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Climate Displacement

The UN estimates 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. 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.

UNANIMA International's advocacy work and research on Global 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. This gendered vulnerability to climate-induced displacement is evidenced and affirmed by women's unequal access to education, employment, healthcare, housing, and land.

Women make-up the majority of the world's poor and are highly dependent on local natural resources for their livelihood. Girls' access to education is often interrupted by climate change impacts. For example, girls are often forced to drop out of school to help support their families through domestic or informal work as a coping mechanism following a loss of livelihood. As many women work in the informal sector through care, domestic, and agricultural work, they lack access to any legal or social protection, and their economic activity is not counted in climate change impacts or assessments of loss and damage.

Women are often refused access to land and assets ownership after a disaster hits, leading to high numbers of women ending up in informal settlements as a result of climate shocks. The lack of access to safe sanitation and the risk of gender-based violence in informal settlements has

detrimental impacts on displaced women's mental and physical health. Thus, in the face of climate change, systemic and socio-cultural inequities decrease women's access to information, resources, and support, and increase their additional risk for poor health, gender violence, human trafficking, homelessness and displacement.

There are many different contexts in which women and girls are displaced by climate change—whether it's rural women whose dependence on agriculture and unequal expectations to provide for their families lead to their displacement; 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 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.

Not only are women and girls vulnerable to climate-displacement, but 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.