**Submission of the International Planned Parenthood Federation to OHCHR on Human Rights and Climate Change**

1. **Please describe the impacts of the adverse effects of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of people in vulnerable situations. Where possible, please share specific examples and stories.**

The climate crisis has devastating impacts on the realisation of human rights. It adversely affects the enjoyment of a wide range of human rights, including the rights to health, food, water and sanitation, a healthy environment, self‑determination, and development.[[1]](#footnote-1) It also has major impacts on the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Deeply ingrained, systemic and structural discrimination, including multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, such as on account of their ethnicity, age, disability or migrant status, means that women and girls are at a higher risk of experiencing harmful effects of the climate crisis.[[2]](#footnote-2) Furthermore, the climate crisis can affect realisation of sexual and reproductive health and rights in a range of ways. At a quite practical level, the climate crisis can impede **access to sexual and reproductive health services**. For example, critical infrastructure, such as clinics and roads, may be destroyed in extreme weather events, which can prevent people from accessing health services or make them unavailable.[[3]](#footnote-3) In humanitarian response work, sexual and reproductive health services are often under‑funded and under‑prioritised.[[4]](#footnote-4) Even where services are available and within reach, women, girls, and marginalised communities may be unable to access them due to existing gender‑related and other barriers that are heightened during crisis.[[5]](#footnote-5) Where sexual and reproductive health services are unavailable, maternal morbidity and mortality and other adverse health outcomes increase.

Lack of access to clean and safe water, such as in the aftermath of extreme weather events or due to increasing water scarcity as a result of climate change,[[6]](#footnote-6) can also pose a major impediment. Clean water is critical for ensuring provision of safe and quality sexual and reproductive health services, including during pregnancy and childbirth and for the administration of certain contraceptive methods. Lack of adequate sanitation facilities and water points in safe locations also increases the risk of sexual and gender‑based violence and affects management of menstrual health.[[7]](#footnote-7) In addition to this, shortage of water can result in girls’ absence from school during their periods – a result of lack of sanitation and hygiene facilities available to girls while in times of drought girls are sent to school a lot less frequently as gender norms dictate that fetching water is a woman’s duty’.

The climate crisis can have a range of harmful impacts on **maternal health**. Recent research, focused on the United States, found significant associations between air pollution and heat exposure related to climate change and risk to pregnancy outcomes, including preterm birth, low birth weight, and stillbirth.[[8]](#footnote-8) Black women were found to be at a higher risk of adverse outcomes than white women, illustrating how exposure to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination exacerbates vulnerability.[[9]](#footnote-9) Maternal health can further be affected by saline contamination of drinking water as a result of saltwater intrusion from rising sea levels. Increased salt intake can lead to a number of adverse pregnancy and maternal health outcomes, including preterm births and maternal deaths.[[10]](#footnote-10)

The climate crisis can increase the incidence of **sexual and gender‑based violence**. Risks of sexual and gender‑based violence are heightened during humanitarian crises and in times of displacement. Both can be expected to increase as a result of more severe and frequent extreme weather events and the slow onset effects of the climate crisis, such as sea level rise. **Child, early and forced marriages** are also more likely to take place in times of crisis and displacement.[[11]](#footnote-11)

The climate crisis may further pose particular risks for the rights and health of **people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics**. Due to their frequent marginalisation, sexual and gender minorities are often more severely affected by disasters associated with natural and other hazards. A neglect of their needs in disaster risk reduction policies and practices can further compound their vulnerability. Continued criminalisation of same‑sex sexual activity in various jurisdictions presents a major barrier to the needs of sexual and gender minorities being acknowledged and addressed.[[12]](#footnote-12)

1. **Please describe any specific policy, legislation, practice or strategy that your Government has undertaken, in compliance with applicable international human rights law, to promote an approach to climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as loss and damage that ensures the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of people in vulnerable situations. Please also note and identify any relevant mechanisms for ensuring accountability for these commitments including their means of implementation.**

Since this response comes from the IPPF, which is a Non-Governmental Organisation, the answer is not applicable.

1. **Please share a summary of any relevant data that captures how the adverse effects of climate change have affected people in vulnerable situations, taking into account multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination (i.e. discrimination based on a combination of mulitple grounds, including disability, gender, race, colour, sex, language, religion, nationality and migration status).**

Recent evidence[[13]](#footnote-13) shows that the interplay of different inequalities and unjust power structures informs vulnerability to climate change risks and issues with accessing comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). While research with an intersectional lens is scarce, many of the variables that impede SRHR implementation also enhance climate change vulnerability and vice versa.

People living in **poverty** are highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change and experience barriers to accessing sexual and reproductive health services: As global temperatures rise, heat waves will spread across continents primarily threatening those in poverty who cannot afford air conditioning, who have to travel further to access natural resources and care, and who may not be able to afford care. It is estimated that three out of four people living in poverty rely on agriculture and natural resources to survive, ‘and the global warming crisis is predicted to impact the agriculture sector the most by yielding fewer crops, increasing food prices, and exacerbating food insecurity*.*’[[14]](#footnote-14) Low-income communities are disproportionately affected because they lack access to social protections such as health insurance.[[15]](#footnote-15),[[16]](#footnote-16) Girls and women living in **rural areas** face similar barriers to SRHR and climate change vulnerability as those living in poverty. Not only are poverty and rurality linked, but women in rural areas are also isolated from services, lack access to transportation, and often depend on jobs that rely on agriculture and natural resources.[[17]](#footnote-17)

**Race and ethnicity** also influence access to SRHR and vulnerability to climate change. For example, Indigenous and Black women experience higher maternal mortality rates than white women,[[18]](#footnote-18),[[19]](#footnote-19) and ‘because Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) are more likely to live in poverty and in communities that lack adequate services, including informal settlements and disaster-prone areas, they are also more likely to experience the worst impacts of climate change - like living in areas with polluted air, rising sea levels, and longer droughts’[[20]](#footnote-20). Indigenous women’s livelihoods and health are further threatened by climate change, as they rely more heavily on land and natural resources to preserve their livelihoods and cultural practices.[[21]](#footnote-21),[[22]](#footnote-22)

Few reports and articles examine how specific **age** groups are affected by climate change. It is, however, well known that adolescent girls and young women face some of the greatest barriers to SRHR services and information due to issues related with privacy, confidentiality, stigma, discriminatory laws and practices, and access to financial resources.[[23]](#footnote-23) It is estimated that by 2025, climate change could prevent at least 12.5 million girls from completing their education each year.[[24]](#footnote-24) Furthermore, there is a global shortage of youth-friendly providers that offers the full range of acceptable contraceptive options.

People with diverse **sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sexual characteristics (SOGIESC)** experience barriers accessing SRH services due to discrimination. For example, a qualitative study in Southern Africa found that due to age-related and societal stigma, as well as real and perceived criminality of same-sex consensual sexual acts, adolescents who are also part of a sexual or gender minority experience ‘double marginalization’.[[25]](#footnote-25) It is therefore projected that these barriers to SRH services will be exacerbated in the aftermath of a disaster, such as a climate-related disaster.

Girls and women living with **disabilities** are at a higher risk of sexual violence, unplanned pregnancies, and STIs.[[26]](#footnote-26) They face difficulties in accessing services and are often denied the right to make decisions about their sexual and reproductive health.[[27]](#footnote-27) Climate change has a compounding effect on girls and women with disabilities, as they face stigma, discrimination and environmental barriers that limit their access to education, employment, healthcare, food security, and other essential services.[[28]](#footnote-28) In addition, people living with disabilities face difficulties accessing emergency and disaster preparedness support and have disproportionately higher rates of morbidity and mortality in emergencies.[[29]](#footnote-29)

Lack of access to SRH services is the leading cause of death for **displaced** girls and women in humanitarian settings.[[30]](#footnote-30) Evidence shows that gaps in access to practically all components of SRHR, including HIV/AIDS and other STIs, contraception, maternal and newborn health, abortion and GBV, have negative health consequences. Maternal mortality and morbidity are highest in crisis affected countries.[[31]](#footnote-31) Estimates suggest that approximately 507 women and girls die every day as a result of complications from pregnancy and childbirth in regions affected by conflict, displacement, and natural disasters[[32]](#footnote-32). It is estimated that 60 percent of preventable maternal deaths and 53 percent of preventable deaths of children under five years old occur in the 50 most fragile states, many of which are affected by conflict and natural disasters[[33]](#footnote-33)

1. **Please describe any mechanisms and tools that are in place to measure and monitor the impacts of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of people in vulnerable situations.**

There are existing human rights mechanisms and tools that can be used to measure and monitor the impacts of climate change on the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of people in vulnerable situations. However, despite their existence, these tools and mechanisms are often not adequately leveraged by governments to monitor human rights obligations. Below is an overview of the mechanisms and tools that could be relevant for monitoring impacts of climate change on human rights; this list is not exhaustive but includes the most relevant human rights accountability mechanisms that should be leveraged.

**The Universal Periodic Review (UPR):** The UPR process is a peer to peer human rights mechanism that reviews the human rights obligations of all Member States. As part of this review, the impacts of climate change on human rights and the most marginalised groups could be included. An assessment of how Member States are taking action to redress any potential human rights violations or recommendations on what further positive action could be taken to mitigate against some of the harmful impacts of climate change on the human rights of the most marginalised groups should be considered.

**Relevant Human Rights Council Resolutions**

The Human Rights Council has contributed to raising awareness of the links between human rights and climate change by successive and targeted commitments made by the Council in terms of the ways climate change affects human rights, including through the adoption of a series of resolutions related to climate change and human rights. These resolutions are agreed intergovernmentally by Member States and establish robust normative standards on the issue of climate change and human rights at the global level and inspire action and accountability at the regional and national levels. The resolutions on climate change and human rights that have been adopted by the Council can be found here:

<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/HRAndClimateChange/Pages/Resolutions.aspx>

**Conference of the Parties (COP)**

The COP is the supreme decision-making body of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, where all States that are Parties to the Convention are represented, at which they review the implementation of the Convention as well as the Paris Agreement and any other legal instruments adopted by this body. There are opportunities for the COP to advance urgently needed action on climate change, as well as accountability in terms of ensuring that action taken does not negatively impact the full and effective enjoyment of human rights of people in vulnerable situations. In the Paris Agreement’s preambular section there is a specific paragraph that underscores the following:

*Acknowledging that climate change is a common concern of humankind, Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity*

This paragraph in the legally binding Paris Agreement can be used to hold governments accountable on how they are respecting, promoting and considering their respective human rights obligations in their actions to address climate change. There are specific and concrete ways that Member States, the UNFCCC secretariat and other stakeholders can monitor this action. For example, in terms of the human rights of women, adolescents, girls, Indigenous people and other marginalised groups, by implementing the [Gender Action Plan](https://unfccc.int/topics/gender/workstreams/the-gender-action-plan) adopted by the COP in 2019.

**Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of Human Rights in the context of Climate Change**

The special procedures of the Human Rights Council are independent human rights experts with mandates to report and advise on human rights from a thematic or country-specific perspective. The newly created mandate of a Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change by the Human Rights Council is a promising step in the right direction to give climate change the systematic, focused and comprehensive attention that has long been urgently needed. Within this mandate, the Special Rapporteur will be able to bring specific recommendations and analysis related to how climate change is impacting the full and effective enjoyment of human rights in different parts of the world and/or specific thematic areas, which should at the macro level be able to encourage further action taken by Member States.

**The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change**

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the UN body responsible for assessing the science around climate change. The reports coming out of the IPCC can be a good basis for using the scientific evidence base to inform policies and practice of Member States, including on how they can take action to mitigate and adapt to climate change in a way that is not at odds with fulfilling their human rights obligations.

**Subsidiary bodies of the ECOSOC:**

Where relevant, the impacts of climate change on human rights should be considered in the work of the subsidiary bodies of the ECOSOC, such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the Commission on Population and Development (CPD). These Commissions have a changing thematic focus on a yearly basis, for example, in 2022 the CSW will be considering the following theme, ‘achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes’, and the CPD is likely to consider a similar theme in coming years. Where there is a specific thematic focus on climate issues, it is even more relevant that subsidiary bodies of the ECOSOC pay due regard to the impacts of climate change on the full realization and enjoyment of human rights. However, even where there is not a strong thematic emphasis on climate change, relevant commissions, as part of their work on development and human rights issues, should take these issues into consideration as part of their respective mandates.

1. **Please identify and share examples of good practices and challenges in the promotion, protection, and fulfilment of the human rights of people in vulnerable situations in the context of the adverse effects of climate change.**

**Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for Reproductive Health in Crisis Situations:** The Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for Reproductive Health (RH) is a set of priority activities to be implemented from the onset of a humanitarian crisis (conflict or natural disaster), and further scaled up and sustained to ensure equitable coverage and urgent care throughout protracted crisis and recovery while planning is undertaken to implement comprehensive reproductive health as soon as possible[[34]](#footnote-34). The implementation of the MISP and the cycle of disaster resilience, preparedness and emergency response will sadly only become more relevant in the decades to come, as we know that slow as well as sudden onset climate crises will increase as a result of climate change.

1. **Please include examples and good practices that highlight international and multilateral cooperation and approaches that are implemented through close consultation with and active involvement of people in vulnerable situations.**

The [Women and Gender Constituency](https://womengenderclimate.org/) (WGC) is one of the nine stakeholder groups of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), consisting currently of 33 women’s and environmental civil society organizations and a network of more than 600 individuals and feminist organizations or movements focusing on gender equality and women’s human rights to achieve climate justice. Among the WGC activities is the engagement, empowerment and training of people in vulnerable situations to participate in global policy processes such as the Conference of Parties (COP).

Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) adopted a 5-year [**Gender Action Plan**](https://unfccc.int/documents/210471) (GAP) at COP25 in December 2019. The GAP is an annex to the enhanced Lima Work Programme on Gender, which aims to advance gender balance and integrate gender considerations into the work of Member States and the secretariat in implementing the UN Climate Convention from 1992 and the Paris Agreement to achieve gender-responsive climate policy and action. According to the COP decision behind the GAP, it *‘sets out objectives and activities under five priority areas that aim to advance knowledge and understanding of gender-responsive climate action and its coherent mainstreaming in the implementation of the UNFCCC and the work of Parties, the secretariat, UN entities and all stakeholders at all levels, as well as women’s full, equal and meaningful participation in the UNFCCC process”*[[35]](#footnote-35). The **GAP** represents an institutional setup, which should incorporate close consultations and active involvement of people in vulnerable situations.

The [Generation Equality Forum](https://forum.generationequality.org/) (GEF) was a global gathering for gender equality convened by UN Women and co-hosted by the governments of Mexico and France, in partnership with youth and civil society, during the summer of 2021 to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action. Coming out of the GEF was a road map for gender equality with an aim of fulfilling the promise of the Beijing Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda, called the [Global Acceleration Plan](https://forum.generationequality.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/UNW%20-%20GAP%20Report%20-%20EN.pdf), which contains six thematic Action Coalitions, including one on Feminist Action for Climate Justice, whose aim is to mobilize and create partnerships among different stakeholders to act and make concrete investments towards achieving gender equality, empower and fulfil the rights of women and girls.

**Policy Recommendations**

This section contains recommendations on the interlinkages between SRHR and climate made by IPPF, as well as recommendations from the Women and Gender Constituency and SRHR and Climate Justice Coalition. These are general recommendations which are relevant to intergovernmental negotiations, such as COP.

1. *Apply a human rights and social-justice based approach to climate action that includes the full range of SRHR*

Fulfill ‘the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and inter‑generational equity’ as articulated in the Paris Agreement and state obligation under international law to ‘respect, protect and fulfill human rights’[[36]](#footnote-36), and recognize that these are only achieved with the realization of the full range of SRHR. Do not consider contraception as a climate change mitigation strategy or solution, and abandon the framing of pursuing population control, as it violates bodily autonomy and undermines girls’ and women’s human rights, particularly of girls and women in the Global South. Applying a social justice framework to climate action recognizes that the responsibility for reducing global greenhouse gas emissions should not be placed on people, particularly women, in low-emitting countries who contribute very little to the causes of climate change but are highly vulnerable to its effects.

1. *Commit robust and feminist financing for the climate and SRHR intersection*

Allocate the funding needed to implement holistic and integrated efforts that cut across the climate, health and gender equality sectors. **Invest in climate resilient health systems**. When health systems are resilient to climate disasters, sexual and reproductive health services are more likely to be preserved. Investments should address underlying systemic causes of vulnerabilities to the climate crisis, including for women and girls and Indigenous people.

1. *Ensure SRHR is integrated into specific UNFCCC Gender Action Plan activities*

The Gender Action Plan[[37]](#footnote-37) (GAP) provides a clear existing pathway to integrate gender perspectives into climate action. Activities under all priority areas within the GAP - including capacity-building, knowledge management, coherence, gender-responsive means of implementation, and monitoring and reporting must integrate SRHR considerations.

1. *Engage girls and women, in all their intersecting identities, and youth- and gender-focused organizations in climate processes*

Engaging those who are impacted the most by climate change in climate policy and decision-making processes ensures that their needs are recognized, prioritized, and addressed. This can be done through a range of actions from focused stakeholder consultations in NDC and NAP development processes to promoting women’s leadership on these issues at the local-, national-, and global levels.

1. *Continue raising awareness on the intersections between climate change and SRHR*

Promote collaboration between government entities working on climate change, gender, health, and SRHR so that SRHR considerations can be integrated into country-level climate policies and programs, including NDCs and NAPs. Invest in more data collection and research that shed light on the nuances of the interlinkages on these issues, with an intersectional lens. Hold spaces in global development processes such as COP, Generation Equality Forum follow-up, and other UNFCCC climate platforms to discuss and raise awareness on these issues.

1. **Please provide any additional information you believe would be useful to support climate action that promotes the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights of people in vulnerable situations.**

The following analyses and recommendations have been added as IPPF considers these points important to take into consideration when understanding the interlinkages between climate change and human rights, specifically SRHR.

**Contraception should never be a strategy for climate change mitigation**

Different stakeholders have pointed to contraception as an important intervention for climate change mitigation. The argument is that contraception will reduce fertility, which will lower population growth, which in turn will lead to decreased levels of greenhouse gas emissions. The predominant focus of such narratives – explicitly or implied – is women and girls in lower income countries, where rates of fertility are comparatively high.[[38]](#footnote-38) Governments must ensure that access to contraception is not considered a climate change mitigation strategy or a solution to environmental ills, as it violates women’s and girls’ rights and instrumentalises their bodies, and, particularly for the climate crisis, it places emphasis and responsibility for tackling crises on already marginalised population groups (women and girls in the global south) who are also most severely affected by their impacts.

Rhetoric and actions suggesting curbs on the fertility of women and girls as a solution for social and environmental ills have a long and dangerous history and still manifest today. Policies and practices driven by a desire to stem population growth have led to countless human rights violations.[[39]](#footnote-39) The International Conference on Population and Development in 1994 marked an important shift away from earlier population‑focused objectives to a broader sexual and reproductive health and rights agenda, grounded in individual human rights.[[40]](#footnote-40) The urgency of the climate crisis must not serve as justification for harmful and coercive population control narratives, policies, and practices.

Mitigation of climate change requires addressing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, particularly in high‑income countries, where per capita levels of greenhouse gas emissions far exceed those in lower income groups.[[41]](#footnote-41) Promotion of contraception as a solution for climate change instrumentalizes women’s and girls’ bodies and places emphasis and responsibility for tackling the climate crisis on those least responsible for contributing to it but most severely affected by its impacts. It is a deeply unjust and harmful distraction from countries’ responsibilities to address the structural drivers of the climate crisis.

**Recommendations for taking action on the interlinkages between climate change and SRHR**

*​​1. Recognize and support SRHR as critical to climate change adaptation and resilience*

Governments should recognize and support the whole spectrum of SRHR[[42]](#footnote-42) as critical to climate change adaptation and resilience. SRHR should be integrated into policy and implementation processes on climate change adaptation from global to local levels. Donor governments and agencies should increase their funding support for SRHR in relation to climate change adaptation.

*2. Ensure focus on human rights and gender equality in responses to the climate crisis*

Responses to the climate crisis must be grounded in human rights and seek to alleviate rather than reinforce existing inequalities. Gender equality should be a key consideration in climate processes and should be mainstreamed across all efforts to address the climate crisis.

*3. Enable meaningful civil society engagement*

Effective and responsive climate action requires the meaningful participation of civil society working with communities affected by the climate crisis in the development and implementation of policies on climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience at all levels, ranging from international to national and local processes. Particular focus should be placed on the meaningful engagement of women’s and youth groups as well as of groups working with and representative of marginalized populations.

*4. Advance mitigation of climate change*

Reflecting their disproportionate impacts and responsibility for the climate crisis, high-emission countries must take decisive action to cut their greenhouse gas emissions. High-income countries should further provide suitable levels of funding and other forms of support to low- and middle-income countries to respond and adapt to the climate crisis.

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