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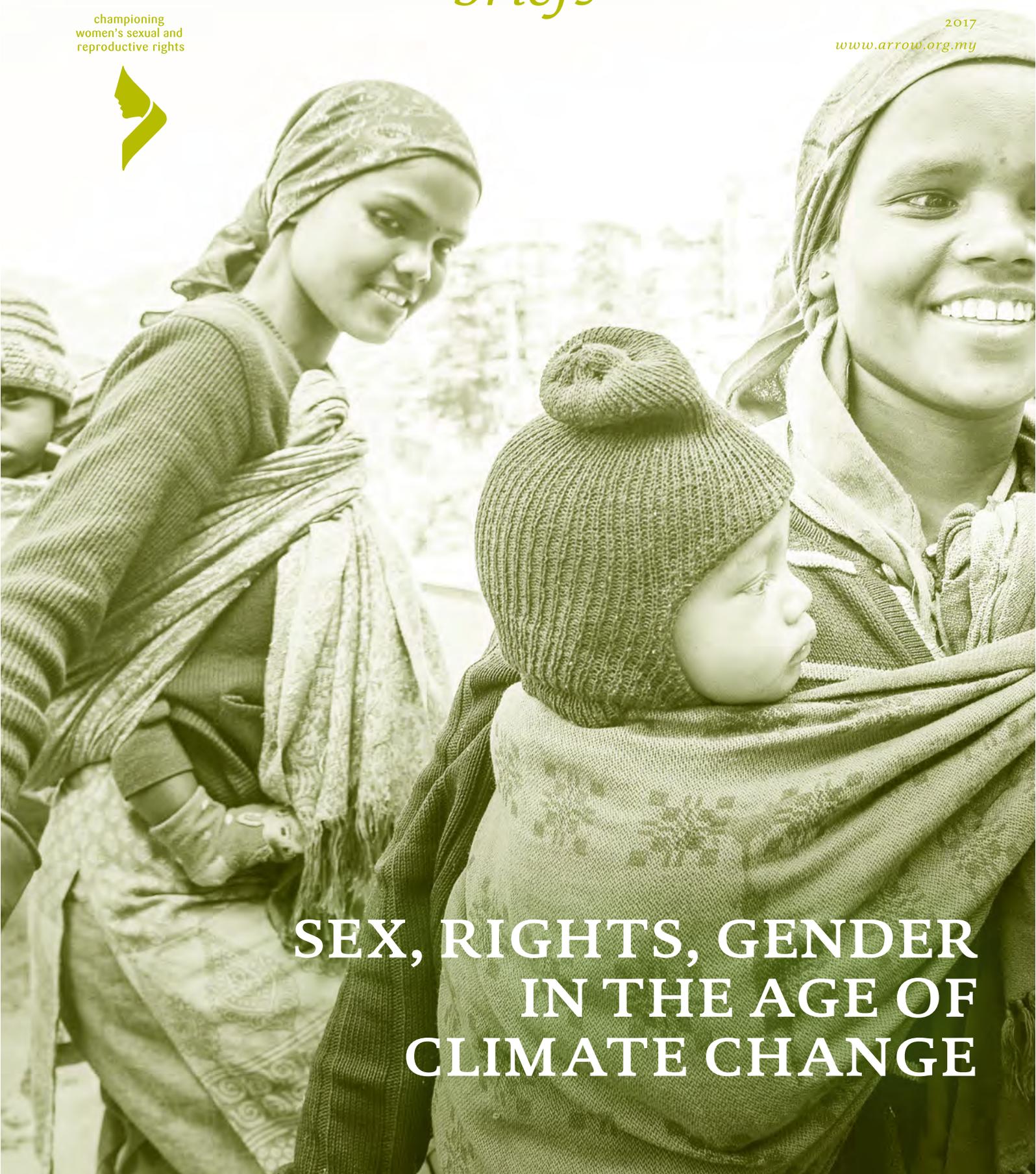
briefs

THE ASIAN-PACIFIC
RESOURCE & RESEARCH
CENTRE FOR WOMEN

championing
women's sexual and
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SEX, RIGHTS, GENDER IN THE AGE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

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CONTENTS

4	Preface
5	I. Introduction
8	II. Defining Sexual and Reproductive Rights
9	III. The Interlinkages of Climate Change and Women’s Sexual and Reproductive Rights
17	IV. International Commitments and National Laws and Policies Related to Climate Change and Women’s Rights
20	V. Conclusion and Recommendations
22	Endnotes
24	Bibliography

10	Box 1: Access to SRH Information and Services in Lao PDR and Pakistan
12	Box 2: Dropping Out of School in the Philippines
13	Box 3: Early Marriage in Bangladesh and Nepal
15	Box 4: Gendered Impact of Climate Change
16	Box 5: Gender-based Violence at Camps in Pakistan

PREFACE

The Asia-Pacific region will be adversely affected by the impact of climate change. The region has witnessed consequences of climate change in terms of increased frequency and intensity of climate induced natural disasters. Forty-five percent of the world's natural disasters have occurred in the Asia-Pacific zone in the last three decades.¹ The region is vulnerable to many types of disasters, including floods, cyclones, earthquakes, droughts, storms and tsunamis. In the past decade, on average, more than 200 million people were affected in the region, which constitutes 90% of the world total; more than 70,000 people were killed by natural disasters, which represent 65% of world total annually.² In recent history, floods affected Bangladesh, Burma/Myanmar, Cambodia, China, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. Earthquakes affected Nepal, Burma, China, Indonesia and Japan. China suffered extreme temperatures, flood and storms. The 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami affected 14 countries in the region, and left in its wake an estimated 230,000 people dead and 1.69 million people displaced. As natural disasters, some of which occur cyclically, affect the region's economies and people, it is essential to factor them in when planning for development. The greatest impact and suffering will be felt by the poorest in the region, and by women and girls even more disproportionately so.

Reproductive health has received a mention in the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in which reproductive health services are recognised as a co-benefit.³ In layman's terms, it means that reproductive health services will significantly benefit human health as well as mitigate climate change. As such, sexual and reproductive health services have been long recognised as a critical intervention strategy in climate change. This has resulted in the development, implementation and monitoring of the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) in emergency situations. However, sexual and reproductive rights are recognised to a lesser degree, and await equal and urgent attention and investment.

Sexual and reproductive rights are often missed out of the development equation.⁴ Reports from the grassroots level tell us that communities affected by climate change perpetuate existing gender norms, and highlight the occurrence of early/child marriage and gender-based violence. This shows that interventions on climate change, including climate extreme events, need to recognise and integrate sexual and reproductive rights. This will increase the agency of women and girls, and enable their autonomy and decision-making on matters pertaining to sexuality and reproduction. Hence the achievements of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on climate change are inter-linked with the achievements towards gender equality and health.

We hope that this brief will shed some light on the nuances of the interlinkages between climate change and sexual and reproductive rights. With the preliminary evidence available, it should hopefully prompt discourse on the connections between sexual and reproductive rights and climate change, as well as further advocacy on inclusion of sexual and reproductive rights in the development agenda. Cross-movement advocacy is needed to foster cohesiveness between the SDGs and the Paris Agreement, with the end objectives of leaving no one behind and building climate resilience.

ARROW appreciates and acknowledges the contributions of our eight country partners in Asia, namely Bangladesh (Khan Foundation), Indonesia (Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan), Lao PDR (University Health Sciences), Malaysia (Penita Initiative), Maldives (Huvadhoo Aid), Nepal (Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC)), Pakistan (Sindh Community Foundation) and the Philippines (PATH Foundation), who provided evidence and stories from the ground on how climate change affects women's sexual and reproductive rights.

Sivananthi Thanenthiran
Executive Director

I. INTRODUCTION

In the early 90s, climate change became a global problem for which a global response was required.⁵ This resulted in the Earth Summit, a landmark framework for seeking international agreements to protect the integrity of the global environment. An international consensus on development and environmental cooperation⁶ was reflected in the resultant Rio Declaration and Agenda 21.

However, the critical relationship between climate change and sustainable development has been little explored. Climate scientists dominated climate discussions with little or no input from other developmental disciplines.⁷ The literature on the links between climate change and sustainable development also remained sparse, unfocused and fragmented, ensuring that the development process always served as a backdrop to the evolution of climate debate. In later years, this divide between the right to environment versus the right to development would hamper the ability of governments to agree on consensus. The crucial integration of climate change and sustainable development was then emphasised in the Fifth Assessment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 2013. It was further strengthened by the inclusion of Goal 13 on climate action to combat climate change and its impact in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In recent years, the frequency and intensity of climate extreme events have escalated. It is crucial to note that climate change is not a gender-neutral phenomenon; women and girls are more vulnerable and disproportionately impacted due to existing gender inequalities that are perpetuated by social practices, structures and institutions. Poverty and gender inequality exacerbate the impact of climate change.

While there is recognition that climate change, human rights and gender equality are linked, this is not translated into policies and programmes that are gender-

sensitive, that recognise women's roles in communities, and are inclusive of women's human rights, including their sexual and reproductive rights (SRR). Evidence and research to clearly establish this linkage is much needed for a more nuanced understanding of the particular vulnerabilities and specific consequences for women and girls affected by climate change. This is imperative at a time when efforts on strengthening community resilience, mitigation and adaptation capacity to climate extreme events place women and girls at the forefront of climate action.

While there is recognition that climate change, human rights and gender equality are linked, this is not translated into policies and programmes that are gender-sensitive, that recognise women's roles in communities, and are inclusive of women's human rights, including their sexual and reproductive rights.

This regional brief examines and dissects the impact of climate change on women's and girls' SRR, including their right to have access to quality, comprehensive sexual and reproductive health (SRH). Even during climate extreme events, the SRR of women and girls deserve to be recognised, respected and fulfilled. These include the rights to: bodily integrity; choice of partner; consensual marriage; consensual sexual relations; decisions on number, timing and spacing of children; as well as freedom from coercion, discrimination and violence. We provide some recommendations on how to address and minimise adverse outcomes for women and girls with a rights-based gendered approach to addressing climate change.

Glossary of Terms

CLIMATE CHANGE

Adaptation: Actions by individuals or systems to avoid, withstand, alleviate adverse impacts, or take advantage of current and projected climate changes and impacts. Adaptation decreases vulnerability or increases resilience to impacts. It includes building the adaptive capacity of people and communities to climate change, including communicating climate change information, building awareness of potential impacts, maintaining well-being, protecting property or land, among others. Adaptation planning at the local, state, and national levels can limit the damage caused by climate change, as well as the long-term costs of responding to climate-related impacts that are expected to grow in number and intensity in the decades to come.

Climate change: The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) defines climate change as any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or as a result of human activity. Climate change results in temperature increases that is attributed to the rise of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and is causing severe instabilities in the earth's biosphere. The effects include higher global temperatures, and increase in frequency and intensity of extreme weather events and related natural disasters, as well as threatening the sustainability of ecosystems.

Climate Impacts: These are effects of extreme weather and climate events and of climate change on natural and human systems. Impacts generally refer to effects on lives, livelihoods, health, ecosystems, economies, societies, cultures, services, and infrastructure due to climate change or hazardous climate events occurring within a specific time period and the vulnerability of an exposed society or system. Impacts are also referred to as “consequences” and “outcomes.”

Extreme (weather or climate) Event: It is also referred to as ‘climate extreme’ and is defined by the IPCC as the “occurrence of a value of a weather or climate variable above (or below) a threshold value near the upper (or

lower) ends (‘tails’) of the range observed values of the variable. Some climate extremes (for example, droughts, floods) may be the result of an accumulation of weather or climate events that are, individually, not extreme themselves (though their accumulation is extreme). As well, weather or climate events, even if not extreme in a statistical sense, can still lead to extreme conditions or impacts, either by crossing a critical threshold in a social, ecological, or physical system, or by occurring simultaneously with other events. A weather system such as tropical cyclone can have an extreme impact, depending on where and when it approaches landfall, even if the specific cyclone is not extreme relative to other tropical cyclones. Conversely, not all extremes necessarily lead to serious impacts.”

Mitigation: Mitigation refers to actions to reduce or prevent GHG emissions. Mitigation efforts range from the use of new and renewable technologies, developing energy efficient technologies or changing management practices and/or consumer behaviour. Mitigation actions can take place at many levels, from costly to less expensive interventions that range from the protection of coastal areas, developing better urban infrastructure, protection of forests and ecosystems, to improving cook stove design.

Resilience: The capacity of social, economic, and environmental systems to cope with a hazardous event or trend or disturbance by responding or reorganising in ways that maintain their essential function, identity, and structure, while also maintaining the capacity for adaptation, learning, and transformation.

Vulnerability: It is defined as the propensity or predisposition to be adversely affected. Vulnerability encompasses a variety of concepts and elements including sensitivity or susceptibility to harm and limited capacity to cope and adapt. It is determined by physical, social, economic, and environmental factors or processes, which increase the susceptibility of a community to the

Glossary of Terms

impact of hazards. It is also a human condition or process resulting from physical, social, and economic factors that determine the likelihood and scale of damage from the impact of a given hazard.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Reproductive Health: Reproductive health implies that people are able to have a responsible, satisfying and safe sex life, and that they have the capacity to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so. Implicit in this are the rights of all persons to be informed of and have access to safe, effective, affordable, and acceptable methods of fertility regulation of their choice, and to appropriate health care services that will enable women to go safely through pregnancy and childbirth and provide couples with the best chance of having a healthy infant.

Sexual Health: Sexual health implies a positive approach to human sexuality. The purpose of sexual healthcare is the enhancement of life and personal relations as well as counselling and care related to reproduction and sexually transmitted diseases (adapted, UN).

Universal Access: Despite its wide acceptance as an objective of health systems, the term universal access lacks a clear definition. A commonly used definition of universal access in relation to reproductive health is that information and services are “available, accessible, and acceptable” to meet the different needs of all individuals. The limitation of this definition is the tautological inclusion of the word “access” in the definition of access, which renders it logically untenable. In its broadest sense, universal access implies the ability of those who need healthcare to obtain it. It has also been defined as “the absence of geographic, financial, organisational, socio-cultural and gender-based barriers to care.”

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II. DEFINING SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Sexual and reproductive rights (SRR) have been clearly articulated, attested and agreed to by States in various international commitments, treaties and documents, namely but not limited to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). These include norms and standards on equality and non-discrimination, freedom from violence, the right to health including sexual and reproductive health (SRH), the right to privacy, and the right to education and information. Though commitments are in place, governments often shy away from fulfilling SRR, designating these rights as ‘lesser’ rights and ‘contentious’ rights.

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action (PoA), 1994 interprets reproductive rights as encompassing:⁸

... certain human rights that are already recognised in national laws, international human rights documents and other consensus documents. These rights rest on the recognition of the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. It also includes their right to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence, as expressed in human rights documents.

A wider recognition of reproductive rights was further seen in the 1995, Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA):⁹

Reproductive health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the

absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes. Reproductive health therefore implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so.

Reproductive rights¹⁰ enable an individual to have autonomy, control and decision-making over their fertility and their body and encompass access to reproductive health services and information including contraception, maternal health and delivery services and safe abortion services. Sexual rights are even more contested and is falsely labelled by those who oppose it and “by many governments as being synonymous with the legalisation of homosexuality and same-sex marriage.”¹¹

According to the World Health Organisation’s (WHO) working definition, sexual rights “embrace human rights that are already recognised in national laws, international human rights documents and other consensus documents.” This includes the right of all persons, free of coercion, discrimination and violence, to: (i) the highest attainable standard to health in relation to sexuality, including access to SRH care services; (ii) seek, receive and impart information in relation to sexuality; (iii) sexuality education; (iv) respect for bodily integrity; (v) choice of partner; (vi) decide to be sexually active or not; (vii) consensual sexual relations; (viii) consensual marriage; (ix) decide whether or not, and when to have children; and (x) pursue a satisfying, safe and pleasurable sexual life.¹²

It is crucial for all stakeholders to acknowledge that SRR¹³ are about self-determination and have an impact on the right to life, health, security, bodily autonomy and bodily integrity. In this regard, SRR are essential to achieve the SDGs.

III. THE INTERLINKAGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND WOMEN'S SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Climate change is known to impact the health of women disproportionately.¹⁴ The impact and limitations on the SRR of women and girls is lesser explored. Evidence from ARROW partners on the ground reflect the need to emphasise on the interlinkages between climate change and women's SRR in order to respect and fulfil SRR so that cycles of inequity and inequality are not perpetuated by communities in vulnerable climate circumstances. The evidence, stories and narratives presented below are from the scoping studies developed by ARROW's partners as part of the project on climate change and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).¹⁵ Eight partners from eight countries in Asia were involved in this project, namely, Khan Foundation (Bangladesh), Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan (Indonesia), University Health Sciences (Lao PDR), Penita Initiative (Malaysia), Huvadhoo Aid (Maldives), Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC, Nepal), Sindh Community Foundation (Pakistan) and PATH Foundation (Philippines).

People living in poverty contribute least to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that trigger global warming, especially if they live in developing countries. They are also, ironically, the worst affected by climate change.¹⁶ Among the poor, women are identified as being one of the most vulnerable populations to climate extreme events.^{17,18} They have the fewest resources at their disposal to cope with drought, flood, cyclone, warmer weather, rising sea levels, and air pollution. They normally live in low-lying coastal zones and flood plains, settlements on unstable slopes or landslide prone areas, and island populations that are highly exposed to climate extreme events.^{19,20} In Bangladesh, Khan Foundation's study of 3,360 rural women from the coastal communities who are vulnerable to flood and disaster revealed that women are more vulnerable due to greater household burden and responsibilities compared to their male counterparts.²¹ For example, women upon receiving early warning of cyclone did not immediately

seek refuge at cyclone shelters but instead stayed back to manage the household and take precautionary measures to safeguard their assets and livestock first. When they finally arrived at the shelters, their SRH needs were not taken into consideration—sanitary pads and contraceptives are not included in the disaster relief packages—and SRH services were not available for women experiencing gynaecological problems and pregnancy complications. This is one example of how women's rights to SRH services are impacted during climate extreme events.

PATH Foundation's study found that women in the fishing communities understand climate change based on their experiences. They described alteration in weather patterns, the warmer climate they have been experiencing in the last 5-10 years, ocean waves becoming stronger and bigger compared to previous years, and the direction of the wind and waves becoming more unpredictable.²² Almost all the women respondents stated that climate extreme events are more frequent and intense due to climate change. They also articulated that climate change has threatened the health, food security, water shortage, livelihood and home stability of the communities. The hardship experienced have led to the community members migrating away from the coasts in search of other jobs; this includes women and puts them at risk of gender-based violence.²³

In the following part, we endeavour to describe the impact of climate change on women's SRR through analysing the stories and experiences from the ground that have emerged from our partners. Various aspects of women's SRR are affected by climate change, however, we will only focus on three aspects that emerged from our partners' study findings—access to SRH information and services as a prerequisite to attain SRR; the violation of rights due to early/child marriage; and gender-based violence. We acknowledge that these stories and

experiences only present a snapshot of these effects. Nevertheless, it also provides the needed evidence to demonstrate the importance of policies and programmes that are gender-sensitive and inclusive of women's rights, including their SRR in the climate change context.

THE RIGHT TO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH INFORMATION AND SERVICES

Reproductive rights as defined by the ICPD guarantees all couples and individuals the right to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so. Therefore, access to SRH information and services is part and parcel of reproductive rights, which needs be realised especially in settings of gross inequalities in health such as climate extreme events.

The availability of SRH services from the perspectives of the rights-based approach includes having adequate health care infrastructure (for example, hospitals, community health facilities, trained health care professionals), goods (for example, contraceptives, other medicines, equipment), basic amenities (for example, potable drinking water and sanitation) and information and services on SRH including contraception.²⁴ All these must be available in sufficient quantity and distributed equitably across geographical areas and communities. As set out above, such services must be available to all, including the marginalised and vulnerable groups who are also the groups most likely to have SRH problems unattended to.

The findings from our partners show that when faced with climate extreme events, women either do not have or lack access to SRH information and services (see Box 1). In Pakistan, Sindh Community Foundation found that local health outlets damaged by floods are given low priority for reconstruction and rehabilitation during post-disaster periods.²⁵ Although health facilities are available in government camps/shelters, SRH services and medical assistance are lacking.

Box 1: Access to SRH Information and Services in Lao PDR and Pakistan

Chanpin, a 38-year-old mother of eight from the Ahan community in Thateng, lost her ninth child because of walking long distances to collect water for her family. Lao PDR is experiencing unusually prolonged and devastating drought seasons, as a result of climate change in the country. Women like Chanpin do not have access to SRH services and yet bear the brunt of the added hardships that climate change brings due to their ascribed gender roles, which ultimately compounds the vulnerabilities they face.

Excerpt from postcard produced by ARROW and University of Health Sciences (UHS) as part of a regional partnership working together on building the interlinkages of climate change and SRHR.

Nusarat, a 28-year-old mother of six from Jacobabad, miscarried her seventh child when travelling to a post-disaster government camp. At the camp, there was a severe lack of adequate medical services and she was not able to seek help for her postpartum complications. Pakistan is battling with the consequences of climate change, which has increased the frequency and intensity of floods and cyclones in the country. Effective post-disaster management has become critically important in saving lives now more than ever. However, significant gaps still remain.

Excerpt from postcard produced by ARROW and Sindh Community Foundation as part of a regional partnership working together on building the interlinkages of climate change and SRHR.

Our partner from Pakistan also found that women in the Sindh province had more difficulty in seeking health services compared to men during displacement due to two reasons. Firstly, the unavailability of women doctors in the camps or shelters prevents the women from seeking health services, particularly SRH services. Secondly, women are not allowed to leave the temporary

shelter on their own to either access health services or to get food even within the camp compound unless they are accompanied either by their husband or male relatives. These are attributed to the cultural practice and strict male dominance in the province.

In Maldives, Huvadhoo Aid reported that health care services are not available in all islands. For women living in the outlying islands where SRH services are not available, they have to travel to another island that offers these services and has gynaecologists. However, during harsh weather conditions, sea travel is unsafe and sometimes impossible. This often results in pregnant women, with either pregnancy or delivery complications, being unable to access timely health services.²⁶

These narratives from the ground bolster the evidence that underscores that climate response, whether mitigation or adaptation projects, cannot be gender-neutral. These projects must take into consideration women's experiences, and their skills and needs in the face of climate change. In addition, the degree of vulnerability of women varies and is determined by factors such as their age, ethnicity, marital status, socio-economic status, and educational level.²⁷

Access to information and education on SRHR is instrumental in achieving SRR. The Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education in his 2010 report to the United Nations General Assembly²⁸ stresses that:

... states must ensure that they do not restrict individuals' access to appropriate services and necessary information and must remove social and regulatory barriers to information on sexual and reproductive health and health care.

Access to education even in emergency settings is an essential intervention for women and girls. On the one hand, it provides education and information in order to make decisions on sexual and reproductive health; on the other hand, it builds confidence and skills for women and girls to participate in community mechanisms and decisions. Access to education is instrumental to

shaping and challenging stereotypical gender roles and discrimination as well as ensuring the enjoyment of women's right to live free from violence. Having access to comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) within the education curriculum will also enable and empower young girls to look after their own health responsibly and respectfully. All of this is much needed in communities affected by climate extreme events.

Our partners' studies have shown that climate change has a direct impact on young girls dropping out or being taken out of schools. Partners in Nepal (WOREC) and the Philippines (PATH Foundation) reported that when climate extreme events happen often times young girls are among the first to be affected to the extent that they are forced to drop out of school (see Box 2). The increasing workload in the household and economic hardship experienced by the family would cause parents to withdraw their daughters from schools so that they could either help out at home or in the farm, or to find a job to supplement the household's income. This in turn limits their future prospects and hinders their empowerment, including learning to take care of their health and hygiene.

WOREC, PATH Foundation, and University Health Sciences (our partners in Nepal, the Philippines, and Lao PDR) also highlighted that older women respondents concluded that the root cause for women and girls not being able to take care of their health and hygiene as well as seek health care services, including SRHR, is mainly due to the lack of or low level of education. Policy-makers interviewed by PATH Foundation acknowledged that if women and girls were made aware of their SRR they can make their own choice and decision, and can access related information and services to be in better control of their SRH.

The lack or the absence of education among girls would affect their ability to participate and engage in decision-making on climate change related matters, which affects their health and well-being. This lack also prevents them from acquiring the necessary skills and capacity to negotiate their SRR in a safe manner. Our partner in

Indonesia (Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan) found that while both men and women have the capacity to be agents of change in response to climate change, gender inequalities prevalent in societal and cultural norms dictate their roles and responsibilities. This results in men and women having different life experiences when affected by climate extreme events. For instance, women are the main care givers in their family and they are also the primary providers of water, food and cooking fuel. During climate extreme events they are faced with the added burden within their households, which deters them from playing their role as agents of change to address climate change.

Box 2: Dropping Out of School in the Philippines

Gladys, a 35-year-old woman from a coastal community in Oriental Mindoro, was forced to leave school at the age of 15 to help support her 15 younger siblings. Her Catholic mother did not opt for family planning services. Even today, with her own family, Gladys struggles with the responsibility of supporting the large family she came from.

Gladys speaks out on the importance of education and availability of contraception during these difficult times brought on by climate change. Coastal communities in the Philippines are struggling with the effects of sea water warming caused by climate change. This has led to the permanent migration of fish populations and, consequently, giving rise to issues around food security. In this context, the awareness about the significance of family planning and access to family planning services have never been more important. The ability to control when and how many children to have can have significant implications on the quality of life of women.

Excerpt from postcard produced by ARROW and PATH Foundation Philippines as part of a regional partnership working together on building the interlinkages of climate change and SRHR.

The long-term negative impact of this situation on the development and empowerment of girls, which would in turn affect their health and well-being, cannot be overemphasised. It will affect their ability to acquire information, engage in better employment with better wages, choose whom to marry, determine the number of children and spacing of their pregnancy, improve their health and well-being, and improve their quality of life as well as that of their family. The World Bank found that households that invest in their children's education are more able to “cope with negative shocks such as illness or natural disaster.”²⁹ Ensuring access to education in climate change affected areas and during climate extreme events also ensures that girls stay in schools, an intervention that can be decisive in the course of their lives.

EARLY/CHILD MARRIAGE

The terms “early marriage” and “child marriage” are used interchangeably. Here, early/child marriage is defined as both formal marriage or informal union by an individual before reaching the age of 18.^{30, 31} In most cases, only one spouse is under the age of 18, and more often than not, it is the female spouse.³² Families affected by poverty, and being unable to feed and take care of their children, would marry their young daughters off “at an early age because they are seen as financial burden.”³³ As the risk of sexual violence increases upon the attainment of puberty, this is also a consideration, especially in communities where sexual violence brings dishonour to families. The practice of child marriage is common in Asia, especially in South Asia. A report by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) showed that the percentage of women aged 20-24 years who married or entered into union by the age 18 is 66% in Bangladesh and 41% in Nepal.^{34, 35}

International agreements—such as the UDHR, CEDAW, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)—consider early marriage as a violation of the girl child's rights.³⁶ Decisions on marriage are forced on the girl child or made on her behalf by her family members or guardian;³⁷ denying her sexual rights in terms of the

Box 3: Early Marriage in Bangladesh and Nepal

Twenty-one year old Sumitra from Satkhira, Bangladesh was encouraged to enter into an early marriage during a post-flood devastation period in the hope that it would safeguard her future. She got pregnant soon after her marriage but miscarried because she was unable to access proper food and adequate medical care. Abject poverty seen in Bangladesh is currently being exacerbated to an overwhelming degree by climate change related devastation, such as flooding, which has created serious concerns around food security. Climate change related disasters are forcing families to find quick solutions to their immense struggles and the unavailability of adequate medical services is adding to their burden.

Early marriage can reduce the economic burden on a family but it is often never favourable to the women and girls involved. Sumitra's story speaks for the need to increase awareness around harmful practices that limit SRH, including early marriage, so girls have healthier lives and brighter futures.

Excerpt from postcard produced by ARROW and Khan Foundation as part of a regional partnership working together on building the interlinkages of climate change and SRHR.

Kali, a 72-year old woman from Dang, a district prone to drought, was forced into marriage at the age of 14. Her experience with early marriage had brought more harm to her life than good. Kali recalls how stress, in addition to poor nutrition, affected her reproductive health causing abdominal pain and irregular menstruation. In recent years, Kali observed young girls going through similar harmful traditional practices.

She emphasises that early marriages cannot be the solution for people to escape the increasing poverty that climate change brings. Climate change related disasters in Nepal—such as frequent crop failures, untimely droughts, frequent heavy rainfall and flooding—are increasing the occurrences of harmful traditional practices, such as early and forced marriage. This is driven by the hope of families to attain economic stability during these unpredictable times.

Excerpt from postcard produced by ARROW and Women's Rehabilitation Centre as part of a regional partnership working together on building the interlinkages of climate change and SRHR.

choice of partner among other violations.³⁸ Early/child marriage robs girls of their childhood, deprives them of education and employment opportunities, imposes on them the burden of household responsibilities at a tender age, denies them the decision-making power in the family, exposes them to gender-based violence, risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV and AIDS, and increases their chances of pregnancy and childbirth complications that could result in maternal morbidities and mortality.^{39,40} Early marriage often goes hand-in-hand with early child bearing as these girls are not equipped with SRH information, or with skills to

negotiate delaying pregnancies with their partners and their extended families.⁴¹

Extreme climate events can exacerbate the phenomenon of early marriage for girls.⁴² Aggravated by poverty, early marriages occur during extreme events as a coping strategy adopted by poor families. Our partners in Bangladesh (Sindh Community Foundation) and Nepal (WOREC) found in their studies that families are practising child marriage among their young daughters as means to escape poverty brought about by climate change (see Box 3).

Climate change also induces other health-related phenomena. Climate extreme events increase the risk of undernutrition among girls. During climate change, food crop yield would be greatly affected thus leading to price hike in food. Food within the household is reduced, and in many developing countries, there is a gender bias in the allocation of food within the household. Furthermore, research found that climate change is associated with increased prevalence of anaemia, intrauterine growth retardation, and pregnancy and delivery complications among pregnant women, as well as low birth weight and perinatal mortality among newborns.⁴³ All of these contribute to poor health outcomes of girls at the community level, especially when they are married off early and find themselves pregnant.

Both countries, Bangladesh and Nepal, have a prescribed legal minimum age of marriage.⁴⁴ Despite the regulations, the prevalence of child marriage between 2008 and 2014 for Bangladesh is 18% (married by age 15) and 52% (married by age 18).⁴⁵ For Nepal, it is 10% (married by age 15) and 37% (married by age 18).⁴⁶ In fact, Bangladesh and Nepal are among the top 10 countries with highest rates of child marriage.⁴⁷ Though in recent years the practice of child marriage has decreased markedly in Bangladesh and Nepal due to the respective governments efforts,⁴⁸ however, climate change may undermine the progress made as poor families resort to desperate measures by marrying off their young daughters to lighten their financial burden.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence is defined as “violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately. It included acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty.”⁴⁹ Whereas, sexual violence is defined as “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited

to home and work.”⁵⁰ The World Disaster Report 2007 has underscored that during emergency situations—for example, natural disasters, armed conflict and other humanitarian emergencies—women’s and girls’ risk of violence increased markedly and the manifestations of violence faced by them are severe.⁵¹ The report also mentioned that there is lack of information and attention on violence against women and girls in the context of natural disasters as compared to armed conflict and displacement. Similarly, there is lack of information and attention on the linkages between climate extreme events and gender-based violence.

Studies from our partners showed that women experience different types of gender-based violence due to the various circumstances resulting from climate change. These can be categorised as gender-based violence that occurs within women’s daily routine, within male and female migration contexts, and within displacement settings.

Women faced sexual harassment or sexual violence while carrying out their daily routines such as fetching water, firewood and food as reported by our partners from Bangladesh (Khan Foundation) and Indonesia (Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan) as described in Box 4. During climate change, they are at higher risk of gender-based violence since they have to walk further and often to unfamiliar territories to accomplish their daily tasks.

Climate change also forces community members to migrate. Generally, migration happens due to the many “push factors” (conflict, poverty, land access, and ethnicity) and “pull factors” (development, livelihoods, seasonal labour, kinship, and access to health or services).⁵² As a result, countries are “slow to recognise the role of climate change as an additional push factor, and the level to which it is driving migration.”⁵³ Though male migration is more common than female migration, there are times when the only option available for women and young girls is migration in search of employment, water, food and shelter when their villages are destroyed.⁵⁴

Box 4: Gendered Impact of Climate Change

Indonesian farmers reported that since 2000 there has been climate chaos that made them unable to predict the time to sow. When monsoon arrives almost three months late, it influences drought and floods, making women's access to water more difficult. Women bear the brunt of climate change as they need to travel further distances to collect water, which increases the risks of sexual violence. Apart from that, climate change has altered the economic productivity of the farming sector and other sectors that depend on natural resources and abundant water. As such women are migrating more to the urban areas to work as maids or migrant workers abroad. In worse cases, they are being trafficked, sometimes as sex workers, which puts these women at greater risks of sexual violence.

Excerpt from: Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan. Indonesia Scoping Study. Building New Constituencies for Women's SRHR: Climate Change and SRHR. Interlinkages between Women's SRHR and Climate Change: Mainstreaming Policy in Central Java, Indonesia. 2015. http://arrow.org.my/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Climate-Change-and-SRHR-Scoping-Study_Indonesia.pdf.

In Bangladesh, salinity intrusion and drought prone areas where freshwater is in short supply puts additional stress on women who bear the responsibility to supply water to their families. Majority of the women respondents had to collect water from far distances and more than two-thirds of the respondents had to collect water even when they were pregnant. It means that the entire burden of ensuring water supply to the household falls on the women. This puts them at risk of gender-based violence as well as impairing their health.

Excerpt from postcard produced by ARROW and Women's Rehabilitation Centre as part of a regional partnership working together on building the interlinkages of climate change and SRHR.

In the context of **gender-based violence and male migration**, our partner in Nepal (WOREC) found that women suffered physical and psychological violence from the community as well as from their family and relatives when their husbands were away working in another town or country. Their study underscored that to escape food insecurity due to climate change about 80% of the male members from the sampled households went to India as seasonal migrant workers and the remaining 20% went to the Gulf countries to work.⁵⁵ Seventy percent of the women reported that they were tortured by the community and family members, in particular by other male members of the community or relatives.⁵⁶ In addition, the wives of these migrant men also experienced domestic violence from their husbands when they returned to the village. For example, when they could not make enough money through seasonal migration work these men would vent out their anger

and frustration by abusing their wives.⁵⁷ This is an example of a complex interplay between migration and the patriarchal system, and now compounded by climate change. Once again, the women in the study did not report about the violence they experienced at home as this is a sensitive issue. Instead, they accepted gender-based violence as a part of married life and thus reinforcing the practice that a husband has the right to hit or abuse his wife.

A study by the United Nations Women in 2015 in Bangladesh, among women who stayed behind while their male family members work in other towns or countries due to climate change, also has similar findings.⁵⁸ The study pointed out that the women were looked down upon by the other members of their society due to the absence of male family members, and some reported verbal abuse, harassment and assault.⁵⁹

As a result, they suffered stress that then led to mental trauma, including mental breakdown.⁶⁰ The study concluded that though the existing social norms and practices in Bangladesh lead to the discrimination of women and violation of their rights, the situation is further exacerbated by male migration resulting from climate change.⁶¹

As for **gender-based violence in female migration** contexts, studies have shown that in some cases women and young girls, especially those migrating across borders, are vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.⁶² Due to restrictive policies in countries of destination, many a time illegal or underground migration would occur and this makes women and young girls vulnerable to exploitation and abuse.⁶³ For example, they could be trafficked and forced to work either as sex workers,⁶⁴ bonded labourers, farm labourers or domestic workers. Our partner from Indonesia (Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan) has similar findings in their study and reported that these migrant women experience higher risk of sexual violence (see Box 4).

In relation to **gender-based violence in displacement settings**, our partner in Pakistan (Sindh Community Foundation) revealed that women staying in shelters or camps during climate extreme events also experienced gender-based violence such as various types of harassment and rape (see Box 5). Moreover, Khan Foundation (Bangladesh) reported in their study that one-third of the 3,360 women respondents mentioned that sexual harassment occurred at shelters or transitional/emergency housing. Out of this number, about three-quarters of them have knowledge of occasional verbal harassment and another one-fifth of sexual harassment, including forced sex and rape. According to the women, majority of the incidents were committed by strangers while only about 10% were committed by known relatives. Since sexual harassment is a culturally sensitive topic and there is stigma attached to it many of the women respondents were not comfortable discussing it. About 85% of them had not discussed this issue with anyone.

Box 5: Gender-based Violence at Camps in Pakistan

Due to the environment in camps, women, especially pregnant women, lack privacy at the shelters and in toilets. They experienced harassment and faced attempted gender-based violence in camps. However, these were not reported because of strict gender cultural norms and tribal notions of honour that prevented women from raising their voices. The women and girls experienced depression, anxiety and fear.

Excerpt from: Sindh Community Foundation. Pakistan Scoping Study. Building New Constituencies for Women's SRHR: Climate Change and SRHR. Understanding Climate Change Impact on Women's Reproductive Health: Post-Disaster Interventions in Sindh Province, Pakistan. 2015. http://arrow.org.my/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Climate-Change-and-SRHR-Scoping-Study_Pakistan.pdf.

Khan Foundation and WOREC also pointed out that the shelters or camps are mainly overcrowded and do not have rooms and toilets allocated specifically for women. WOREC reported that during the flood in Dang, a large number of women who were displaced had to sleep in a common place that led to unsafe sex, sex in unhygienic conditions leading to stress. Women also reported of abnormal vaginal discharges that could be an indication of infections.⁶⁵

Despite experiencing gender-based violence, the women suffered in silence and were afraid to report the cases as it is against their cultural norms, social taboos and tribal practices as mentioned earlier. Also, according to our partner in Indonesia (Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan), the reason female survivors are reluctant to report their cases is because it often jeopardises their position in the household, as more often than not they are economically dependent on their husbands.⁶⁶ Furthermore, a woman is not supposed to criticise her husband as this is against socio-cultural norms. Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan also

Programme implementers who are working towards increasing the resilience of communities need to consider putting in place measures and means to address gender-based violence in climate change settings.

reported that although sexual violence occurs repeatedly and continuously, not many people, including the government, understand and consider this an issue of public concern, but relegate it as a personal issue, thereby absolving their responsibility in mitigating it.

Programme implementers who are working towards increasing the resilience of communities need to consider putting in place measures and means to address gender-based violence in these settings. Programme implementers, policy-makers, enforcement officials and local authorities generally consider gender-based violence a familial matter and do not take necessary action. Women and girls themselves may not be aware of their rights and may also fear that reporting may result in repercussion from their perpetrators. Implementation of laws and awareness programmes from a gender perspective is needed to encourage reporting from women and girls, and to promote a more accountable attitude, that can result in effective action, from the enforcement authorities.

IV. INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS AND NATIONAL LAWS AND POLICIES RELATED TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS

The Human Rights Council in its 32nd Session in 2016 pointed out that:⁶⁷

...the adverse effects of climate change have a range of implications, which can increase with greater warming, both direct and indirect, for the effective enjoyment of human rights, including, inter alia, the right to life, the right to adequate food, the right to the enjoyment of highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, the right to adequate housing, the right to self-determination, the right to safe drinking water and sanitation and the right to development. . .

The Council also recognises that climate change is already threatening the lives of some populations as well as preventing these populations from the full and effective enjoyment of human rights as stipulated in the UDHR.⁶⁸ These populations comprise those most vulnerable to

climate change, particularly women and girls, regardless of their age, marital status, ethnicity and other factors.

The most significant international commitment on climate change in recent years is the Paris Agreement. The Paris Agreement mentions human rights broadly, but also specifically mentions the “rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity.”⁶⁹ The Agreement stipulates that States “should when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights.”⁷⁰ This Agreement was adopted by all Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) in Paris in December 2015.⁷¹ The Agreement entered into force on 4th November 2016.⁷² As of the writing of this brief, 168 Parties out of the 197 signatory Parties have ratified the

Agreement.⁷³ The signatory Parties are committed to reduce GHG emissions by 2020 with the conservative objective to curb global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels; and pursuing efforts to fulfil a more ambitious objective of reducing the average temperature to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.⁷⁴

The inclusion of human rights in the Paris Agreement is commended as it takes into account the CEDAW's statement on gender and climate change issued in 2009. The statement has called for all Parties in the UNFCCC to respect human rights, particularly women's human rights, in which women must be guaranteed the opportunity to participate in the decision-making on policies and programmes related to climate change.⁷⁵ This is an achievement for CEDAW as it has advocated for gender equality to be integrated into all UNFCCC agreements in line with CEDAW, the BfFA, and the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Resolution 2005/31.⁷⁶

In actuality, there is very little that is contentious with the issues that have arisen with regard to the need to recognise, respect and fulfil the sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls. The same issues have been captured in the Goals 3 and 5 of the SDGs.

The significant commitments mentioned above highlight the importance of upholding human rights, including women's human rights, in the context of climate change. SRR are fundamental aspects of women's human rights. Women and girls often experience severe infringements of their right to sexual and reproductive autonomy and self-determination in discriminatory settings caused by systemic faults like poverty and gender inequality as well as by structural barriers, which in turn is further exacerbated by climate change. Very often SRR are repeatedly neglected by States due to lack of political will

and misinterpretation of the international instruments that they signed.

In actuality, there is very little that is contentious with the issues that have arisen with regard to the need to recognise, respect and fulfil the SRR of women and girls as shown above. The same issues have also been captured in the Goals 3 and 5 of the SDGs "By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes" (SDG 3); and "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls" (SDG 5).^{77,78} Hence, analysis of achievements on climate change, gender, and health should be closely interlinked as these impact each other. To ensure progress for people on the ground, it is critical that these goals are not viewed in silos, and successful implementation of the goals calls for policy coherence, integration between different ministries and line ministries, underpinned by human rights.

NATIONAL LAWS AND POLICIES

At the national level, usually specific ministries and line ministries are charged with the responsibility of linking their work with the international commitments pertinent to them. But when we look at the interlinkages of various issues, clearly there are gaps in responses, policies and programmes as the work of ministries and line ministries is not interlinked and inter-dependent. Many governments will struggle to integrate gender and rights in the climate change work they undertake, as they lack the necessary policies and mechanisms to do so. Where these policies exist, they may not cohere. Often times the implied linkages between mechanisms (as can be gleaned from stated policies/strategies) are not completely understood by either the government agencies/departments, or the civil society organisations. For example, there is usually an absence of mechanisms that link departments in charge of climate change with departments working on gender issues. This, more often than not, results in the absence of a gender responsive approach towards addressing climate change.

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Existing laws that address the SRR issues mentioned above are in place, however gaps in implementation, especially in the aftermath of climate extreme events, remain. For example, the two countries (Nepal and the Philippines) where there is a gap of SRH information including CSE, have references to CSE in existing laws and policies.

For Nepal, the inclusion of some basic elements of the CSE (SRH and HIV, various types of violence and relationships) are found in the Population Policy and Reproductive Health (2003), National Nutrition Policy and Strategy (2004), National AIDS/STI policy (2011), National Youth Policy (2010) and Education Sector Policy on HIV/AIDS (draft, 2010).⁷⁹ Whereas, for the Philippines, the inclusion of some basic elements of the CSE (gender, SRH and HIV, sexual rights and sexual citizenship, various types of violence and relationships) are found in the Responsible Parenthood and Reproductive Health Act of 2012 (Republic Act 10345),⁸⁰ the Youth in Nation-building Act (Republic Act 8044), and the Philippines AIDS Prevention and Control Act of 1998.⁸¹ In this scenario, these commitments on CSE are not being fulfilled in the aftermath of climate extreme events.

However, when we look at the two countries which face child/early marriage—Bangladesh and Nepal—we find that implementation is weak across the board. The legal age of marriage for girls in Bangladesh is 18 years; however, personal laws hold marriages below 18 to be legal and have not set a minimum age.⁸² This causes confusion and room to uphold child marriage as

a valid marriage. In Nepal, the minimum age of marriage for girls is 20 years.⁸³ Though the two countries have national laws prescribing the minimum age of marriage for girls, its implementation is still weak and often times overruled by traditional or religious practices that promote early marriage among girls. In the context of climate change, weak implementation of the law could encourage this practice resulting in many more girls being forced into child marriages as a coping mechanism for poor families.

Likewise, for gender-based violence, there are national laws—within the household and outside the household—that criminalise gender-based violence acts such as sexual harassment, verbal abuse, assault, rape and marital rape. For Bangladesh, the Prevention of Oppression Against Women and Children Act, 2000 criminalises sexual oppression, including assault and indecent gestures, and is punishable with either fine or imprisonment between two to seven years or both.⁸⁴ Articles 285, 287 and 288 of the Indonesian Penal Code criminalises sexual violence against women and young girls in the context of outside marriage and is punishable with imprisonment between four to twelve years.⁸⁵ Indonesia also has a Law on Protection of Women and Anti Gender-Based Violence, 2009 (By-law 3/2009) that protects women and girls from gender-based violence.⁸⁶ Similarly, Nepal has the Gender Equality Act that criminalises sexual violence acts, including sexual harassment and rape, against women and girls.⁸⁷ For sexual harassment, the offender is punishable with imprisonment up to one year. Offender for rape is punishable with imprisonment between five to fifteen years.⁸⁸ The Nepali Domestic Violence (Offence and Punishment) Act, 2009, on the other hand, states that the perpetrator, whether the husband or family members, could be fined 3,000 – 25,000 rupee or six months of imprisonment or both.⁸⁹ For Pakistan, Section 509 of its Penal Code criminalises sexual harassment of women in private and public spaces.⁹⁰

Despite there being laws to protect women and girls against gender-based violence in the four countries as highlighted above, the incidences are under reported or

not reported by women and girls.⁹¹ Also, as discussed earlier, enforcement authorities have the tendency to presume that gender-based violence is either a personal or a domestic problem. If both trends continue, the incidences of gender-based violence among women and girls during climate extreme events will escalate.

From these three scenarios, we can surmise the following. One, the long arm of laws which ensure and safeguard gender equality, may not always reach poorer communities especially those areas that are vulnerable to climate change. These laws then have not been able to change gender norms and practices in those communities. Two, in areas where there are stresses caused by climate extreme events, laws and mechanisms that are usually operable are suspended, and it is emergency policies and practices that prevail. These emergency policies and practices may not adhere

fully to the needs and rights of women and girls. Three, much more work needs to be done in order to ensure existing laws and policies that uphold gender equality are integrated and mainstreamed within vulnerable communities—as this will go a long way in building community resilience.

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V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Evidence and ground realities demonstrate that women and girls' SRR—regardless of their age, ethnicity, marital status, socio-economic status, and educational level—are negatively impacted by climate change. Women's and girls' access to SRH information and services are hampered due to damaged health facilities or suspended SRH services during climate extreme events. Girls dropping out from school, whether voluntarily or involuntarily during climate extreme events, compounded the problem of them receiving information, seeking SRH services and their lack of agency to exercise decision-making on issues of sexuality and reproduction for the long-term. Climate change also exacerbated the problem of early/child marriage and gender-based violence among women and girls.

Though it is encouraging to see countries making attempts to ensure that their National Climate Change Policy, strategies, budgeting and programme, including mitigation and adaptation projects, are shifting towards

being more gender-responsive and rights-based, however, SRR usually receive no attention in these documents. Therefore, it is essential to make sure that policies, strategies and programmes, which are now moving towards being gender-responsive, take into account women's human rights and do not overlook their SRR. The following are some of our recommendations for rights and gender-based solutions in addressing the impact of climate change on women's SRR at the national and international levels:

- There needs to be increased funding for future research on how climate change impacts women's SRR as very little data and information is available in most Asian countries. Apart from quantitative data, it is also essential to collect qualitative data, such as analysis of social factors and conditions, which will add to a nuanced understanding of the impact of climate change on women's SRR.

- There is an urgent need to commence the climate change and SRHR discourse at international, national and sub-national (provincial and district) levels because currently the SRHR discourse is absent in climate change discussions. The discourse would provide opportunity for SRR advocates to push for inclusion of these rights in national policies, strategies, budgeting and programmes.
- There is a need to generate awareness among women of their rights. With increased awareness, their capacity will be strengthened to start advocating for their rights within circles of their family, community, and nation. There also needs to be a nuanced understanding on how climate change poses barriers to exercising those rights. This will also facilitate formal and informal leadership and participation of women or women's groups at all levels to help their women constituents address their needs and issues, including exercising their SRR, especially during climate extreme events, to build resilience.
- There is a need to strengthen the sensitisation and implementation of gender-equality principles during climate extreme events among the local and central government agencies, as well as policy-makers. It is hoped that this will increase the accountability of government agencies and policy-makers to promote, develop, and implement gender sensitive strategies, programmes, budgeting, and activities that take into account women's rights, including their SRR.
- There is a dire need to strengthen SRH information and service provision, coordination and collaboration between the government, UN agencies, donors, and international and local NGOs during and after climate extreme events. Healthcare providers should be gender-sensitised so that women survivors feel comfortable in seeking health services. Menstrual hygiene supplies should be included as part of the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) that is distributed to women survivors. Also, governments need to ensure the availability of portable medical equipment, supply of medicines, and that health facilities are able to withstand disasters and remain functional and operational to provide health care services for women, including SRH services. Vehicles used for referral of complications should be functional at all times. In the case of inaccessibility, options must be planned in advance to facilitate accessibility to health services through an efficient service delivery network.
- There is a need to institute policies to prevent girls from dropping out of school during climate extreme events and to continue to provide schooling for girls during displacement using, for example, the education in emergencies programme developed by the UNICEF. The State, including the Ministry of Education, should promote free education, including comprehensive sexuality education, for girls. The ministry should work closely with local governments to ensure that parents are sensitised on the importance of education for girls, as well as families affected by climate change are provided financial assistance during extreme climate events and disasters so that they do not withdraw their daughters from school to help in the family or force them into early marriage.
- States need to strengthen the implementation of national laws that are available to curb early/child marriage and to eradicate gender-based violence. However, both the reporting of incidences and the enforcement of these laws are weak. Enforcement authorities must recognise and respect the rights of women and girls, and make every effort to protect their rights.

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ARROW is a regional non-profit women's NGO based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and has consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Since it was established in 1993, it has been working to advance women's health, affirmative sexuality and rights, and to empower women through information and knowledge, engagement, advocacy, and mobilisation.

ARROW envisions an equal, just and equitable world, where every woman enjoys her full sexual and reproductive rights. ARROW promotes and defends women's rights and needs, particularly in the areas of health and sexuality, and to reaffirm their agency to claim these rights.

This publication is a three-part series publication on climate change and women, namely (i) climate change and women's health, (ii) climate change and women's sexual and reproductive rights, and (iii) women in the face of disasters. This publication is produced as part of ARROW's project on "Building New Constituencies for Women's Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR): Working with Rights-based Climate Change/Environment Groups and Faith-based Groups to Build Momentum for SRHR in the Lead-Up to the New Development Framework." One of the objectives of the project is to generate evidence for interlinkages in climate change and SRHR issues/solutions in the Asian region beyond the current discourse of population dynamics and to identify areas of policy and programme interventions in climate change adaptation and advocacy work specifically related to improving women's health, including SRHR. Eight partners from eight countries in Asia were involved in this project, namely, Khan Foundation (Bangladesh), Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan (Indonesia), University Health Sciences (Lao PDR), Penita Initiative (Malaysia), Huvadhoo Aid (Maldives), Women's Rehabilitation Centre (WOREC) (Nepal), Sindh Community Foundation (Pakistan), and PATH Foundation (Philippines).

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