



**UNANIMA International, COP28 Official Side Event –
Statement on the Gendered Impacts of Climate Displacement
by Liana Almony, Assistant Representative to the UN**

We've talked a lot today about integral ecology, emphasizing the relationship between ecological and social issues and advocating for a holistic vision of sustainability. We've discussed the need to shrink our carbon footprint while leaving no one behind, and the importance of confronting the needs of vulnerable communities as we transition from fossil fuels to accessible and renewable clean energy for all. And we know that women and girls are overrepresented among these vulnerable communities most impacted by climate change.

I'm now going to weave all these threads together and illustrate the interconnection of these issues through a more narrow focus - the gendered impacts of climate displacement. By focusing on the experiences, perspectives, and expertise of women and girls displaced by climate change and extreme weather events, it becomes clear how intersecting environmental, economic, and cultural factors underlie both the challenges and solutions to climate change.

UN Environment estimated in 2022 that 80% of people displaced by climate change are women. This is largely because women face conditions of marginalization and exclusion before disasters and displacement even occur, leading to a lack of representation, agency, power, and independence. This results in lowered resilience and adaptation capacity for women and girls in the face of climate induced crises.

UNANIMA International's advocacy work and research on Family Homelessness has taken us all over the world, where testimonies shared with us from the grassroots illustrate the ways in which climate change has disproportionately exacerbated the displacement and homelessness of women and girls globally. One woman from Kenya, who I'll call Mary, shared with us her experience with drought and unproductive soil after years of arid conditions, which resulted in famine, loss of livelihood, and scarcity fueled conflict. These circumstances were compounded by the unequal access of women to land and assets in her community, and Mary was eventually forced to walk over 250 kilometers to the nearest city in search of refuge and opportunities to provide for her family. After her treacherous journey, however, systemic and ideological gender barriers only pushed her further into the vicious cycle of extreme poverty. This led to her living on the street and later surrendering some of her children to a local orphanage. Her story exemplifies the gendered impacts of climate change and the risk multiplication that happens to vulnerable people already living on the margins of society.

In telling this story, I want to recognize that there are many different contexts in which women and girls are displaced by climate change - whether it's women like Mary where their dependence on agriculture and unequal expectations to provide for their families lead to their

displacement; whether it's indigenous women displaced from their homes on Pacific Island nations due to rising sea levels, with no choice but to flee their ancestral land; or whether it's women already displaced by conflict who are then displaced again by floods and fires that wreak havoc on their refugee camps. In each of these contexts, women experience compounding risks linked to their gender and exacerbated by their displacement.

So not only are women and girls vulnerable **to** climate-displacement, they are also vulnerable **in** climate-displacement. Displaced people often reside in substandard shelters which are among the first to be hit when disasters strike, and which lack the infrastructure to adequately cope with the consequences. Entrenched gender inequalities decrease displaced women's access to resources, and increase their additional risk for poor health, gender violence, and human trafficking. Furthermore, the lack of gender-responsive services including reproductive health care, social protection, and avenues for legal recourse can leave women and girls even more vulnerable and unable to access life-saving assistance during their displacement.

The multifaceted and diverse challenges that women and girls face around the world as a result of climate displacement points to the need for gender-responsive policymaking and the empowerment of women with lived experience to be agents of change. Climate change mitigation, disaster reduction, and adaptation policies cannot be holistically developed or implemented without the inclusion of women who understand the unique and compounding vulnerabilities which cause and worsen climate displacement.

Adaptation to the consequences of climate change requires strengthening the resilience of people in the human mobility context. This is why we need to work with frontline communities, those who understand the specific realities of women displaced by climate change because they've lived it, so we can meet people where they are and provide informed support. Women and girls are the creators of their own resilience, they just need the space and support to do so.

On that note, I want to talk about financing for a moment, which as we all know is a hot topic of this COP28. Existing climate funds rarely and insufficiently provide direct support to individuals. The Loss and Damage Fund needs to be operationalized in such a way that it reaches the people who need the funds most, especially women and girls. Women lack access to finance both before and after they are displaced, and this keeps them from supporting themselves and supporting their communities. We need to provide financial instruments and opportunities which are gender responsive, and which uplift women and girls in the face of climate challenges like displacement. Women have the ingenuity and ideas to mitigate and adapt to climate change, they just need the tools to push those solutions forward. When we invest in women we invest in human capital, and this has many benefits for society as a whole.

Ultimately we need a paradigm shift, not just through the power of presence, but also in how we view women in migration and displaced populations more broadly. Human mobility itself becomes an adaptation strategy when we recognize the tremendous benefits that come when people migrate, and when we create systems where displaced women are empowered to reach their potential, actively participate in their new communities, and be a part of the climate solution. We should build opportunities between countries and regions across the globe so we can collectively benefit from the insight and innovation from those who typically get left behind.

Ensuring that the needs, concerns, and unique realities of women and girls are adequately addressed is crucial for improved climate governance outcomes at every level, as the goals of sustainable development and gender equality are intrinsically linked. However, we shouldn't just include women because it makes economic, political, or strategic sense. It is women's fundamental right to be involved in these spaces, to live a dignified life and have a seat at the table, beyond tokenism and regardless of any other justifications.

Over the last few days at COP, and especially during gender day yesterday, I've attended many events that reflected on the nexus of climate and gender, and called for the inclusion of women in the design, decision-making, and implementation of climate action. This has been a topic of conversation at many previous COPs as well, but women remain underrepresented in the COP negotiation rooms and in the rooms where global policy decisions are made more broadly. It's time to actualize our commitments. Empowering women has to be more than just words, and only by doing so can we influence and accelerate sustainable climate action and lasting environmental justice. As a global community, it's time to listen, time to act, and time to center those most impacted by climate change in the decision-making at COP28 and beyond. Thank you.