

US Women's Caucus at UN: Climate - Women and Health

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Summary

Climate change has been declared the single biggest health threat facing humanity and proven that women are disproportionately harmed by growing air pollution, deteriorating water quality and rampant disease. Extreme weather events are already impacting food security, forcing huge displacement of populations, exacerbating physical and mental health of women and families. x

Factor in the multiple impacts of social determinants, we are witnessing exponential deterioration of women's health, predicted to increase intensity and widespread weather disasters. The lack of gender-disaggregated health data, disguises the needs of different life stage of women; perpetuates lack of awareness and impedes desperately needed action at all levels of decision making for governments and global healthcare agencies both at global and regional level.

Fast Facts

- Women suffer disproportionate mortality, and survivors experience decreased life expectancy during climate changes and disasters, 80% people displaced by climate change are women and are 14 times more likely to suffer health consequences and die. (1)
- Women and girls, particularly poorer women face higher risk of physical, sexual, and domestic violence in the aftermath of disasters, and are a higher risk for mental health and poor economic recovery. (2)
- An estimated 45-80% of the world's smallholder farmers are women in developing countries whose livelihoods are at risk from climate-related droughts and crop failure, results in poverty and poor health outcomes. (3)
- Women are more affected by bad air quality since it directly affects fetus and maternal health. Globally, 800+ women die daily, from preventable causes related to pregnancy, 94% occurring in low and middle-income. (4) & (5)
- Poor healthcare services, and inadequate access for women contributes heavily to poor or no health care during climate changes disasters, at home and globally. (6)

Recommendations - Apply to USA and Global

Good health is a human right, a comprehensible, accessible, well-managed health care system is the main line of defense for protection of humanity. Less than 2 % of multilateral climate finance invested in health. Drastic improvement in current inequities of high costs and access to health, particularly for women, remain elusive in US and globally. (7)

A) Full participation of women at all levels of decision making is essential to guarantee the special needs of women are addressed in planning to address climate related problems in health care, in government, in public health agencies as well as hospitals and local health clinics.

- B) Prioritize gender-specific health research on threats of climate change on public health, health policy, medical services and promote awareness campaigns to educate and build capacity for women.
- C) Improve collection, collaboration, and coordination of gender-age disaggregated data to better drive informed policies and effective interventions on gender and climate change at all life stages of women
- D) Provide more funding for research to determine the political, physical, and socioeconomic reasons why women suffer disproportionately and to make strategic plans for mitigation of climate disasters.
- E) Redefine and set concrete benchmarks for expectations on standards of women's health, in every society as a key marker of development, ensuring disaster risk reduction and education for climate adaptation are used as key elements for future projects and policy.

Suggested Reading

- Climate Change and Public Health, Center for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/>
- Climate Change and Health Facts, Environmental Protection Agency <https://www.epa.gov/>
- Climate Change and Women's Health, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists <https://www.acog.org/>
- Women's Empowerment to Reducing Climate Change, EARTH Day <https://www.earthday.org/>
- How climate change disproportionately affects women's health, Carbon Brief <https://www.bing.com/search?form=MOZLBR&pc=MOZI&q=Carbon+Brief>
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change <https://www.globalchange.gov/nca5>
- America's Climate Choices, Nuclear Regulatory Comm. <https://www.nrc.gov/about-nrc.html>
- Human Health Perspectives on Climate, NIH <https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/contact-us>
- USA Facts <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health>
- Mental Health Matters, The Lancet Global Health [www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(20\)30432-0/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(20)30432-0/fulltext)

Footnotes

1. Gender and Disaster, UNDP Bureau for Prevention and Crisis: <https://ascjcapstone.com/terms/spring-2019/kegreenb/>
2. Climate Change Increases The Risk of Violence against Women UNCC: <https://unfccc.int/news/climate-change-increases-the-risk-of-violence-against-women>
3. Women in Grass Root Movement, Truth OUT <https://truthout.org/articles/women-in-grassroots-movement-respond-to-climate-change/>

4. Material Risks of Gender Based Violence in Emergency settings UNICEF
<https://www.unicef.org/media/67346/file/The-material-risks-of-gender-based-violence-in-emergency-settings-2020.pdf>
5. Maternal Health, US AID:
<https://www.usaid.gov/global-health/health-areas/maternal-and-child-health/technical-areas/maternal-health>
6. Nutrition- Womens' Extra needs. Better Health;
<https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/nutrition-womens-extra-needs>
7. BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth, Climate Disasters, Healthcare for Women, UNFPA phys.org/news/2021-09-climate-disasters-block-access-women.html