Military Cooperation in Disaster and Emergency Response Practices, Challenges, and Opportunities.”

BEST PRACTICES FOR CIV-MIL COOPERATION

The following are insights and suggestions from Project participants regarding best practices for civ-mil cooperation aiming to advance gender equality:

- Foster an inclusive environment in which women, men, and non-binary people, as well as other vulnerable populations, can freely communicate their needs and concerns.
- Establish clear, gender-responsive standard operating procedures for communication channels, resource sharing, and coordination mechanisms to facilitate civ-mil information sharing and decision-making processes.
- Engage in gender-sensitive trust-building exercises, especially when (civ-mil) relations have historically been adversarial or violent (particularly in contexts where CSOs are not legally recognized).
- Encourage communication and requests between defense / security and CSOs to be gender-inclusive, specific, and time-bound, and conveyed to leadership (women and men leaders).
- Respect each other's mandates, roles, and expertise, while acknowledging the need for advancement of gender equality and the importance of collaboration and complementarity.
- Conduct gender-inclusive joint training and exercises to enhance interoperability and mutual understanding of respective capabilities and limitations.
- Promote transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in partnership activities, engaging women and men within local communities and other stakeholder groups to ensure their meaningful participation and ownership of response efforts.
- Develop a free-flowing, multi-directional messaging system between government and defense / security agencies, CSOs, and communities, especially when communicating with people in very remote regions.
- Recognize the roles and efforts of all entities, including women and men in leadership, especially that of CSOs which may be overlooked in government press and reporting.
- Prioritize the protection and welfare of affected populations (especially from sexual- and gender-based violence (SGBV)) to devise collaborative response efforts that are conducted in accordance with humanitarian principles as well as customary and international law.
- Defense / security agencies tend to move slowly but have resources; CSOs tend to move quickly but lack access to resources. Efforts should be made to tap into the strengths of each partner and ensure resources are distributed in a gender-equitable manner.
- Ensure sufficient financial resources are available to support long-term civ-mil engagement.

OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH FEMINIST APPROACHES TO CIV-MIL PARTNERSHIPS

To actively advance human security, equality and peace, civ-mil relationships can seek to center *feminist principles** of care, inclusivity, equity, and justice, while aiming to transformatively address structural and intersectional oppression. In doing so, civ-mil relations could serve to reduce diverse human insecurities, support human rights in the face of the climate crisis, and enable collaborative yet equitable responses to disasters and other humanitarian crises. Empowering local communities, particularly women's and marginalized groups, to be equally heard and lead climate resilience and adaptation efforts can foster sustainable solutions that address the root causes of environmental degradation and conflict. Investing in grassroots initiatives and participatory decision-making processes supports more sustainable responses to the climate crisis that are inclusive and grounded in the needs of affected communities. Drawing on feminist values, which seek to advance the wellbeing and security of *all*, this Project has endeavored to

ultimately highlight how defense and security resources can be harnessed for climate crisis and disaster response in ways that:

- Promote the ability of communities to withstand severe and compounding consequences of climate breakdown through inclusive and collaborative approaches;
- Emphasize and promote the agency, leadership and knowledge of women and women’s civil society organizations;
- Inspire communities and leaders to build back better through deliberately adopting gender-transformative practices; and
- Transform harmful gender norms at multiple levels– internalized, interpersonal, collective, institutional and structural⁴³ – in aiming, above all, to forge more peaceful societies centering on human security, environmental sustainability and collective wellbeing. Towards Gender-Transformative Action Plans and MEAL Processes

Reframing (Climate) Security through a Feminist Lens

While multiple feminisms and feminist perspectives exist, broadly, a feminist perspective of disasters and the climate crisis offers a critical reframing of "security," differing substantially from and challenging non-gendered and "hard security" framings that continue to dominate public and international policy domains, including academia and think tanks. A feminist perspective centers human security, highlighting how the intensification of the anthropogenic climate crisis is exacerbating existing social inequalities and power imbalances that may result in societal breakdown and increased violence and conflict. Increased investments in arms and military capacity frequently occur as governments prioritize national security responses over human security, peacebuilding, and public services. This trend threatens to perpetuate cycles of conflict, disproportionately impacting marginalized communities (and often those in low-industrialized countries who have contributed the least to climate change), particularly women and gender-diverse individuals who often bear the brunt of armed conflicts, disasters and environmental degradation. Importantly, increased militarization will also undermine efforts to address the root causes of climate change – including the elevated carbon emissions of militaries globally – and exacerbate human and environmental injustices.

In aligning with feminist principles, civ-mil relations could become innately committed to the de-escalation of conflicts and crises, not only by addressing harmful patriarchal norms, behaviors and ideals, but also through supporting processes of demilitarization. Climate- and gender-just feminist initiatives require a redirection of funds from military budgets toward initiatives that prioritize the needs of communities, especially those most affected by the climate crisis and disasters. In turn, these funds can support sustainable development projects, decolonization efforts, non-violent conflict resolution, environmental conservation programs, and renewable energy initiatives that promote resilience and adaptation. Furthermore, adopting robust feminist foreign policy frameworks that prioritize – and adequately fund – gender equality, human rights, and environmental justice programs can guide and reshape national priorities towards peacebuilding, social justice and sustainable development.

⁴³ "The Five Layers of Gender Inequality," Instagram Post, January 24, 2023, <https://www.instagram.com/theequalityinstitute/p/CnyL9EIO4qv/?locale=ru>.

ACTION PLANS

The process of developing Action Plans – such as for WPS programs – fundamentally involves engaging in multiple levels of strategizing. In the case of climate and / or disaster management action plans, international frameworks such as the Sendai Framework, the WPS Agenda and the SDGs may inform action plan development, as well as regional action plans, national action plans, organizational plans, and project-specific plans. In the case of action plans for gender-transformative disaster management and HA/DR, a gender perspective should be comprehensively integrated across all sections of the Plan, including development, operations, MEAL, and governance. Core elements that should be included in a gender-focused action plan encompass ways to address the problem and its root cause by defining governance structures, outlining strategies, determining outcomes and priorities, setting indicators and data collection methods, specifying the frequency of monitoring, identifying target populations and key settings, proposing essential actions, and appropriately allocating resources. Challenges in developing action plans include the need for meaningful participation and leadership of diverse groups, adequate resources and gender-responsive budgets, clear accountability mechanisms, and effective monitoring and evaluation frameworks. Despite these challenges, comprehensively integrating gender perspectives into action plans is crucial for promoting peace, security, and sustainable development.

MONITORING, EVALUATION, ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEARNING (MEAL)

Action plans are often only as good as their government-supported gender-responsive budgets, leadership buy-in, and sustainable outcomes. Knowing whether goals and outcomes have been achieved is only possible with thorough and ethical collection and utilization of data – a process that is often referred to as measurement, evaluation, accountability, and learning (MEAL). By implementing a robust MEAL process, action plans are more likely to be tailored to meet the diverse needs and circumstances of persons of all genders, ultimately leading to more effective, inclusive – and hopefully transformative – disaster responses. Good practices in MEAL include disaggregating data by gender, age, and additional identity characteristics to pinpoint intersectional disparities and disadvantages. A gender-responsive approach to MEAL should involve using gender-sensitive indicators (tools for measuring quantitative or qualitative progress), seeking to understand structural power dynamics and access to resources, involving diverse stakeholders from the outset and throughout the MEAL process (particularly affected populations), and regularly collecting feedback from affected populations. Indicators should be chosen based on what factors need measurement in a given local and national context. When identifying indicators, it is important to ask not merely “what do ‘people’ need?” but to apply an intersectional lens to ask “*which* groups or *who* needs what?” Such an approach to developing a MEAL framework informs more gender-responsive decision making, and allows for adjustment of crisis strategies accordingly, thereby promoting accountability and enhancing the overall effectiveness of civ-mil disaster response efforts. Feminist approaches to MEAL represent an even stronger commitment to transformative change. Feminist MEAL practices challenge gender equality organizations and programs to “think differently about what is considered evidence, (push) the boundaries of how evidence is captured, (question) who gives knowledge meaning and power, and (promote) social transformation”.⁴⁴

[Follow this link to the Major Report, Appendix 3. Gendered Risk Assessment and Action Plan Tool \(GRAAPT\) \(English only\).](#)

⁴⁴ “Feminist Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning” (Oxfam Canada, n.d.), <https://www.oxfam.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Oxfam-Canada-Feminist-MEAL-Guidance-Note-English.pdf>.

FINAL REFLECTIONS

This Project has focused on the highly complex ways in which gender norms intersecting with other social inequalities influence who is vulnerable to a climate crisis event, how individuals react to and persist under the pressures of the global climate crisis, and the ways in which gender norms, community dynamics, and broader socio-political systems and institutions either entrench inequalities or redefine roles to transform gendered power structures. If the climate crisis is the context in which all HA/DR of the future will occur,⁴⁵ addressing diverse women's insecurities will be a powerful determining factor of societal security and wellbeing. The mounting costs to human security and federal budgets caused by climate-induced floods, wildfires, cyclones, heat waves, and droughts demand equitable solutions. Broadly, it is imperative that diverse groups of women meaningfully inform, participate in, and equally lead civil, defense and security sector responses to natural disasters and climate-related tensions, and that their expertise and real experiences underpin gender-transformative HA/DR approaches. Actors and institutions should seek to build relationships with women's CSOs in cities, towns, and villages ahead of a disaster so that lines of communication will be open and accessible during times of crisis.

The GRAAPT approach developed through the Project and explored in this Major Report has attempted to provide a way to comprehensively add a gender perspective to any climate security HA/DR strategy. It has done so by using a consultative, diagnostic approach to ascertaining the unique gender factors that impact disaster response outcomes. Undoubtedly, the feminist-informed approach to HA/DR planning adopted in this project, which focuses on grassroots consultations and uplifting women to advance gender equality requires time-consuming and labor-intensive processes. If gender is given due consideration using this method, it is likely to generate critical insights that guide more effective climate adaptation/action policies and programs, and serve to advance gender-transformative action and outcomes. As such, this diagnostic approach represents only the first step; it requires ongoing flexibility and adaptation to ensure contextual suitability, especially for expedient use following a catastrophic event. More research, testing and critical analyses are required to refine the process across multiple contexts and with additional civ-mil actors and partnerships.



Image credit: Nordic Development Fund

⁴⁵ Carol Cohn, "The Women, Peace and Security Agenda and the Climate Crisis: Inextricable Links" (Talk presented at The Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden, March 9, 2020), https://genderandsecurity.org/sites/default/files/Carol_Cohn_-_WPS_and_the_Climate_Crisis_-_Inextricable_Links_0.pdf.