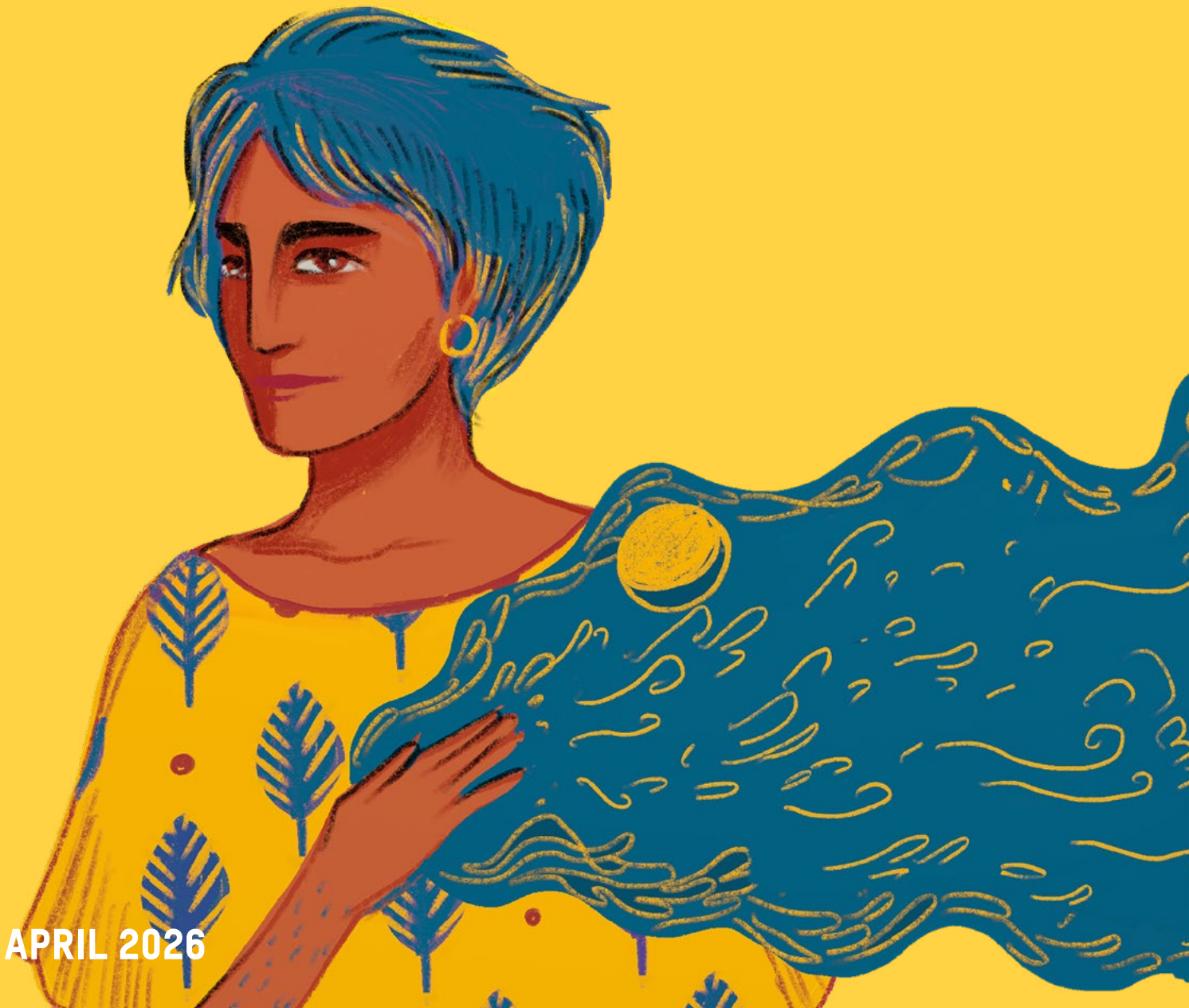


# WOMEN, PEACE, SECURITY AND CLIMATE JUSTICE:

A Learning Exchange on Gender-Transformative Solutions That Build Climate Resilience and Lasting Peace

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# INTRODUCTION

Climate change has been internationally recognised by most policymakers, advocates and the wider public as increasingly exacerbating conflict dynamics, security risks and inequalities worldwide. The convergence of the climate crisis, conflict and backlash against women’s and LGBTQIA+ rights and gender equality poses significant challenges to the effective implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda globally. This brief draws on academic and practice-oriented research and opportunities for integrating climate justice with the WPS agenda. It builds on insights from the webinar “Women, Peace, Security and Climate Justice – A Learning Exchange on Gender-Transformative Solutions That Build Climate Resilience and Lasting Peace”, which brought together civil society practitioners, researchers and advocates from Colombia, South Sudan, and Trinidad and Tobago, alongside international organisations including the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) and Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). It highlights lessons from locally led initiatives, underscoring the risks of extractivist and securitised climate responses, and points to gender-transformative pathways that can strengthen climate resilience and support lasting peace in fragile and conflict-affected settings.

## KEY ISSUES AND ANALYSIS

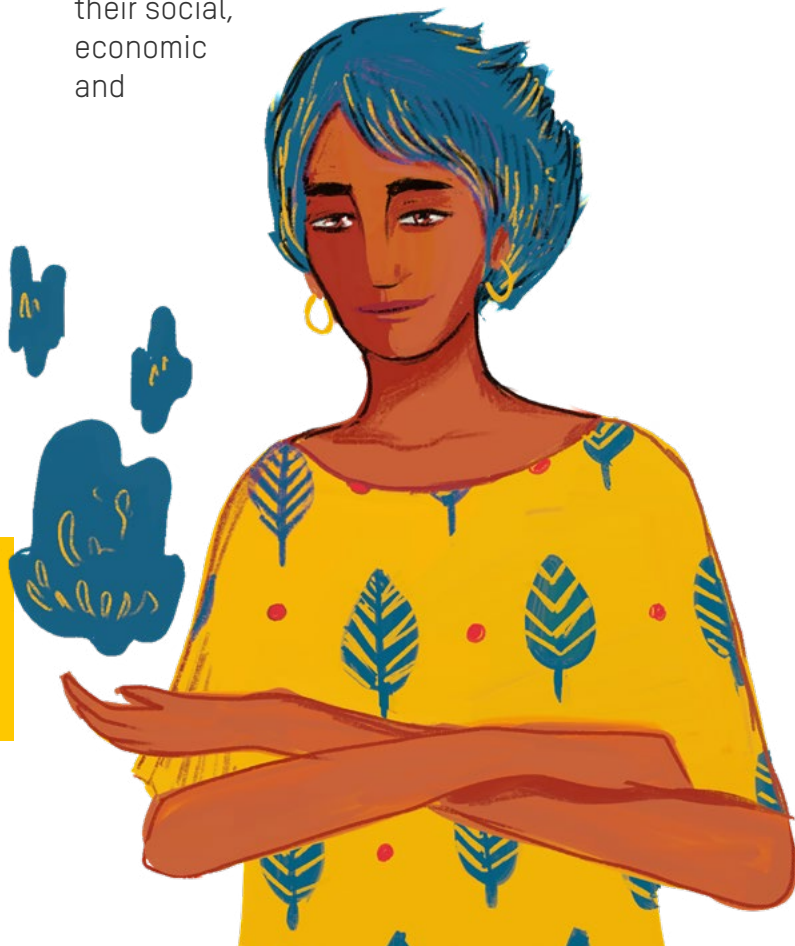
### CLIMATE CHANGE AND ARMED CONFLICT REINFORCE GENDERED INEQUALITIES AND INSECURITY.

The consequences of climate change are already acutely felt across different regions of the world, manifesting in increased frequency and intensity of climate-related shocks and stresses, such as droughts, flooding and heatwaves, impacting the resilience capacity of ecosystems. These phenomena have not only environmental but also social repercussions, including increased competition over land, water and livelihoods, heightened by pre-existing social and economic inequalities. Existing power asymmetries, exclusionary governance systems and militarisation result in disproportionate impacts on women and girls and structurally excluded communities, particularly in conflict-affected contexts, where climate shocks interact with ongoing insecurity and displacement.<sup>1</sup>

### UNDERREPRESENTATION OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN FORMAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES RELATED TO CLIMATE JUSTICE, PEACE AND SECURITY.

According to the United Nations, more than 3.3 billion people are currently classified as highly vulnerable to climate change impacts, with women and girls overrepresented among those facing

intersecting risks of poverty, displacement and violence.<sup>2</sup> SIPRI estimates that by 2050, climate change will push an additional 158 million women and girls and 142 million men and boys into poverty, reinforcing gendered economic and security inequalities.<sup>3</sup> This was confirmed by the speakers during our webinar. Experts from Columbia, South Sudan, and Trinidad and Tobago elaborated further on how climate change and conflict are often framed as 'neutral' or 'technical' crises, while their social, economic and



<sup>1</sup> See for example: *Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (2021). Gender, Climate and Security: Towards Locally Led Peacebuilding*, GPPAC, 2021

<sup>2</sup> *United Nations Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (2025). Women and Climate Security*, United Nations, 2025

<sup>3</sup> *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2025). Climate, Peace and Security Thematic Fact Sheet: Women, Peace and Security*, SIPRI, 2025, <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2025/partner-publications/climate-peace-and-security-thematic-fact-sheet-women-peace-and-security>

humanitarian consequences are in fact deeply gendered. Decision-making fora and processes related to armed conflict and climate crises are frequently framed as masculine domains, from which women are often excluded and underrepresented. Yet women bear the long-term costs through displacement, caregiving responsibilities, food insecurity and exposure to violence.<sup>4</sup>

At global climate negotiations, women's perspectives remain inconsistently reflected, reinforcing a disconnect between policy commitments and lived realities.<sup>5</sup> At COP29 in 2024, for example, women represented only 35 per cent of delegates, highlighting persistent gender gaps in climate governance spaces that are central for determining adaptation, loss and damage, and finance priorities.<sup>6</sup>

### THREATS TO HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND CLIMATE ACTIVISTS

To counter the exclusion from official and formal negotiations and policy-making spaces, women have created their own informal spaces, sometimes online and sometimes in community-based fora.<sup>7</sup> While these spaces have enabled innovative solutions and increased resilience, they also reflect systemic

failures to recognise women as legitimate political and climate-security actors.

Their observations on how extractivism, international businesses and economic interests have a destructive impact on the environment and human life – especially that of indigenous populations, women and minorities – are often shared in reports, consultations and online discussions but are rarely given sufficient attention and importance to drive significant change.<sup>8</sup> Women's rights and climate advocates have highlighted how initiatives that fail to integrate gender and climate change aspects are unsustainable and have contributed to displacement, environmental degradation, gender injustice and heightened gender-based violence, forcing local communities to choose between short-term survival and long-term environmental damage.

When speaking out about these injustices, often rooted in post-colonial power imbalances, human rights defenders and climate activists – especially those from indigenous and marginalised communities – face threats and physical violence.<sup>9</sup> "In 2021, *more than one in ten recorded killings of environmental defenders involved women, nearly two-thirds of whom were Indigenous.*"<sup>10</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Grace Durong (2025). *Root of Generation. South Sudan during webinar 27 November 2025*

<sup>5</sup> Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation (2025). *Women, Peace and Climate Security: Extending the Women, Peace and Security Agenda*, Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, 2025

<sup>6</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2025), *Climate, Peace and Security Thematic Fact Sheet: Women, Peace and Security*, SIPRI, 2025, <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2025/partner-publications/climate-peace-and-security-thematic-fact-sheet-women-peace-and-security>

<sup>7</sup> Grace Durong (2025). *Root of Generation. South Sudan during webinar 27 November 2025*

<sup>8</sup> Dulcy Maria Cotes (2025). *Advocate for Communities Affected by Climate Crisis and Coal Mining. Colombia and Venezuela. During webinar 27 November 2025*

<sup>9</sup> Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation (2025). *Women, Peace and Climate Security: Extending the Women, Peace and Security Agenda*, Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, 2025.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (2025). *Women and Climate Security*, United Nations, 2025

**GBV PREVENTION AND RESPONSE AND THE PROTECTION OF SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS (SRHR) AS CRITICAL TO ADDRESS IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

When climate crises hit communities, social injustice and inequalities tend to deepen further. This is often due to resulting displacement, health risks, sexual and gender-based violence (GBV), and other protection risks and insecurities.

A recent study by the United Nations identifies a direct link between global warming and GBV. According to the study, *“every 1°C rise in global temperature is associated with a 4.7 per cent increase in intimate partner violence (IPV). In a 2°C warming scenario, 40 million more women and girls are likely to experience IPV each year by 2090. In a 3.5°C scenario, that number more than doubles.”*<sup>11</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic and recent hurricanes in the Caribbean demonstrated how fragile health systems collapse under compounded crises, leaving women and girls exposed to violence and preventable health risks without appropriate response. Menstruation management, contraception access, post-rape care and psychosocial support are routinely deprioritised during emergencies, despite evidence that GBV increases during climate shocks, pandemics and displacement.<sup>12</sup>



<sup>11</sup> Laura Quinones (2025). *Climate crisis driving surge in gender-based violence, UN study finds*. UN News, 4 April 2025: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/04/1162461>

<sup>12</sup> Jil De Bourg (2025). *Family Planning Association, Trinidad & Tobago*. During webinar 27 November 2025

## LACK OF FUNDING FOR CLIMATE- AND GENDER-RESPONSIVE INITIATIVES, ESPECIALLY IN CONFLICT SETTINGS

Women's rights organisations have been driving climate resilient peacebuilding initiatives, through conflict-sensitive disaster preparedness, community dialogue, sustainable agriculture and community-led early warning systems. International organisations, such as the United Nations Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF) support women's rights organisations in responding to climate resilience threats. Since 2016, 61 women-led organisations supported by WPHF have implemented climate-security and resilience initiatives, directly benefiting more than 36,000 people, 70% of whom are women and girls.<sup>13</sup> Yet what sounds like a big achievement and commitment to WPS and climate justice, is in reality only a drop in the ocean given current cuts in official development assistance (ODA), gender backlash and rising militarisation. *"By providing the majority of climate finance – almost 70% in the form of loans, rich nations are unjustly indebting poor countries that have contributed the least to the climate crisis and that are often already grappling with conflict."*<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, former allies and donors have withdrawn or reduced their commitment, leaving the UN and initiatives like the WPHF without the resources needed to counter the social inequalities and violence that women and girls will increasingly face if climate change continues along its current trajectory.

Speakers repeatedly stressed that small, locally led initiatives can generate significant impact when properly supported, but short-term, project-based funding and complex donor requirements undermine the continuity, institutional resilience, and staff wellbeing of smaller local CSOs. Despite their proven effectiveness, integrated environmental and peacebuilding initiatives by women's rights and women-led organisations receive only 0.2% of global philanthropic funding for environmental action, severely limiting their capacity to scale and sustain impact.<sup>15</sup> Despite the evident urgency to invest especially in (post)-conflict countries to respond to the climate-related challenges their society faces, climate finance remains heavily skewed toward non-conflict-affected contexts. Nearly two-thirds of climate finance flows to non-conflict-affected settings, while highly conflict-affected settings like Yemen and Somalia receive minimal support. This is despite the proven devastating effects of environmental damages such as droughts on the population, armed violence and relapse to conflict.<sup>16</sup>

## DATA, EVIDENCE AND LOCALLY LED RESEARCH AS ESSENTIAL TO DEMONSTRATE THE GENDERED IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUPPORT CLIMATE JUSTICE ADVOCACY WITHIN THE WPS FRAMEWORK.

A recurring theme across the webinar was the lack of or insufficient gender-

<sup>13</sup>United Nations Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (2025). *Women and Climate Security*, United Nations, 2025

<sup>14</sup>Oxfam (2025). *Climate Finance Shadow Report 2025: Analysing Progress on Climate Finance under the Paris Agreement*, Oxfam, 2025

<sup>15</sup>United Nations Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (2025). *Women and Climate Security*, United Nations, 2025.

<sup>16</sup>Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2025). *Climate, Peace and Security Thematic Fact Sheet: Women, Peace and Security*, SIPRI, 2025, <https://www.sipri.org/publications/2025/partner-publications/climate-peace-and-security-thematic-fact-sheet-women-peace-and-security>. See also. *Dr Karen Meijer and Abeer S. Ahmad. Unveiling Challenges and Gaps in Climate Finance in Conflict Areas*. SIPRI. 2024

disaggregated, context-specific data on the impact climate change and environmental destruction has on people's lives, including loss and damage, and security risks. Without robust evidence, gendered harms remain invisible and cannot be appropriately considered and addressed through policy and financing decisions including in WPS National Action Plans (NAPs) and climate strategies.

Participants highlighted the importance of locally led research, including training grassroots organisations to collect data and document hidden economic and social costs. Such research should examine climate impacts on physical and mental health, displacement, and vulnerability to trafficking and modern slavery.<sup>17</sup> Evidence-

based advocacy can influence decision-makers, investors and policymakers to respond more effectively to the ongoing climate crisis and the social inequalities and insecurities it generates. In contexts like South Sudan where formal data systems remain weak, investing in women-led, community-based evidence generation is particularly crucial for informing climate-responsive peacebuilding and humanitarian programming.

The WPS agenda provides a 25-year-old normative and operational framework for addressing the gendered dimensions in conflict and crisis-affected settings, which has yet to fully incorporate how climate change intersects with peace and security. Moreover, at the regional



<sup>17</sup> Ritu Bhardwaj, Director of Climate Resilience Finance and Loss and Damage at the International Institute for Environment and Development during webinar 27 November 2025

and national implementation levels, climate considerations remain unevenly integrated into WPS NAPs and related policy frameworks. As of 2024, 64% of WPS NAPs reference climate change, yet most lack concrete actions, indicators or budget allocations, according to research by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security.<sup>18</sup>

Studies suggest that meaningful participation, investment in conflict prevention and protection of civil society are essential for sustainable peace. Applying this lesson to climate governance requires moving beyond symbolic inclusion towards operational

integration across peace, humanitarian and climate frameworks, particularly in preparation for COP31 and beyond. For the devastating impacts of climate change and environmental destruction to be meaningfully mitigated and slowed down, it is not sufficient to include a gender perspective in research and data collection; women must also be meaningfully included in decision-making and public debates at all levels. Integrating climate justice into the WPS agenda is therefore a strategic necessity, especially for conflict-affected countries where climate-related risks directly fuel insecurity, displacement and local conflict over land and natural resources.

<sup>18</sup> Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (2025). *Climate Change and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda*, Georgetown University, 2025

# CONCLUSION

Despite funding, reports and activist movements raising awareness and proposing solutions to respond to the global climate crisis, climate change is a structural driver of insecurity, inequality and violence that intersects directly with the core concerns of the WPS agenda. Across regions and contexts, climate-related risks and threats, and natural disasters resulting from climate change intensify existing power asymmetries, exacerbate gendered vulnerabilities and undermine social cohesion, even more so in conflict-affected settings. In these settings, women and girls are disproportionately affected by these dynamics, yet continue to be systematically excluded from the political, economic and security-related decision-making processes that shape climate responses.

At the same time, the analysis and insights shared in many recent reports<sup>19</sup>, research, and during the November 2025 webinar highlight that women are not merely victims of climate-related insecurity, but community leaders, and environmental and peace activists who are already at the forefront of climate-resilient peacebuilding, disaster preparedness, and community-based adaptation. Their work demonstrates that gender-responsive and locally led approaches can reduce conflict risks, strengthen resilience and contribute to lasting peace. However, these efforts remain severely underfunded, undervalued and insufficiently protected, particularly in contexts where extractivist practices, militarisation and shrinking civic space prevail. Women environmental defenders and climate activists have been threatened and attacked for exposing the role of extractivism and corporate interests in driving environmental and social harm.<sup>20</sup>

The findings further underline that current climate governance and financing mechanisms are not sufficiently paying attention to conflict-affected societies that have been enormously affected by climate-related challenges, such as droughts and floods. Climate finance continues to focus on stable contexts and large-scale, technocratic solutions, while conflict-affected settings – where climate impacts often further fuel violence and displacement – receive minimal support. This results in a significant gap within both the WPS agenda and the climate policy frameworks and contributes to a widening justice deficit for women and marginalised groups.

In order to comprehensively respond to the most significant security risks of our times, integrating climate justice into the WPS agenda is therefore not an optional add-on, but a strategic necessity. The WPS framework offers a normative, political and operational foundation for addressing the gendered dimensions of climate-related insecurity, provided it moves beyond symbolic references towards concrete actions, dedicated resources and accountability mechanisms. As preparations for COP31 and future climate negotiations continue, aligning climate change action with four WPS pillars (participation, prevention, protection, and relief and recovery) will be essential to ensure that responses to the climate crisis contribute to peace, justice and human security rather than further crisis and instability.

<sup>19</sup> *Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation (2025). Women, Peace and Climate Security: Extending the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, 2025*

<sup>20</sup> *Dulcy Maria Cotes, Advocate for Communities Affected by Climate Crisis and Coal Mining. Colombia and Venezuela. During webinar 27 November 2025*

*See also Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation (2025). Women, Peace and Climate Security: Extending the Women, Peace and Security Agenda, Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation, 2025*

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## **1. Treat climate change as a central security concern**

Policymakers should explicitly recognise climate change as a driver of gendered impacts of conflict and gendered insecurity within security frameworks, including the WPS agenda, and adopt rights-based, justice-oriented approaches to gender equality and climate-related issues.

## **2. Ensure meaningful participation of women in climate decision-making**

Women, particularly from conflict-affected and climate-vulnerable communities, must be meaningfully included in climate negotiations, national climate policies and security-related decision-making processes at all levels, with real influence over priorities and resources. This requires dedicated resourcing for women's participation, support for women's rights organisations and measures to remove social, economic and security-related barriers to participation.

## **3. Align WPS National Action Plans with climate policies**

Governments should systematically align WPS National Action Plans with Nationally Determined Contributions, National Adaptation Plans and disaster risk reduction strategies, including clear indicators, timelines and budget allocations. Such alignment should explicitly address climate-related security risks and gendered vulnerabilities and establish mechanisms for regular monitoring and reporting, including in conflict-affected contexts.

## **4. Scale up direct, flexible funding for women-led organisations**

Donors need to centrally prioritise and significantly increase funding and grant-based, long-term and flexible financial support for women's rights and feminist peacebuilding organisations working at the climate, gender and peace/conflict nexus, particularly in conflict and crisis-affected settings.

## **5. Acknowledge and protect the expertise and lived experience of women environmental and human rights defenders**

States and international actors should acknowledge the expertise and lived experience of women environmental defenders and climate activists and ensure that they are consulted before major investments and extractive projects with environmental and social impacts are approved. They should strengthen protection mechanisms, including legal protection, emergency support and accountability for perpetrators of threats and violence, and address structural drivers of attacks against women human rights defenders.

**6. Integrate GBV response, prevention and mitigation and SRHR into climate responses**

Climate adaptation, disaster response and humanitarian interventions must systematically integrate GBV response, prevention and mitigation, SRHR and psychosocial support, particularly during climate-related emergencies. This includes funding and implementing survivor-centred services, safe spaces and community-based protection mechanisms, and ensuring that health and protection systems remain functional under compound crises.

**7. Invest in locally led, gender-disaggregated data and research**

Governments, donors and research institutions should support locally led research that produces gender-disaggregated, context-specific data on climate impacts, loss and damage, health, displacement and security risks.

**8. Use upcoming COP processes to advance WPS-aligned climate action**

Civil society and policymakers should use COP31 and future climate negotiations to advocate for the institutionalisation of gender-responsive, peace-oriented climate action, grounded in the principles and lessons of the WPS agenda. This entails securing commitments for increased gender-responsive climate finance in fragile and conflict-affected settings, institutionalising women's meaningful participation in climate governance and embedding WPS principles in key climate decisions on adaptation, loss and damage, and just transitions.

