

FEMINIST MOVEMENTS AND CLIMATE JUSTICE IN MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA



ABOUT THE KVINNA TILL KVINNA FOUNDATION

The Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation has defended women's rights since 1993. For every woman's right to be safe and to be heard. Today we are one of the world's leading women's rights organisations, working directly in areas affected by war and conflict to strengthen women's influence and power. We work closely together with over 100 local partner organisations across 20 countries to end violence against women, reach lasting peace and close the gender gap once and for all. The future is equal. And together, we are change.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations:

COP	Conference of the Parties
CSOs	Civil society organizations
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GGND	Feminist and Decolonial Global Green New Deal
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
PACJA	Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
UNFCCC	The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WEDO	Women's Environment and Development Organization
WPS	Women, Peace and Security Agenda
WROs	Women's Rights Organizations
WWG-FFD	Women's Working Group on Financing for Development

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CONCEPTS AND TERMINOLOGIES

Adaptation: is an adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities.”¹

Capitalism: is an economic system based on the private ownership of the means of production and their operation for profit.

Climate Change: is change of climate “attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.”²

Climate Justice: is a vision to dissolve and alleviate the unequal burdens created by climate change. As a form of environmental justice, climate justice is the fair treatment of all people, and freedom from discrimination with the creation of policies, and projects that address climate change. For example, climate justice recognizes that among those hardest hit by climate change are women– particularly rural and Indigenous women–and therefore seeks to rectify the gender inequities which are further perpetuated by climate change effects, policies, and programs.

Eco-feminism: is a feminist theory and movement that focuses on the relationship between feminism and environmental issues, the intersections of their goals, and the similarities in the forms of patriarchal and capitalist’s oppression of women, nature, and animals. French feminist Françoise Dupont first used the term in 1974.³

Global North and Global South: is a socio-economic and political divide that also roughly, but not solely, corresponds to wealthier northern nations and economically poorer southern countries.

Mitigation: is an anthropogenic intervention to reduce the sources or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases.⁴

Neoliberalism: is a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade.⁵ Neoliberal policy tends to emphasize deregulation, corporatization, and the pursuit of profit combined with an individual responsibility approach to social services.

1. IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change). (2001). Climate change 2001: The scientific basis. Contributions of Working Group 1 to the Third Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

2. United Nations. (1992). United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkpconveng.pdf>.

3. Wiki Gender. (8 June 2020) Eco Femini. النسوية البيئية. https://genderiyya.xyz/wiki/%D9%86%D8%B3%D9%88%D9%8A%D8%A9_%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A6%D9%8A%D8%A9

4. IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change). (2001). Climate change 2001: The scientific basis. Contributions of Working Group 1 to the Third Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

5. Harvey, D. (2005). A brief history of neoliberalism. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Feminist and women's rights movements are amongst the oldest, most developed, and well-organized movements in the MENA region. They have been accredited for social change and the promotion of gender justice despite enormous challenges. However, in a region that is characterized by inequality and hard-hit by climate change, disproportionately affecting vulnerable groups including women and girls, it is remarkable that demands for climate justice are not yet central to the current feminist priorities in MENA, where scattered efforts have yet to develop into feminist climate justice movements.

This study seeks to provide learning around supporting feminist climate justice movements' building in MENA region. Drawing on data from 22 in-depth interviews with feminist activists, women environmental activists, and international organizations; a survey to which 140 feminist and women's rights activists from across the region contributed; and a research findings' validation workshop, we attempt to respond to the following questions:

What are the intersections between climate change and gender justice in MENA? What are the regional climate change activism trends shaping feminist movements' agenda? What is the current interest in the feminism-climate nexus among activists and organizations? What are the identified challenges, needs and gaps? And how can international organizations and donors better support the growth and strengthening of feminist climate justice movements in MENA?

Despite the weak engagement with climate change agenda, which remains an under discussed and largely unrecognized issue, insights gathered for this study attest to a growing interest of feminist actors and organizations in the feminist-climate justice nexus. This rising interest is two-folded: one part having to do with a mounting sense of peril from climate change impact and the debates around post-COVID 19 recovery that centered climate justice; the other with a new sense of promise, with the rise of global eco-feminist movements and the recent momentum created by the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66) which took place in March 2022 and which for the first time prioritized as its key theme the interlinkages between gender equality and climate change.

With the CSW66 and the two Conferences of Parties (COP) under the UNFCCC taking place in November 2022 in Egypt and in November 23 in United Arab Emirates, there is an opportunity to galvanize feminist climate MENA regional momentum and make feminist climate activism in the region more organized and geared towards movements' building. In fact, 62.5% of our survey respondents indicated that climate change should become a priority issue on the agenda of feminist movements in the MENA region and 50% agreed that climate change is indeed a feminist issue.

A closer investigation of the movements' needs, and gaps showed the following:

- Many feminist actors and organizations highlighted lack of capacity and know-how and grappled with what engaging in the intersection of climate and gender agenda actually means and how to put it into practice.
- Many indicated that they lack the technical capacity to engage in climate negotiations and policy development on national and international levels and they lack the resources to put the nexus into practice, including in their advocacy.
- Many referred to the gender and climate nexus as a "new" and "under-theorized" issue which translates into a lack of theorizing on the connections between climate justice and gender justice; underlining the need to support more efforts to document and analyze past and ongoing struggles led by women and their communities from an eco-feminist perspective.
- Many highlighted the tendency of the feminists and climate movements to work in silos; and the need to challenge this compartmentalization has been highlighted as yet another challenge to overcome.

The study found that there are overlapping contextual and structural challenges that hinder feminist climate justice movements building in the region:

- There are competing priorities for the feminist movements in MENA, which makes prioritizing the issue of climate change appears to be a “luxury” for many. Contexts that are witnessing protracted crisis, armed conflicts and occupation also serve to further deprioritize already deprioritized issues of gender and climate justice.
- Shrinking civic space and the risks associated with feminist climate activism is weighing down on the feminists and other civil society actors’ ability to organize and meaningfully engage in the climate justice agenda.
- Lack of national climate democratic processes and the under-representation of women at all levels of climate change decision making and policy making bodies, including at the national level, where gender justice remains a largely “decorative” consideration in adaptation policies.
- Lack of funding to the nexus. There are rarely any funds that go to feminist movements building in MENA and less so for feminist climate movements. Moreover, funding is often siloed and is rarely directed towards movements at the intersection of gender-climate justice nexus. Research participants from across the MENA noted that there is an urgency to “invest in movement building” and reach out to “unconventional” and young feminist groups.

Drawing on research participants’ expressed desire and willingness to engage with the feminist-climate nexus, we identified key priorities and ways forward for international and donor organizations to support the movements.

1. Strengthening individual and organizational capacities:

- a. Increasing access to a combination of flexible long-term and short-term funding that support the development of climate and gender transformative projects with local communities.
- b. Building capacities of community led feminist initiatives to apply for new modalities of international climate funding.
- c. Extending funding to young feminist informal grassroots groups and networks, by removing earmarked funding, easing up on requirements, and allowing these groups and networks to utilize funds to support their own initiatives on the feminist-climate nexus.
- d. Building the technical capacity on gender-sensitive climate financing; the integration of SDGs into climate national and local policies; and in the domain of review of NDCs which allows building a more gender-responsive approach to climate mitigation and adaptation.
- e. Bolster the capacity on the collection, synthesis and dissemination of knowledge and data at the intersection of gender equality and environment, in response to the considerable gap in accurate, disaggregated, and detailed data and evidence about climate change impact on vulnerable communities, including women in their diversity.
- f. Supporting young feminist activists and women researchers to undertake participatory action researchers to document lived experiences of climate change and as a movement building strategy.

2. Increasing movements’ abilities to influence decision-making and policies:

- a. Pressuring governments to remove barriers to civic engagement, to enable women’s rights and feminist activists’ access and influence over decision making processes at all levels.
- b. Supporting feminist actors to be visible and meaningfully engaged in climate (adaptation/mitigation) decision-making, policy making, implementation and monitoring processes at the local, national, regional and international levels.
- c. Making sure that the voice and priorities of the frontline women, and most vulnerable communities are heard and reflected at all levels of decision-making processes by pursuing their inclusion in advocacy groups and networks.
- d. Building technical capacities of women rights and feminist activists around climate governance and the decision-making process at the national and international levels to support their meaningful participation in climate action and debate at all levels.
- e. Supporting networking and the introduction of feminist actors from MENA to regional and global feminist advocacy organizations and networks to increase voice and influence.

3- Supporting collective action and strong alliances:

- a. Creating inclusive and safe spaces for debate and dialogue amongst feminist organizations and activists with the aim to foster collective visions to what feminist climate justice alternatives mean for the region; to be able to set common political agenda, priorities, and align strategies; to learn from peer experiences, build relationships, and coordinate linkages among feminist activists, organizations and networks.
- b. Creating spaces for learning and engaging with other feminist movements across geographies, especially from the global south which face similar climate risks and similar economic, political, social and ecological challenges.
- c. Creating inclusive spaces for debate across movements with intersecting priorities, particularly concerning organizations working on environmental, gender and social justice.

INTRODUCTION

It is nothing new for women to be disproportionately experiencing the effects of climate change: precisely because their basic rights continue to be denied in different ways and to different degrees, particularly in the Global South⁶. We know that gender inequality makes women more vulnerable to growing inequalities including environmental tensions, and to climate situations that present multiple hazards, above all for the poorest women.

However, there's nothing "natural" about the ongoing climate crisis. Indigenous, peasant and rural women, along with the majority of women in the Global South, who bear an even greater climate change burden, have been among the first to highlight that climate change is "human made" and is primarily and univocally due to the historic and ongoing impacts of colonialism, patriarchy and devastating capitalist depredation; Women above all, are more dependent upon natural resources for their survival. Drought, flooding and extreme and unpredictable climate patterns present life and death challenges for many women because of prevailing patriarchal gender roles and responsibilities, harmful social norms, unequal access and control over resources, and exclusion from decision-making spaces at the household and public levels.

And yet, it is women who are increasingly the ones facing up to climate change on a daily basis; leading the resistance and building alternatives.

From the indigenous women struggles in Canada, Peru and Brazil against the harmful impacts of extractive companies, to women farmers' struggles in Congo, Morocco, Palestine and India for land rights, to name only few; women and their global feminists' movements are shaping the global discourses on climate change, building the ideological connections between exploitation of nature and women's exploitation; arguing that the patriarchal system of extractivist capitalism and climate change cannot be seen in isolation.

These movements are leading global efforts to pressure governments to live up to their commitments to cut greenhouse gas emissions; and are demonstrating every day that there are feminist alternatives to patriarchal-extractivist-capitalist systems, based on climate justice.

In that sense, a feminist climate justice framework means addressing the climate crisis not merely as an environmental problem but as a complex social justice problem, placing at the center the planet and the populations that are particularly vulnerable to its impacts⁷ including future generations. It also means tackling the root causes of the climate crisis, including unsustainable production, aggressive extractive industries- at the top of which lies the fossil fuel industry- consumption and trade, while making progress towards equity and the protection and realization of human rights and sustainability of resources.

Yet, despite the fact that women of the global South, including the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region face the extreme impacts of climate change, the latter has not yet made it fully to the political agenda of feminist and women's rights organizations in the region.

Given the instrumental role of feminist movements in bringing about sustainable, gender transformative, people centered, rights' based solutions for climate agenda, this paper explores potential avenues for making climate justice more central to the existing feminist movements in MENA. It attempts to respond to the following questions:

6. Santisteban, R. S. (Ed.). (2020). (publication). *INDIGENOUS WOMEN & CLIMATE CHANGE*. IWGIA. Retrieved September 9, 2022, from https://www.iwgia.org/images/publications/new-publications/Indigenous_Women_and_Climate_Change_IWGIA.pdf

7. Williams, L., Fletcher, A., Hanson, C., Neapole, J., & Pollack, M. (2018). (rep.). *Women and Climate Change Impacts and Action in Canada Feminist, Indigenous, and Intersectional Perspectives*. CRIAW. Retrieved September 9, 2022, from https://www.criaw-icref.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Women-and-Climate-Change_FINAL.pdf

1. What are the intersections between climate change and gender justice in MENA?
2. What are the regional climate change activism trends shaping feminist movements' agenda?
3. What is the current interest in the feminism-climate nexus among activists and organizations?
4. What are the identified challenges, needs and gaps?
5. And how can international organizations and donors better support the growth and strengthening of feminist climate justice movements in MENA?

METHODOLOGY

We refer to feminism as any personal, professional, or political intervention which aims to challenge gender inequalities. As Cathy Moughalian and Zeina Ammar explain: "A feminist is anyone or any formal or informal organization who may or may not identify as such, but whose work, vision, and values fall under this umbrella."

⁸ We also refer to feminist movements in plural because there's no one Movement that encompasses all feminist political tendencies in the MENA region. We understand feminist movements as organizations, leaders, and networks working together to challenge and change power structures that reinforce gender inequality. They are almost always led by people with lived experience of the gender power imbalance and often other injustices as well.

To answer the research questions and in an attempt to reach as many feminist and women's rights actors from the region as possible, alongside the secondary data collection, we used a mixed methodology for primary data collection. Over a period of one month (mid July to mid August) we undertook a total of 22 in-depth interviews and an online survey to which 140 women's rights and feminist activists from the MENA responded. The interviews we conducted were with 5 women climate and environmental activists, 15 feminist and women's rights activists (representing individual activists, local organizations and regional networks and organizations in MENA) and 2 international organizations working in the region. Participants were diverse in age, years of experience within the feminist and climate movements, type of involvement (employees, members of networks, independent activists and researchers) and nationality. The geographical distribution of the interviewees was as follows:



With the consent of the interviewees, interviews were recorded, transcribed, and anonymized, and recordings were deleted after transcription. The initial findings of the report were presented and discussed further in a validation session organized by Kvinna till Kvinna and Oxfam. Feedback and emerging insights from the session were then integrated into the findings of the report. Given the time constraints and the limited MENA region specific literature on the gender-climate nexus, priority was given to data extracted from the interviews and survey. The piece is therefore grounded in those experiences and perceptions.

8. Moughalian, C., & Ammar, Z. (2019). (rep.). *Feminist Movement Building in Lebanon: Challenges and opportunities*. RootsLab. Retrieved September 9, 2022, from <https://policy-practice.oxfam.org/resources/feminist-movement-building-in-lebanon-challenges-and-opportunities-620850/>

CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE MENA REGION

This first section explores the dominant trends in climate change in the MENA region and how they manifest in meteorological phenomena. Furthermore, it details the impacts of climate change that are experienced in a gendered way, aggravating already existing vulnerabilities and gender-based discrimination. This section also summarizes how policies in the MENA are dealing with climate crises and its social ramifications.



CLIMATE CHANGE IN FULL THROTTLE IN THE MENA REGION

The MENA region is among the regions that are most vulnerable to the increasing frequency of extreme climatic phenomena.⁹ With estimates for temperature increase to more than 1.9 degrees Celsius.¹⁰ Studies¹¹ have highlighted that severe environmental impacts such as decreased precipitations, forests' fires, desertification, evaporation, floods, prolonged droughts, sand storms, rising sea levels, and food and water insecurities have devastating impacts on the livelihoods of large sections of the populations which have been already experiencing vulnerability following decades of neoliberal development policies, fragility, conflicts, and occupation.

Drought is the most prevalent climate hazard. Its impacts on livelihoods are severe and cause the highest human losses. The marshes in southern Iraq face dangers due to climate change, dams built upstream and decades of war and mismanagement.¹² Its effects include decreased water supplies, as well as loss of harvest and livestock, which, in turn, threaten food security. Today as famine threatens the indigenous population in the marches, large segments of the population, mostly the young, are forced to migrate.¹³

One of the biggest challenges of the current century is providing water, energy, and food to all, in an environmentally sustainable, economically viable and socially inclusive manner that is capable to cope with

shocks and disasters.¹⁴ These challenges invite us to think of new ways to manage natural resources.¹⁵ However, the devastating environmental impacts and **insecurity of water, energy and food supply are expected to worsen**, driven by demographic growth, consumerist lifestyles and vulnerabilities to disasters.¹⁶ The current scale and impact of water scarcity in the MENA is unprecedented, with around 41 million people are **lacking access to safely managed drinking water** services and 66 million people lacking basic sanitation services leading to more disease and fragility.¹⁷ The MENA is home to the world's energy-poorest people for about 65 million people have **no access to electricity**, and 60 million suffer from **prolonged power outages and undersupply**.¹⁸ Reports¹⁹ estimated that over 55 million of MENA populations is undernourished, **the region's share of the world's acutely food insecure people was 20%**.

The region is also experiencing devastating floods, causing severe damage to infrastructure and human life. Torrential rains and flash flooding in 2021 in Yemen have left several people dead and caused large-scale damage to thousands of homes and infrastructure.²⁰ To this, the temperature in the MENA is expected to continue increasing until the end of the current century with longer periods of extreme temperatures (more than 40 degrees C.).²¹ In parallel, rates of precipitation will decrease by about 90 to 120 mm per year. Other major natural hazards in the region are sand- and dust storms. They have led, in many countries, to serious adverse impacts on human health and agricultural productivity, as well

9. Arab Climate Change Assessment Report, <https://www.preventionweb.net/publication/arab-climate-change-assessment-report-main-report> (Accessed on 22/07/2022).

10. Idem.

11. <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>
<https://archive.ipcc.ch/ipccreports/sres/regional/index.php?idp=155>

12. <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2022/02/strains-ancient-mesopotamian-marshes-imperil-ecology-way-life>, (Accessed 22/08/2022).

13. Idem.

14. Sachs, J. D., Schmidt-Traub, G., Mazzucato, M., Messner, D., Nakicenovic, N., and Rockström, J. (2019). Six transformations to achieve the sustainable development goals, *Nat. Sustain.* 2, 805–814. doi:10.1038/s41893-019-0352-9.

15. Pingali, P. L. (2012). Green revolution: impacts, limits, and the path ahead, *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci.*, 109, 12302–12308. doi:10.1073/pnas.0912953109; Nyström, M., Jouffray, J. B., Norström, A. V., Crona, B., Søgaard Jørgensen, P., Carpenter, S. R., et al. (2019). Anatomy and resilience of the global production ecosystem, *Nature*, 575, 98–108. doi:10.1038/s41586-019-1712-3.

16. Hoekstra, A. Y., and Wiedmann, T. O. (2014). Humanity's unsustainable environmental footprint, *Science*, 344, 1114–1117. doi:10.1126/science.1248365; Steffen, W., Rockstrom, J., Richardson, K., Lenton, T. M., Folke, C., Liverman, D., et al. (2018). Trajectories of the earth system in the anthropocene. *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U. S. A.* 115, 8252–8259. doi:10.1073/pnas.1810141115.

17. United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, 2021, "Running Dry, the impact of water scarcity on children in the Middle East and North Africa", <https://www.unicef.org/mena/reports/running-dry-impact-water-scarcity-children> (Accessed on 26/09/2022).

18. Olawuyi, Damilola S., 'Energy Poverty in the Middle East and North African (MENA) Region: Divergent Tales and Future Prospects', in Iñigo del Guayo and others (eds), *Energy Justice and Energy Law* (Oxford, 2020; online edn, Oxford Academic, 18 June 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198860754.003.0015> (Accessed 21 September 2022).

19. FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2020. Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition in the Near East and North Africa 2019 – Rethinking food systems for healthy diets and improved nutrition. <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca8684en>

20. "Yemen flash flooding causes large-scale damage", 4 May 2021, BBC <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-56979531> (Accessed on 22/07/2022).

21. Arab Climate Change Assessment Report, <https://www.preventionweb.net/publication/arab-climate-change-assessment-report-main-report> (Accessed on 22/07/2022).
<https://www.unep.org/ru/node/331>

as traffic accidents and airline delays²² The cost of sandstorms to the MENA region amount to US\$13 billion in GDP a year. In September 2015, a massive dust storm hit Syria and Iraq and spread through Lebanon, Egypt and Jordan. The storm was unprecedented in recent Lebanese history, striking amid social mobilization against the waste management crisis, and leading to five deaths and 750 cases of asphyxiation or shortness of breath.²³

All these extreme events, when coupled with vulnerable conditions, such as the development of city slums, unsafe settlements for refugees, or limited access to transport, health, education and other basic services, become disasters rather than just hazards. They can also increase the likelihoods of conflicts over resources and deepen existing ones. For example, Palestinian people's vulnerability to climate change is exacerbated by the Israeli occupation practices of stealing water sources and systematically demolishing Palestinian water infrastructure,²⁴ using Palestinian farming lands, as a dumping ground for military, industrial, and sewage waste²⁵, leading to the pollution of agricultural land, water, and air; endangering the life and health of Palestinians.²⁶ Thus, climate change is amplifying historically rooted social inequalities in the MENA region, including violence, militarization and conflict; discrimination; unemployment; poverty; inadequate social safety nets; poor governance, and an economic model that creates more disparities.²⁷ Climate change contributes to migration and conflict and acts as a threat multiplier to human security. As a result, the MENA region has the highest average military spending as a share of gross domestic product (GDP) compared to other regions. The military expenditure of the MENA region on average is above their fiscal capabilities as the budgets allocated to operations leave less than

the required amounts for expenditures on civilian needs such as education and health. This disproportionately harms women as they are more dependent on social spending.

GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN MENA

For MENA countries already grappling with the fallout from the pandemic, financial collapses, austerity, conflicts, and displacement, "the cascading effects of climate change add to a daunting array of challenges."²⁸ Reports²⁹ have warned that **climate change will amplify vulnerabilities and sharpen social and economic inequalities, in a region that is already described among the most unequal in the world.**³⁰

Climate change is not gender neutral, and its consequences are not distributed equally and are greater for marginalized populations, especially women. Emerging research on the gendered impacts of climate change demonstrates how climate change is exacerbating gender inequalities. In fact, MENA has the largest gender gap globally³¹. "Women have not enjoyed equal citizenship yet and continue to be subjugated to various forms of violence. Moreover, **climate crises is aggravating the feminization of poverty** with estimates that 80% of people displaced by climate change were women, subsequently they suffer different forms of gender-based violence, bare increased unpaid domestic and care work, and further entrenches poverty".³²

Degradation of natural resources, especially stress on water resources, can in many ways contribute to conflict or insecurity. Climate change is particularly challenging for weak states and countries in conflict, as it can worsen conditions on the ground, leading to instability, as well as forced migration.³³ Most of freshwater resources (66%) in MENA originate from

22. <https://www.unep.org/ru/node/331>

23. Idem.

24. Human Rights Watch, 27 April 2021, "A Threshold Crossed, Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution", <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution> (Accessed on 22/07/2022).

25. Statement of Arab and African States CSOs and Feminist Organizations Network, Women's Efforts for Equality Persist in Combating the Challenges of Climate Change (shared with the researchers by interviews participants).

26. Idem.

27. Hadeel Qazzaz

28. Opt cit: <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/02/24/cascading-climate-effects-in-middle-east-and-north-africa-adapting-through-inclusive-governance-pub-86510>

29. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/02/24/cascading-climate-effects-in-middle-east-and-north-africa-adapting-through-inclusive-governance-pub-86510>

30. <https://www.oxfam.org/en/blogs/region-brought-its-knees-inequality-kills>

31. World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2022, <https://jp.weforum.org/reports/global-gender-gap-report-2022/in-full/1-5-performance-by-region/>, (Accessed on 25/08/2022).

32. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/if-women-dont-lead-well-lose-battle-against-climate-crisis>

33. Mari Luomi, Environmental Security: Addressing Water and Climate Change Risks in the UAE, Working Paper, Emirates Diplomatic Academy, 2019.

outside national borders.³⁴ **There is a growing risk that climate change aggravates water scarcity and tensions within and between the nations sharing water resources.**³⁵ This was reflected by a climate justice activist from Iraq³⁶, who mentioned that the drought that the Marshes region is currently facing is caused by unequal government distribution, privileging the touristic sector over agricultural lands. For her, the situation is also worsened by the water policies adopted in neighboring countries, Iran and Turkey, especially the dam constructions that deprives the area from water resources.

During conflict, the hostile effects fall disproportionately on women and girls. **Conflict increases the prevalence of gender-based and sexual violence and it restricts the mobility of women and girls to access essential services and jobs.**³⁷ In times of food insufficiencies, **women are more exposed to food deprivation and extreme poverty.** Moreover, **feminist movement building is also at risk during conflict** as expressed in answers to survey question about challenges to feminist movements' involvement in climate justice which included "conflict and vulnerability" (40% of respondents).

With mounting socio-economic and political crises as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, advances made towards the liberation of women and the attainment of their rights across the region are either slowing down, halting, or in some cases, even being reversed.³⁸ Women's lower incomes relative to men, their gendered roles and social statuses, affect the way they experience climate change. Below are some of the aspects of how climate change aggravates gender inequalities in MENA:

- With women constituting around 50% of the agricultural and fishing labor force, the impacts of climate change will be greater upon their livelihoods, such as declining fish stocks and failing crops.³⁹ Their work becomes more energy and time consuming, while yielding less and making biodiversity and ecological farming methods more difficult to maintain.⁴⁰
- With women in MENA owning less than 10% of agriculture lands⁴¹, climate change will increase their food insecurity.
- With women expected to take on unpaid care work, including care of the young, the sick and the elderly, and subsistence agriculture, climate change will result in a double or triple care burden. In other words, climate change reinforces the stereotypical gender roles in the society and hence deepening the existing gender inequalities.
- This puts additional pressure on girls, who would have to leave school to help their families in their increased responsibilities to cope.
- Climate change related loss of livelihoods is and will continue to push women further into the informal sector, such as domestic work, where they are already over-represented, and where they are at higher risks of violence and exploitation, particularly in situations of displacement.⁴² Women increased double and triple care burden due to climate change is and will continue to increase stress, exhaustion and mental health risks.⁴³
- With increased threat to human health due to climate change,^{44 45 46} women and girls will be at a higher risk of health problems especially for pregnant and lactating women.⁴⁷ Due to existing gender roles in many countries, this may particularly impact women and girls who spend a great

34. ESCWA et al., Arab Climate Change Assessment Report - Main Report. RICCAR, 2017.

35. Balgis Osman Elasha, Mapping of Climate Change Threats and Human Development Impacts in the Arab Region, UNDP-RBAS, 2010.

36. Interview number 6 with climate change activist, on 11/08/2022.

37. The World Bank, 2011, World development report 2011 : conflict, security, and development, <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/966731468161352341/world-development-report-2011-conflict-security-and-development> (accessed 26/09/2022).

38. <https://mena.fes.de/press/e/capitalist-patriarchal-nightmare-ecofeminist-awakening>

39. <https://www.womin.org.za/images/papers/Full-collection-Women-gender-and-extractivism-in-Africa.pdf>

40. Idem.

41. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Gender and Land Rights Database, <https://www.fao.org/gender-landrights-database/data-map/statistics/en/>

42. Bradshaw and Fordham, Women, Girls and Disasters A review for DFID, 2013 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/844489/withdrawn-women-girls-disasters.pdf, (accessed 25/08/2022).

43. WHO, Gender, Climate Change and Health, 2014 <https://www.who.int/globalchange/GenderClimateChangeHealthfinal.pdf>

44. Arab Climate Change Assessment Report, op. cit.

45. Idem.

46. Idem.

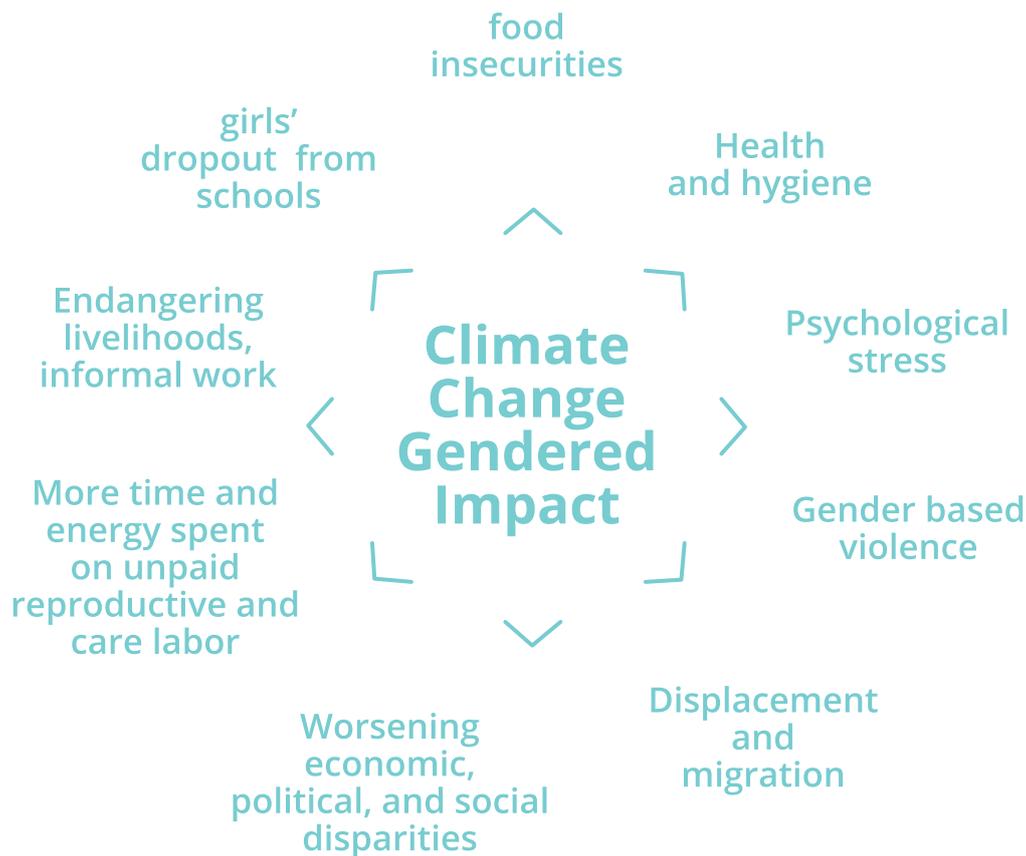
47. Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA), Gender and Climate Change: A closer look at existing evidence, 2016 <https://wedo.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/GGCA-RP-FINAL.pdf>

deal of time outdoors in agricultural fields or performing water-, sanitation and hygiene-related tasks under extreme high and low temperatures, as well as caring for sick family members.⁴⁸ Pregnant and lactating women face additional challenges because of their increased need for food and water, yet often limited mobility.⁴⁹ In general, exposure to natural disasters and stress during pregnancy increases the risk of poor pregnancy and maternal health outcomes.⁵⁰ Instances of infection, such as urinary tract infections, impact women differently and more greatly, while reports have mentioned natural disasters as barriers to family planning.⁵¹

- Climate change can increase the risk of violence against women and girls.⁵² Climate change-related events can potentially make women's homes and neighborhoods uninhabitable. As a result, they may be displaced to camps where living under temporary settlements can expose them

to violence from strangers.⁵³ Climate-induced disasters also increase the risks of intimate partner violence and sexual violence. Climate crises leading to eruption of conflict is also a source of potentially increased violence against women (and men).

- Many essential services for women and girls such as sexual and reproductive health care, education, social protection, and gender-based violence response- are disrupted by acute climatic disasters.⁵⁴
- Extreme weather conditions destroy livelihoods and in turn exacerbate poverty. When families are unable to meet their basic needs, evidence suggests that the risk of child marriage increases significantly for girls.



48. Idem.

49. Global Gender and Climate Alliance (GGCA), Gender and Climate Change: A closer look at existing evidence, 2016 <https://wedo.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/GGCA-RP-FINAL.pdf>

50. Idem.

51. Idem.

52. UNFPA, 2022, Climate Change and Gender-Based Violence in Jordan, https://jordan.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/unfpa_research_brief_on_gbv_and_cc_final_march_8_0.pdf (accessed 23/08/2022)

53. Action Aida, 2019, 5 ways climate change affects women and girls, <https://www.actionaid.org.uk/blog/2019/11/29/5-ways-climate-change-affects-women-and-girls> (accessed 23/08/2022)

54. UNFPA, Five ways climate change hurts women and girls. News, 16 August 2021, <https://www.unfpa.org/news/five-ways-climate-change-hurts-women-and-girls> (accessed 23/08/2022)

Water supply in Azraq camp⁵⁵ : Water in Azraq refugee camp in Jordan is distributed to inhabitants through a 300 tap water system, which gives access of a daily average of 60 liters of water per person per day, much lower than the national per capita/day distribution of 90- 100 liters. Approximately every seven families share a water tap from which they collect the water that is supplied every few days for a certain number of hours.

With the **responsibility of collecting and fetching water in the camp being primarily of refugee women**, this increases their risk to verbal abuse and sexual harassment. Some women have to walk long distances to collect water. Case managers explained that many women often face problems with neighbors over water rationing.

Women who are heading their households are at higher risk of harassment and are more likely to be taken advantage of by other camp members. Due to conservative social norms in the camp women tend to avoid reporting instances of violence and harassment and find other ways to deal with it. For example, one woman started going to a tap that is further away from her home, just to avoid the man who was harassing her.

gender-climate nexus was driven by the complexity of the climate negotiation process during the earlier years of the United Nations Framework Conventions on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the decision to focus on more “universal” issues rather than “specific” issues. Prior to the 13th Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC (COP 13), only one decision referenced women or gender equality. By COP 21, this number had increased to 45 decisions⁵⁶. **Feminist groups and the wider women's movements were absolutely key to the transformative shifts in climate discourses.**⁵⁷ Their voices calling for fundamental post-Covid system changes based on feminist, just, and green approaches, are becoming increasingly louder. This culminated in the “Feminist Agenda for a Green New Deal,”⁵⁸ a holistic feminist agenda that bridges the well-being of the planet and people through a justice-based approach.⁵⁹ Moreover, feminist activists, especially indigenous women, from around the world have pioneered the formulation of their own ‘Women’s Action Agenda 21’ (1991) and the ‘Women’s Action Agenda for a Peaceful and Healthy Planet 2015’ (2002). These were meant to make feminist voices explicit in order to influence global sustainable development agendas and climate conventions holding governments accountable towards the climate and gender justice.

The example above showcases the amplification of gender-based violence and discrimination in times of crisis, where women lose their jobs and livelihoods, are unable to access health care nor sexual and reproductive services, their chores of unpaid domestic and care work are multiplied, along higher rates of informal work with no securities and no access to public subsidies.

INTERNATIONAL POLICIES ON THE GENDER-CLIMATE NEXUS

Gender justice approaches took some time to shape the international climate change discourse, initiatives and processes. The lack of attention to the

55. Case study illustrating how gender patriarchal norms, conflict and refugeehood, and climate crisis converge to aggravate gender based violence, in *Climate Change and Gender-Based Violence in Jordan*, Research Brief, 2022, UNFPA Jordan https://jordan.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/unfpa_research_brief_on_gbv_and_cc_final_march_8_0.pdf

56. Eric Zusman, So-Young Lee, Ana Rojas, and Linda Adams, 2016; *Mainstreaming Gender into Climate Mitigation Activities Guidelines for Policy Makers and Proposal Developers*, Asian Development Bank, 2016

57. Women’s Major Group, 2015; see also UN Women, Gita Sen 2018

58. Tara Daniel & Mara Dolan (2020) Intersectionality and collective action: visioning a Feminist Green New Deal in the US, *Gender & Development*, 28:3, 515-533, DOI: 10.1080/13552074.2020.1843829

59. Abou-Habib, Lina, Valeria Esquivel, Anne Marie Goetz, Joanne Sandler and Caroline Sweetman (2020) ‘Introduction: gender, development, and Beijing+25’, *Gender & Development* 28(2): 223– 237, doi:10/1080/13552074.2020.1766288

Main international conventions and mechanisms on the gender-climate nexus:⁶⁰

CEDAW (1979): the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) is often considered the international bill of rights for women and is fundamental to advancing gender equality. Parties are bound to take action to promote and protect the rights of women, including the operational principle of equality in legislation. Articles 10, 11 and 13, respectively, affirm women's rights to non-discrimination in education, employment and economic and social activities. These demands are given special emphasis with regard to the situation of rural women, whose particular struggles and vital economic contributions, as noted in article 14, warrant more attention in policy planning.⁶¹

BRS (1989, 1998, 2001, respectively; synergy 2008): The Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions (BRS) are designed to help protect human health and the environment from the negative effects of hazardous pollutants. A Gender Task Team was established in 2012 to mainstream gender across the three conventions, and develop a Gender Action Plan.

Agenda 21 (1992): The 1992 Earth Summit, or UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), declared that women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development. Agenda 21 called for sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive databases. It built on the previous work of organizations that promoted women's empowerment and gender equality with regard to economic rights such as land ownership, resource stewardship, education, and employment.

CBD (1993): The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) has decisions of Parties that include gender considerations. In 2008 (updated for the period 2015-2020), parties to the CBD adopted a Gender Plan of Action, and has integrated actions to enhance the monitoring framework and indicator system for gender mainstreaming.

UNFCCC (1994): although void of social considerations in its Convention text, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) now has decisions on gender equality made over recent years, including the Lima Work Program on Gender (LWPG). Parties adopted a Gender Action Plan in 2016 (updated in 2019), strengthening monitoring and reporting of implementation of gender-related mandates.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) includes women and the environment as one of the 12 critical areas for action and encourages governments to collect data on the impact of environmental degradation on women, as well as develop gender-sensitive databases. It is considered the most comprehensive set of guidelines for the development of gender statistics at the national, regional and global levels.

UNCCD (1996): the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) recognized women's important role and participation in combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought, setting a Gender Action Plan (last updated September 2017).

MDGs (2000): The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) created measurable and internationally agreed gender goals and indicators. However, these indicators were siloed, and gender considerations were not integrated throughout all the different goals.

UNSCR 1325 (2000): the UN Security Council Resolution 1325, establishing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPS), recognizes women's role in sustaining peace and security. There is a growing demand from the civil society for the WPS agenda to embrace environmental protection. There is increasing attention in discussions on the disproportionate impact that environmental degradation and the climate crisis has on women.⁶²

SDGs (2015): and the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda (SDGs), with its 17 goals, recognizes that the natural world and its life-giving services must be urgently protected in order to fulfill the needs of nine billion people by 2050. **Gender is a standalone goal (#5) and a cross-cutting issue** across all goals.

60. United Nations Environment Programme, 2019, "Gender and environment statistics: Unlocking information for action and measuring the SDGs".

61. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-elimination-all-forms-discrimination-against-women> (accessed on 16/08/2022).

62. [Defending-the-Future.pdf \(gaps-uk.org\)](#)

SDG 13 'Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts⁶³' has the following targets:

- 13.1 Strengthen resilience and adaptive capacity to climate-related hazards and natural disasters in all countries
- 13.2 Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning
- 13.3 Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning
- 13.a Implement the commitment undertaken by developed-country parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to a goal of mobilizing jointly \$100 billion annually by 2020 from all sources to address the needs of developing countries in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency on implementation and fully operationalize the Green Climate Fund through its capitalization as soon as possible
- 13.b Promote mechanisms for raising capacity for effective climate change-related planning and management in least developed countries and small island developing States, including focusing on women, youth and local and marginalized communities

Paris Agreement (UNFCCC) 2015: The Paris Agreement is the new global framework for climate governance adopted by 195 countries to accelerate global actions and investments against climate change. It recognized the principles of a human rights-based approach to climate actions with specific attention to vulnerable communities' needs, including gender equality and women's empowerment.⁶⁴

CSW66 (2022): The sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women took place in March 2022, under the theme, "Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programs". CSW66 recognized with concern

the disproportionate impacts of climate change, environmental degradation and disasters on all women and girls. It called to promoting women's and girls' participation and leadership to climate action, expanding gender-responsive finance, building women's resilience in the agricultural context, and enhancing gender statistics and sex-disaggregated data.⁶⁵



63. Acknowledging that the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change is the primary international, intergovernmental forum for negotiating the global response to climate change.

64. Oxfam, 2019

65. <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/un-commission-status-women-reaffirms-womens-and-girls-leadership-key-address-climate>

Despite some promising developments on the level of international gender-climate mechanisms, there is still a long way to go. For example, while the use of the term “gender-responsive” in the Paris Agreement was a big achievement, it doesn’t move beyond an attitude of women as victims of climate change in need of capacity building support to strengthen their resilience.⁶⁶ It doesn’t recognize their capabilities for mitigation or for developing solutions to climate change. Moreover, climate policy processes don’t go beyond numerical representation of women, who continue to be excluded from decisions and policy making.⁶⁷

Despite this, women movements, globally and in the MENA, are gradually gaining momentum in climate activism. During the past year, the sixty-sixth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66) played a role in bringing the attention of feminist movements across the world including in MENA to climate justice. We saw an increased interest based on the focus of the CSW66 to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programs.

CSW66 was an important opportunity to strengthen the role of women and girls as leaders on climate action, and to solidify global commitments to gender-transformative climate solutions that center the health and rights of girls and women, in all their intersecting identities.⁶⁸ In fact, CSW66 was highly anticipated as a moment to advance progress on issues that directly affect girls and women but are often left out of climate discussions. These include mainstreaming sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in climate and disaster policies, programs, and budgets; addressing structural barriers that impact girls’ and women’s ability to cope with and adapt to the impacts of climate change; and the just and equitable transition toward economies that recognize and address care work.⁶⁹

The CSW66 constituted a culmination of decades of

feminist struggles for climate justice. For instance, initiatives like The Feminist Economic Justice for People & Planet Action Nexus, the Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), the Women’s Working Group on Financing for Development (WWG-FFD), and the Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA), among others, launched in 2020 a **Feminist and Decolonial Global Green New Deal (GGND)**⁷⁰, calling to mobilize around macro demands to challenge the existing economic, trade and financial dynamics, and working towards a New Global Economic Architecture that works for the People and the Planet.⁷¹ The GGND is a strategy to promote the interconnection between the structural challenges and demands of justice to transform:

- a. Increasing access to a combination of flexible long-term and short-term funding that support the development of climate and gender transformative projects with local communities.
- b. Building capacities of community led feminist initiatives to apply for new modalities of international climate funding.

MENA COUNTRIES AND GENDER-CLIMATE COMMITMENTS

Under the Paris agreement, countries should submit their plans for climate action known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs). In their NDCs, countries communicate actions they will take to reduce their greenhouse gas emission in order to reach the goals of the Paris Agreement. Countries also communicate in the NDCs actions they will take to build resilience to adapt to the impacts of rising temperatures. By 2021, most of the MENA countries had submitted their revised NDCs, which better integrate national gender machineries within the elaboration process, and show greater attention to gender in general, in comparison to the many gaps witnessed with the first round of NDCs.⁷² However, as we will discuss later, **the reference to gender in these**

66. Huyer S, Twyman J, Koningstein M, Ashby J, Vermeulen SJ. 2015. Supporting women farmers in a changing climate: five policy lessons. CCAFS Policy Brief 10. Copenhagen, Denmark: CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS).

67. Idem.

68. Women Deliver, 4 April 2022, CSW66: Looking Back and Paving the Way Forward on Climate Justice, <https://womendeliver.medium.com/csw66-looking-back-and-paving-the-way-forward-on-climate-justice-787e8590ea39> (accessed 27/09/2022).

69. Idem.

70. The Feminist Economic Justice for People & Planet Action Nexus is led by four key partners - who also serve as co-leads for two of the Action Coalitions on economic justice and on climate justice: the Women’s Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), the Women’s Working Group on Financing for Development (WWG-FFD), FEMNET - The African Women’s Development and Communication Network and the Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance (PACJA). In the context of the Beijing+25 Generation Equality Forum, WWG-FFD & FEMNET are co-leads in the Action Coalition on economic justice while WEDO and PACJA are co-leads on the Action Coalition for climate justice.

71. Action Nexus on Climate Change, 2021, Feminist Economic Justice for People and Planet, WEDO, <https://wedo.org/feminist-economic-justice-for-people-and-planet/> (Accessed 28/09/2022); Global Feminist Frameworks For Climate Justice Town Hall, September 2020, Frameworks Reader, <https://wedo.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Global-Feminist-Framework-Town-Hall-READER-FINAL.pdf> (accessed 28/09/2022).

72. https://womengenderclimate.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/2022_GAP-submission.pdf

reports remains largely a technocratic act especially with the absence of political will to address the structural causes of gender inequalities by governments in MENA. National climate policies remain largely selective, incomprehensive, lacking social dialogues and representation, and unfounded on gender analysis and intersectional segregated data. Moreover, women in the MENA representation in national policy and decision making remains very weak.⁷³ For example one activist mentions during the interview that under climate commitments countries should appoint national gender and climate focal points, but MENA countries are well behind

on this.⁷⁴ A lot remains to be done to move to ensure integration of gender equality consideration and concerns in climate-related planning and actions with an aim to ultimately implement these in a gender transformative way that not only addresses concrete climate change challenges, but also the underlying systemic, cultural and power structures and barriers that curtail the voice and agency of women and marginalized gender groups in providing climate solutions in MENA.⁷⁵

MENA countries NDCs summary in the following table:⁷⁶

COUNTRY	TIME-FRAME	PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING NDC	REFERENCE TO WOMEN/GENDER	NDC COMMITMENTS
Algeria	2020-2021	NDC developed through a consultation process of multiple stakeholders	No	Mitigation Adaptation
Morocco	2021-2030	Updating of NDC with several rounds of consultations and sectoral workshops in 2019-2021	- Gender is briefly touched on in Morocco's updated NDC. - Its discussion of mitigation actions is anchored in the respect for human rights and gender equality. - The updated NDC was developed through participation of indigenous peoples in a gender-sensitive manner	Mitigation Adaptation
Tunisia	Until 2030	The document was drafted through broad cooperation between the main stakeholders	No	Mitigation Adaptation
Egypt	Until 2030	No mention of process for developing NDC	No	Mitigation Adaptation
Palestine	2015-2030	Participatory process	Gender issues are a key theme The updated NDC commits to adopt gender-responsive approach as the socio-economic status of vulnerable groups is considered and evaluated. SDG 5 on gender equality is mentioned among the SDGs that are key to Lebanon's adaptation priorities, and which is "considered relevant to all actions."	
Lebanon	Until 2030	The NDC was developed by relevant government ministries, with inputs from experts and technical consultants and stakeholder groups		Mitigation Adaptation
Iraq	2020-2035	No mention of process for developing NDC		Mitigation Adaptation
Yemen	Until 2030	NDC document was drafted through a participatory process including consultations of key stakeholders and technical agencies		Mitigation Adaptation
Jordan	Until 2030	Participatory process	Emphasis on vulnerable groups (mainly the poor and women, those living in rural areas).	Mitigation Adaptation

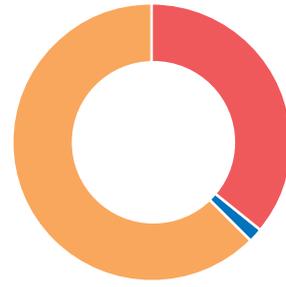
73. Idem.

74. Interview with research participant 8, feminist and food sovereignty activist, Tunisia, 26/7/2022

75. Idem.

76. The climate gender tracker, country profiles <https://www.genderclimatetracker.org/country-profiles>

FEMINIST CLIMATE MOVEMENTS TRENDS AND DYNAMICS IN MENA



- **62.50%** I consider that CC should become a priority
- **36%** I consider that CC is important, but not a priority
- **1.50%** I consider that CC shouldn't become a priority



WEAK ENGAGEMENT AND INCREASED INTEREST

Research participants from across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region have overwhelmingly agreed that climate justice remains on the backburner and ranks behind on the agenda of both state and civil society actors, including feminist and women's rights organizations. In fact, relatively to other regions such as Africa, South America and South Asia, facing similar climate impact and risks, feminist activism around the feminist-climate nexus in MENA remains underdeveloped.

While there are few feminist individuals and networks that are active on climate justice as part of wider environmental movements or grassroots initiatives, research participants indicated that **climate change in general is still a poorly discussed topic and the work on addressing it remains very modest because it is still under-recognized.**

Nevertheless, insights gathered for this report attest to a growing interest of feminist actors and organizations in engaging with climate justice. This was clear, for example, in the survey responses where: 37% of respondents strongly agreed and 23% agreed that climate change is a feminist issue and a majority of 62.5% indicated that **climate change should become a priority issue on the agenda of feminist movements in the region.**

The rising feminist interest in climate justice is driven by two main regional and global trends:

1. The collision of climate change with COVID-19 pandemic provided a frightening glimpse into the scope of the grim challenges lying in store as the effects of climate change become more prevalent and pronounced. This translated into calls for a post COVID recovery that centers climate justice, including by feminist voices from the MENA region.⁷⁷
2. Climate change is also gaining momentum and becoming a global contentious issue of feminist mobilizations and consequently the gender-climate nexus is receiving more international prominence; especially following the momentum created by CSW66 in 2022, which for the first time prioritized as its key theme the interlinkages between gender equality and climate change. This has played a significant role in bringing the attention of many feminist actors from the MENA region to the climate justice agenda. As expressed by a feminist activist from Palestine:



We anticipated the preparations for the 2022 Commission on the Status of Women, where the topic was climate change, through a regional Network⁷⁸ that we established during the Covid-19 period. The Network has recognized climate justice as one of the themes that it will actively work on. Our fellow feminist members from Morocco, who have already accumulated some experience on the topic through their engagement in the COP22⁷⁹, began transferring their experiences to the members of the Network. This is how we, as feminist organizations in MENA, began paying more attention to the issue of climate change and its effects on women. We drafted policy papers and put together an oral statement that was read during the CSW66 on behalf of Palestinian and women in the Arab region."⁸⁰ (Feminist activist, Palestine).

LACK OF CAPACITY AND KNOW HOW

Survey responses showed that respondents were able to identify the environmental phenomena of climate change (rising temperature, water scarcity, desertification etc.); but a lesser ability to identify their gendered implications and how they are exacerbating social and gendered inequalities. For example, **only 18% and 23% of survey respondents indicated that they have a very good knowledge about the impact of climate change on gender based violence and women unpaid care work, respectively.**

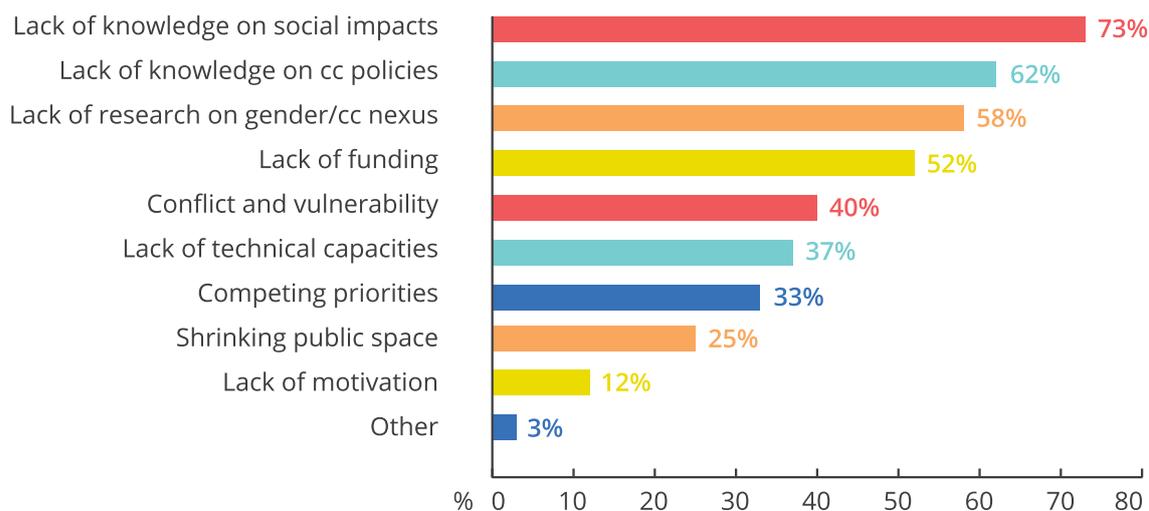
Moreover, the study found that feminist actors in MENA grapple with what engaging in the intersection of climate and gender agenda actually means and how to put it into practice. Many indicated that they lack the technical capacity to engage in climate negotiations and policy development on national and international levels and they lack the resources to put the nexus into practice, including in their advocacy. This was also reflected in responses to survey question about challenges to feminist movements' involvement in climate justice which included: the "lack of knowledge about the social impacts of climate change (cc)" as a top challenge with 73% of total responses; this was followed by "lack of knowledge of national and global policies related to

77. Tejpar, R., Nijhawan, A., & Porter, D. (2021). (rep.). *Imaginations of a Feminist Economic Transformation* (pp. 1–16). Oxfam International: https://www.oxfam.ca/feminist-economic-transformation/gfx/MENA_Report_English.pdf (retrieved on August 10, 2022)

78. The Arab States CSOs and Feminist Network

79. The United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP22) was held in Marrakech, Morocco, on 7–18 November 2016.

80. Interview with research participant 1, feminist activist, Palestine, 3/8/2022



climate change” 62% and “scarcity of research on the intersections of climate change and gender justice” 58%; “lack of funding” 52%; “conflict and vulnerability” 40%; “lack of technical capacities” 37%; competing priorities of the feminist movements 33% and “shrinking civic space” 25%.

As put by a feminist and climate researcher from Morocco:



When I try to persuade a women’s rights organization to mainstream climate change in its programs, I am told that the issue is not a priority. I see this as a result of the lack of knowledge on the impact of climate change on women in specific. This is because we only recently started to pay attention to climate change in our region. Therefore, the organizations do not own the concept and do not realize how dangerous climate change is to the issues they are working on. And when they actually know the extent to which they are affected by it, the feminist movements in the region will become very effective in this matter.”⁸¹ (Feminist activist and climate researcher, Morocco).

DIVERSE APPROACHES TO CLIMATE

However, evidence show that feminists in the region are giving the issue of climate much more attention than ever before. For example, among 10 titles that formed the premise for a Feminist Economy Manifesto published in 2021⁸² and written by feminist activists from across the MENA, 2 titles were

directly linked to climate and the ecology. Indeed, there’s a belief especially among younger and intersectional feminist activists interviewed for this report that the wider political, economic and human rights environment has significant impact on gender and climate justice; and hence, a feminist climate agenda needs to deal with the broader contextual and systemic drivers of exclusion and oppression.

In fact, it wasn’t difficult to identify diverse tendencies in approaching the gender-climate nexus in the conversations we held with research participants.

This difference is two faceted. It’s expressed on the level of the framing as well as on the level of strategies for change. Broadly put, a distinction based on research participants’ discourse, classifies dominant approaches into two: a radical approach to climate and a reformist one.

A radical approach to climate is expressed by mostly intersectional feminist activists.

- In terms of framing: They envision climate justice as part of their pursuit to transform all power relations in society, and not exclusively those pertaining to gender. They establish linkages between ecology, patriarchy, capitalism and colonialism; and they position the struggle for climate as part of a wider vision for justice on the social, economic and environmental levels.
- In terms of strategies: the radical activists emphasize movement building; catalyzing change on the grassroots level; producing alternative knowledge and building cross-movements and alliances.

81. Interview with research participant 3, feminist activist and climate researcher, Morocco, 21/7/2022

82. Tejpar, R., Nijhawan, A., & Porter, D. (2021). (rep.). *Imagings of a Feminist Economic Transformation* (pp. 1–16). Oxfam International: https://www.oxfam.ca/feminist-economic-transformation/gfx/MENA_Report_English.pdf (retrieved on August 10, 2022)

A reformist approach to climate is expressed by women’s rights activists.

- In terms of framing: They mostly speak about climate and its effect on women. They are less intersectional, and more focused on single issue activism. They tend to dissociate climate change from larger structural problems. They also tend to individualize problems as well as solutions to climate change.
- In terms of strategies: the reformist actors put more focus on influencing climate policies, women political representation, building resilience and capacities of women and raising their awareness about climate change.

CATEGORY	REFORMIST ACTORS	RADICAL ACTORS
	Single issue activism Focus on women’s vulnerability to climate change individualize problems/solutions technical solutions	Organize intersectional activism Focus on transforming all unequal power relations, including gender Systemic failure/ systemic change
TYPE OF STRATEGIES	Advocacy/ influencing state policies Raising awareness Capacity building Service provisions	Movement building Grassroots organizing Alternative knowledge production Building Alliances

Radical feminist actors, critique what they perceive as dominant a-political approaches to climate change in both environmental and women’s rights organizations. A-political approaches understand climate change as a mere technicality that can be addressed through singular technocratic approaches, rather than through a comprehensive transformation of the economy, social relations, and modes of production. As put by a feminist activist from Jordan:

“ In our region the environmental and feminist movement’s kind of share similarities in terms of depoliticization. The environmental movement is much more professionalized and NGO-ized with focus on reforms: big projects, clean energy etc. On a large scale there’s no challenge to the status quo in terms of creating an anti-capitalist/patriarchal alternative. I think that this depoliticization is also a major factor impacting women’s rights discourse and making it unable to tackle environmental issues. In order to reach an environmentally and socially just society, the movements need to be political and need to take a deep look into our economy...and again there’s no strong will to do so.”⁸³ (Feminist activist, Jordan)

Moreover, radical feminists emphasize the need to

establish strong linkages with grassroots struggles. They describe the tendency within organizations and movements to be centralized in urban centers and non-inclusive of poorer social classes and more marginalized and rural areas, where livelihoods and food security are more dependent on biodiversity and water resources, as major factors hindering the development of a strong feminist-climate agenda. As explained by a feminist and food sovereignty activist from Tunisia:

“ The easiest way to engage with the climate issue is for women’s organizations to include this issue in their agenda; but the most effective way is through grassroots work. That is, by working with the affected women who are at the forefront of the impacts of climate change; I believe that these women’s lack of access to platforms and their exclusion from educational and other systems that would allow them otherwise to build networks are main reasons why climate is not taking central stage on the agenda of women’s rights and feminist movements. In my work with peasant women, I know to what extent they are exposed to great losses due to the high heat waves that lead to the loss of their entire crop. If this category of women had a voice that reaches a greater extent, I imagine that the issue of climate change, as a feminist issue, would emerge faster.”⁸⁴ (Feminist and food sovereignty activist, Tunisia).

83. Interview with research participant 14, feminist activist, Jordan, 14/7/2022

84. Interview with research participant 8, feminist and food sovereignty activist, Tunisia, 26/7/2022

Alluding to the diverse climate change approaches and strategies of feminist actors in the MENA region is important for not assuming that there's one Movement in the region. In fact, there are diverse feminist movements, with diverse approaches and politics. Yet, as explained by one attendant of the research findings' validation workshop:

“ We shouldn't be looking for a unifying vision for the feminist movement. Radical feminists, eco-feminists, conventional feminists... They are all working for certain goals. The climate crisis is too huge, and the needs are too big, we need all hands in this. When movements have diverse approaches, it means they are vibrant and alive and it's always a sign of good health.”⁸⁵

NEW PARADIGM, OLD STRUGGLES

As mentioned earlier, research participants have noted that there is no particular focus on climate change as part of feminist movements in MENA. **Research participants from different generations and different countries across the region, thought about the gender and climate nexus as a “new” and “under-theorized” issue, which translates into a lack of theorizing on the connections between climate justice and gender justice;** underlining the need to support more efforts to document and analyze past and ongoing struggles (and knowledge) led by women and their communities from an eco-feminist perspective. Putting it differently, while eco-feminism is perceived as a new paradigm in MENA, local struggles led by women and men over rights to land, water, health, housing, livelihoods and overall ecology, are decades long. Moreover, while these everyday struggles are not necessarily fought under the title of “climate change” and while not all women that take part of them define themselves explicitly as “feminists”, however, that doesn't make these struggles any less gender and climate justice related. To borrow the words of Safaa T.: “many actions on the ground reflect eco-feminist frameworks, even if they don't label themselves as such.”⁸⁶ This can be the case for the now two decades' long struggle of the Soulaliyate women's struggle against land dispos-

session in Morocco⁸⁷ or more recent protests in Iraqi Marshes against the fatal conditions experienced by the population due to the drought and against the adverse impacts of the construction of large dams on the Tigris and Euphrates⁸⁸. Hence, for many research participants, **adopting an eco-feminist lens would make feminist movements gain new perspectives into the problems, issues and priorities of their societies, and acquire new tools to bridge and weave movements and struggles together.**

In this regard, and in order to fill the theory gap necessary to movements building, the past few years have witnessed a growing investment on the part of feminist activists in MENA in producing knowledge and theorizing about the feminism-climate nexus.

The Knowledge Workshop (KW) is one of the few feminist organizations in Lebanon that has been focusing on this issue. As a Workshop for researching local women's stories and histories, in 2017 KW has documented and made available oral histories and experiences of women in the environmental movements who took part in struggles and campaigns to defend land against profit-oriented policies and projects.⁸⁹

Speaking about what motivated this initiative, Deema Kaedbey from KW, said:

“ It was obvious to me that people are becoming increasingly interested in this issue. I also sensed a growing interest in this issue within feminist groups in Lebanon. This strengthened my belief in the importance of making available an eco-feminist resource that opens up the space for discussion and critique. We wanted to highlight the issue of climate change not as an “abstraction” but as an issue that is closely and intimately linked to our everyday, our economies and our livelihoods. It's also a starting point to delve into the personal, the intimate and the artistic; and allows everyone the possibility to speak about this issue, even if they didn't have environmental or gender “expertise.”⁹⁰ (Deema Kaedbey, director of KW, Lebanon).

85. Attendant of the research findings' validation workshop, 19/9/2022

86. Kaedbey, D., T., S., & Dirani, Z. (2022, June 15). What Remains: Eco-Feminist Pursuits. Alwarsha. the Knowledge Workshop.

Retrieved August 11, 2022, from <https://www.alwarsha.org/what-remains-intro-en/> The book which investigates the interconnections between feminist and environmental issues saw the light following an open call of submissions, to which local women writers, artists, environmentalists, feminist activists and researchers responded by submitting content that investigates the linkages between feminism and ecology.

87. ATTAC Maroc, The Soulaliyate movement: Moroccan women fighting land dispossession, 14-8-2020

<https://waronwant.org/news-analysis/soulaliyate-movement-moroccan-women-fighting-land-dispossession>

88. For more details about the Iraqi Marshes drought and protests: The Ahwari Human Rights Network on Instagram

89. Alwarsha, the environmental movement: <https://www.alwarsha.org/environmental-movements/>

90. Interview with Dima Kaedbey, director of the Knowledge Workshop, Lebanon, 18/07/2022

Such initiatives are driven by MENA feminist activists' sense of the need to start thinking the intersection of climate and feminism and how it translates in the MENA contexts through the actual lives and experiences of people.

In fact, **the need to challenge compartmentalization of movements has been highlighted by many research participants as yet another challenge to overcome.** Many Research participants mentioned that there's lack of cross-movements exchange between environmental movements and feminist movements. Research participants identified a general tendency within movements to work in isolation and with poor engagement and communication with other movements and groups. This was identified as a factor that deters the formation of a strong feminist-climate movement.



It's very important in our current context to recognize the importance of joining movements. For instance the environmental movement doesn't necessarily have the perspective that patriarchy has a big role in environmental degradation. So it could be the reverse way, discussing with environmental groups how gender justice is vital to dismantle the systems that led us to where we are. I think it will be good to discuss with feminists and other groups where their efforts overlap."⁹¹ (Feminist activist, Jordan).

91. Interview with research participant14, feminist activist, Jordan,14/7/2022

CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGES TO FEMINIST CLIMATE MOVEMENTS BUILDING



COMPETING PRIORITIES WITHIN A SHRINKING CIVIC SPACE

A clear majority of our research participants referred to context related challenges hindering feminist movement building around a climate justice agenda. At the top of these, comes the issue of the **“competing priorities” of the feminist movements in the region**. Having to deal with wars, famine, displacement and other enormous social, economic, and political priorities, facing immense pressure and backlash in their countries- often at the risk of their own safety and security- makes prioritizing the issue of climate change appears to be a “luxury” that many cannot afford. As put by feminist and climate researcher and activist from Egypt:



There are issues that are more “time sensitive.” Meaning, if I am bleeding while suffering from an allergy, I will definitely treat the bleeding before the allergy. In a context that makes people “crawl” behind their everyday needs, and local and regional problems related to the status of women, it feels like living in a hospital’s emergency room-like society. There are overlapping priorities. And in light of a political reality that requires silence and caution; and an emergency situation where women are exposed to daily physical violence, it may look that talking about something like climate, appears to be a luxury. However, I do not think that these issues contradict; but rather they co-exist. And in the end, we must continue to work on the long term, while taking into consideration and appreciating, with zero blame, that people are looking for short-term survival mechanisms.”⁹² (Eco-feminist researcher and activist, Egypt)

Another issue that was brought up by research participants is the ongoing constriction of civil society spaces which serves to undermine feminist move-

ments building and work. The wider political context and the authorities’ active policy to limit civil spaces and political movements, commonly emerged as challenges to organizing. Activist spoke about the harsh realities faced by human rights defenders and feminist activists in the MENA region characterized by limitations of their ability to receive international funding, an increase in restrictive policies on freedoms of assembly, association, and expression, as well as violent attacks, harassment and intimidation.

One feminist climate activist from Egypt provided an example on how **shrinking civic space impact the ability of feminists and other civil society actors to organize around a climate agenda**. She detailed her involvement in the “Egyptians against Coal” campaign. The latter was created in 2012 as a loose coalition of climate, human rights, feminists and labor rights activists to protest the Egyptian government’s decision to import coal to supply Egypt’s cement plants. Benefiting from the relative openings in the political and public spheres following the January 2011 Revolution, the campaign mobilized public support to contest government and business assertions that importing coal was the only way to meet Egypt’s energy needs⁹³. The campaign was also able to influence media and official discourses, framing government policy on energy in terms of popular concerns about social justice and human rights. However, the increasing and systemic crackdown on Egyptian civil society⁹⁴ has brought the public activities of the campaign to a halt. A quick look at the campaign’s page on Facebook shows only one post from 2021, followed by few others in 2017, which reflect the campaign’s inactivity over the past few years.

In preparations to the upcoming COP27 to be held in Egypt⁹⁵ 36 organizations have expressed their concerns about the ability of civil society in the MENA region to have a voice in the upcoming COP27 in Egypt.⁹⁶ COP27 is set to take place in the remote resort town of Sharm El-Sheikh, precluding the possibility of grassroots street demonstrations like those seen in Glasgow.⁹⁷ Moreover, the government tightly controls protests, using the 2013 anti-protest law⁹⁸,

92. Interview with research participant18, Eco-feminist researcher and activist, Egypt, 1/8/2022

93. Zayed, D., & Sowers, J. (2014). *The Campaign Against Coal in Egypt*. Merip. Retrieved August 16, 2022, from <https://merip.org/2014/07/the-campaign-against-coal-in-egypt/>

94. Human Rights Watch. (n.d.). *Egypt Crackdown on Civil Society*. Human Rights Watch. Retrieved August 16, 2022, from <https://www.hrw.org/tag/egypt-crackdown-civil-society>

95. COP27 brings together states parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change as well as thousands of experts, journalists, and representatives from businesses and nongovernmental groups. COP27, to be held in November 2022, is an important opportunity for the international community to meet and discuss ambitious, rights-based climate action.

96. Human Rights Watch. (2022). *Egypt: Statements on COP27 Imply Restricting Activism. Uphold Rights to Free Expression at Environmental Summit*, Human Rights Watch. Retrieved September 1, 2022, from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/07/12/egypt-statements-cop27-imply-restricting-activism>

97. BBC. (2021, November 6). *COP26: Thousands march for Glasgow’s biggest protest*. BBC. Retrieved September 3, 2022, from <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-59185007>

98. Human Rights Watch. (2013, November 26). *Egypt: Deeply Restrictive New Assembly Law Will Enable Further Crackdown, Stifle Electoral Campaigning*. Human Rights Watch. Retrieved September 3, 2022, from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/11/26/egypt-deeply-restrictive-new-assembly-law>

which bans any public assembly without Interior Ministry approval. Security forces routinely disperse demonstrations using excessive force and have arrested thousands of people for protesting without a permit.⁹⁹

Because of this extremely challenging context, our feminist activist from Egypt is also very skeptical about the ability of feminist and climate activists today to organize around the upcoming COP27¹⁰⁰ which is planned to take place in Egypt in November 2022:

” The situation in the region in general and in Egypt in particular is very bad. We as activists have been closely involved with the COP for a long time. With every COP and in every country, an alliance is usually built in that country around the event. However, we cannot establish such an alliance in Egypt because of the restrictions on civil society that resulted in many women’s rights organizations closing and their inability to operate. Feminist activists are threatened, their organizations are closed and some of them immigrated and others were imprisoned.”¹⁰¹
(Feminist and climate activist, Egypt)

Shrinking civic space has become a norm throughout the MENA region, where crackdowns on human rights activists, as well as environmental activists have been widespread and growing. This situation is further complicated in contexts that are witnessing protracted crisis, armed conflicts and occupation which also serve to further deprioritize already deprioritized issues of gender and climate justice. This is also impacting the ability of feminist activists in MENA to articulate a political discourse and agenda on climate change. As expressed through the words of a feminist activist from Lebanon:

” The feminist movement around the climate in MENA is not strong because the difficulties are too many, the challenges are too much, the existing level of oppression is too high, and the survival priorities impede the formation of a thriving environmental feminist movement. At the same time, I see that the everyday struggles related to land

rights, expulsion from land, the right to health, food security, and water scarcity, are not being addressed under the “climate change” agenda, because the existing political and economic systems frame these struggles as anti-regime and anti-authoritarian struggles.”¹⁰² (Dima Kaedbey, director of the Knowledge Workshop, Lebanon)

This view was also corroborated by other research participants who recurrently raised the issues of how the risks associated with feminist climate activism is weighing down on their ability to organize and meaningfully engage in the climate justice agenda. As explained by another woman climate activist from Lebanon:

” There’s a whole political atmosphere that doesn’t allow a feminist climate agenda to develop. One, the environmental issues are deprioritized. They are only tolerated in scientific terms. But once you connect them to the “Social”, in many countries across MENA, you might end-up being accused of “terrorism”, “working with the enemy” and getting “illegal funding”¹⁰³ (Climate activist, Lebanon).

LACK OF NATIONAL CLIMATE DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES

While spaces for civil society voices continue to shrink, lack of transparency, absence of inclusive and democratic processes and the prevalence of patriarchal mind-sets, continue to dominate power spaces, limiting the ability of feminist and women’s rights organizations to engage in governance and decision-making mechanisms around national climate policies. These governance-related issues were also highlighted by research participants as deterring feminists and women’s rights organizations’ involvement in the climate agenda. Research participants from across the MENA region held common views that women remain largely under-represented at all levels of climate change decision making and policy making bodies, including at the national level:

99. Human Rights Watch. (November 14, 2021). Egypt: Rampant Abuses Make for Poor Climate Host. Civil Society Participation in COP27 at Grave Risk, Human Rights Watch. Retrieved September 1, 2022, from <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/11/14/egypt-rampant-abuses-make-poor-climate-host>

100. The 27th United Nations Climate Change conference is to be held from 6 to 18 November 2022 in Sharm El Sheikh in Egypt.

101. Interview with research participant 4, Feminist and climate activist, Egypt, 22/7/2022

102. Interview with Dima Kaedbey, director of the Knowledge Workshop, Lebanon, 18/07/2022

103. Interview with research participant 13, climate activist, Lebanon, 18/7/2022



In our countries, women are not represented and are excluded from participation in government policies on climate adaptation. There is no gender perspective, as if climate change will affect everyone evenly! There are no women at the negotiating table or in decision-making forums. Women are always excluded.”¹⁰⁴ (Feminist activist, Egypt.)

This under-representation seriously compromises the effectiveness of climate change mitigation and adaptation measures. Moreover, gender considerations are remarkably absent in climate plans and policies across the MENA. Many research participants noted that **gender justice remains a largely “decorative” consideration, in the limited instances where it has been recognized in adaptation policies.** In contexts where state actors appear to be progressing a gender sensitive climate policy, most of the respondents cynically perceived this to be a gesture to win favor, legitimacy and “funds” from the international community, rather than a response to the actual needs of their own societies. This opinion was supported by the fact that there is no transparency about climate adaptation policies, little available public data and quasi-absence of official democratic processes to engage communities- especially women in rural areas- and build on their insights, knowledge and experiences, in order to guide the establishment of national priorities, policy development and elaboration of climate actions.



Women's participation in public life and in the efforts to adapt and mitigate climate impact is weak. Their experiences and knowledge stemming from day to day experience of the effects of climate change are excluded from discussions of policy formulations and actions to be taken, especially for women in rural areas.”¹⁰⁵ (Feminist climate activist, Tunisia.)

Hence, governance and climate policy making in MENA are largely described by research participants as exclusionary and top-down, which doesn't

help turning climate change into an issue of public debate. One feminist activist from Jordan underlined for example how the lack of information and public debate about climate change, factures into the lack of knowledge and the limited social mobilization on climate justice agenda. It's important to note in this regard, and as mentioned earlier, that the “lack of knowledge on the social impacts of climate change” and the “lack of knowledge of national and global policies related to climate change” were mentioned by survey respondents as among the most important challenges to feminist movements' engagement with climate justice agenda in MENA.

Despite this constraining context, many research participants have spoken about their efforts to integrate their feminist and climate justice perspectives within their movements and other movements as well. **Despite they are nascent, scattered and still lacking a clear agenda and common political vision, yet these efforts attest to the MENA feminists' continuous work to extend their reach, learn and influence their communities from below.** However, securing and sustaining funds constitute an important challenge to feminist movement building around a climate justice agenda.

LACK OF FUNDING TO THE NEXUS

In recent years, driven by the climate urgency, some gender-focused donors¹⁰⁶ started increasing their funding to climate action. However, to date, most available funding continues to be confined to programmatic silos.¹⁰⁷ For instance, climate programs seldom consider how gender inequality is at play and vice versa. While investment in each silo is important, it will not be enough to create the transformative change that feminist movements seek. In fact, little of this funding do reach feminist movements. In 2018 approximately 1 percent of gender-focused international funding was directed to women's rights organizations globally^{108 109}. To the lack of available funding to feminist movements, comes the challenges faced by these movements in accessing available funds. This contributes to making the feminist movements in MENA grossly and chronically underfunded¹¹⁰, while posing a significant strain on their ability to sustain and grow.

104. Interview with research participant 16, feminist activist, Egypt, 14/7/2022

105. Interview with research participant 9, feminist climate activist, Tunisia, 20/7/2022

106. Such as Global Affairs Canada and Swedish International Development Agency

107. Shifman, P. et al. (n.d) *Lighting the Way: A Report for Philanthropy on the Power and Promise of Feminist Movements*, Shake the Table: <https://www.weshakethetable.org/report>

108. Op.cit

109. We use this figure as a proxy for lack of MENA specific data on the funding of feminist movements.

110. Anderson, K., Myrntinen, H. (2017) *Now is the Time: Research on Gender Justice, Conflict and Fragility in the Middle East and North Africa*. International Alert Oxfam

Challenges to accessing funding include lack of legal registration, language gaps, poor IT connectivity, lack of familiarity with verbiage used in proposal writing especially for international climate funds, lack of bank accounts, difficult reporting requirements, minimal to no personal connections with donors and limited availability of funds that support movement building rather than activities.¹¹¹ This fact was repeatedly highlighted by many reports¹¹² and was also validated by our research participants.

In discussing challenges in accessing financial resources to support movement building around the gender and climate nexus in particular, most respondents highlighted the fact that **there are rarely any funds that go to feminist movements building in MENA and less so for feminist climate movements. Moreover, funding is often siloed and is rarely directed towards movements at the intersection of gender-climate justice nexus.**¹¹³ This was underscored as a main factor that impedes the formation of powerful feminist climate movements in the region.

“Donors are a big factor. We know that the footprint of the global north is a lot bigger from the global south. This is why, I believe, for so long, donors were not interested in funding a feminist climate agenda in the region.”¹¹⁴ (Feminist activist, Jordan).

Research participants spoke about how the limited funds available are often inflexible and short-term. It was also mentioned that funding rarely goes to feminist grassroots organizing and that it is often concentrated within more established women rights organizations.

“I am convinced from my observation that international donor organizations deal with the same suspects that are not the most affected by climate change. Funds rarely reach grassroots and women who are at the forefront of the climate impact.”¹¹⁵ (Feminist and food sovereignty activist, Tunisia)

Moreover, research participants highlighted the fact that they lack the technical skills and language to access newly made available green funds. Lack of accessible funding mechanisms translates into fewer opportunities to build networks, develop skills, and create alliances and collaborations and exchange knowledge across movements and with fellow feminist groups in the region.

Research participants from across the MENA noted that there is an urgency to “invest in movement building” and reach out to “unconventional” and young feminist groups. This was particularly highlighted in relation to what research participants perceived as donors’ tendency to fund women and climate adaptation projects that are stripped from their political dimensions and potentials by not addressing the structural and systemic barriers faced by women and other marginalized groups. Such projects were described as mostly focusing on raising individual women entrepreneurial capacities in the green economy (ex: recycling projects) and on raising women’s awareness on climate change impact (ex: rationing water workshops). On this issue, a feminist and climate activist from Palestine shared the following:

“I think that we must oppose such donors’ trends, not only because some of the projects they fund contribute to reinforcing harmful social norms around gender roles, but also because we already have a lot of water in Palestine that we are denied access to by the Israeli occupation. These kinds of projects teach people how to manage what little is left of our resources and they call them: “addressing the impact of climate change.” They talk about “rationalizing water consumption” as a means to “adapt” to climate change in Palestine! This is wrong. I rationalize water because I am an individual who respects resources, but I refuse that this becomes part of a climate change adaptation requirement in our settler-colonialist context.” (Feminist and climate activist, Palestine)

Our research participant from Palestine then adds:

111. Doria Feminist Fund. (n.d.). *Grantmaking*. Doria Feminist Fund. Retrieved September 3, 2022, from <https://www.doriafeministfund.org/grantmaking>

112. Moughalian, C., & Ammar, Z. (2019). (rep.). *Feminist Movement Building in Lebanon: Challenges and opportunities*. RootsLab. Retrieved September 3, 2022, from <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620850/rr-rootslab-feminist-movement-building-lebanon-070819-en.pdf>.

113. exception perhaps pertains to climate-focused feminist funds such as the Global Greengrants Fund and Urgent Action Fund which provided small funding for community-led feminist initiatives in parts of the MENA.

114. Interview with research participant14, feminist activist, Jordan,14/7/2022

115. Interview with research participant 8, feminist and food sovereignty activist, Tunisia, 26/7/2022



Communicating the impact of climate change for any Palestinian man or woman will always be linked to the reality under occupation and the oppression practiced against women in Palestine. If you don't establish these linkages, climate change will become a foreign issue that is completely separate from their reality and context."¹¹⁶ (Feminist and climate activist, Palestine.)

Research participants underscored the fact that within the current regional backlash and restrictions on civic spaces, making unrestricted and core funding available to feminist movements in MENA, takes precedence. It was highlighted that donors should ensure that these movements have the necessary resources to sustain and develop their activism, identify and articulate their own climate change adaptation priorities, produce their own local knowledge around the issue and advocate for their rights, as a necessary pathway for strengthening feminist movements' engagement in climate justice.

116. Interview with research participant 19, feminist and climate activist, Palestine, 20/7/2022

SUPPORTING FEMINIST ACTIONS IN CLIMATE JUSTICE IN THE MENA REGION





I am a mother... climate crisis is not for me an issue that I only work on as an activist. I am terrified by the fact that my child will grow up to live in a world where she will have to fight for her share of water, because of current inactivity towards climate change. I have real terror and an intense sense of guilt. So climate change is not a luxury. Nor is it isolated from gender justice. Climate must be connected to all other issues, so that it is not dismissed as a technicality. Climate must be linked to our everyday life, to our bread and water, to our social and human rights and freedoms."¹¹⁷ (Feminist and climate activist, Egypt)

PRESENT REGIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

A clear majority of our research participants recognize the existence of a long legacy of feminist organizing in the MENA region and- despite the many challenges- a current vibrant and diverse feminist scene, including continuous campaigning and advocacy for gender justice and emerging practices of solidarity and Intersectionality. Research participants also recognize that feminist movements are crucial for social change and that strengthening feminist collective action is at the heart of the fight for climate justice. Hence, a readiness and desire to collectively work on a feminist climate agenda was apparent in survey responses and interviews.

As mentioned earlier, the rising interest in the feminist-climate nexus is two-folded: one part having to do with a mounting sense of peril from climate change impact; the other with a new sense of promise, with the rise of global eco-feminist movements.

As such, **supporting and strengthening feminist movements' engagement with climate justice agenda is critical and timely, particularly in light of the growing challenges in accessing appropriate forms of funding for movement building.**

With the CSW66 and the two Conferences of Parties (COP) under the UNFCCC taking place in November 2022 in Egypt and in November 23 in United Arab Emirates, many research participants indicated that this constitutes an opportunity to galvanize feminist climate MENA regional momentum and make feminist climate activism in the region more systemic, organized and geared towards movements' building.



There will be two climate summits over the next two years in the region. It will be a missed opportunity, if feminist movements in MENA won't be visible and loud."¹¹⁸ (Feminist activist, Algeria.)

In fact, interviews reveal that some women's rights organizations have already started groundwork preparations to influence COP27, including organizations that are part of the Arab States Civil Society Organizations and Feminists Network. The Network which currently comprises tens of active CSOs and women's grassroots organizations from the MENA region is currently focusing its efforts on building the capacities of its members on the issue of climate change. It is also preparing for a regional conference for co-learning and co-building a MENA feminist concerted presence and influence in the upcoming climate conferences.

Nevertheless, it has been highlighted that engaging in the intersection of feminism and climate justice agenda is not "business as usual" and requires particular insights, perspectives, skills, knowledge, networks, relationships etc. in order to do so effectively. As such, while the importance of participating in climate conferences was fully recognized by most participants, there was also a majority view that participation within existing structures of power, in itself, is insufficient.

Rather, there's a need to support long-term and comprehensive approaches to strengthening feminist action and movements building around the feminist-climate nexus, in order to obliterate unequal structures and power dynamics.

It was highlighted that international organizations and donor agencies, in specific, have a crucial role in sustaining feminist and collective action, but their support needs to be anchored in feminist principles and practices. The latter were expressed by research participants as follows:

117. Interview with research participant 4, Feminist and climate activist, Egypt,22/7/2022

118. Interview with research participant , Feminist and climate activist, Algeria,25/7/2022

- Participation** > Ensuring full and meaningful participation and promoting women's climate leadership: "nothing about
- Feminist Agenda** > Providing open spaces and platforms for women directly affected by climate change, to shape climate narratives and discourses.
- Inclusion & Diversity** > Anchoring actions in intersectional gender and context analysis. Engaging with "unusual suspects", not only established organizations; and increasing the visibility and leadership of frontline women and marginalized communities.
- Movement Building** > Investing in long-term movement and alliance building and supporting grassroots organizing to sustain change.
- Voice, Agency & Co-creation** > Feminist movements are experts: respecting their agency and acknowledging their expertise and knowledge of their issues and priorities.

As put by a research participant:

“What the donors need is a political will to fund movement building around a feminist climate agenda. International organizations have to step back a bit and give local communities space to thrive, especially in the current context. They need support... not to attribute achievements to themselves. They need support... not to fuse all local organizations in their fabric. They need support... not to create advisory groups to dictate priorities over local organizations. We don't need anyone to speak in our voice. We have a voice to speak for ourselves.”¹¹⁹
(Feminist and climate activist, Egypt)

MENA region are already burdened with competing priorities. Thus programs, advocacy and influencing work in the area of climate change shouldn't become an additional burden, but as part of a comprehensive approach to social, political, and economic justice. Resources, capacities and enabling environments are all crucial to further support feminist movements' engagement in climate change advocacy and policy work.

Research participants contributed their ideas about how can supporters and allies from international and donor organizations nurture and foster feminist climate movements building in the MENA region. The way forward involves work and investments in individual activists as well as the collective.

In this section we frame the different ideas on how international organizations and donors can strengthen feminist climate movements in MENA, through three main areas or axes of intervention:

THE WAY FORWARD TO MOVEMENTS BUILDING

As discussed earlier, feminist movements in the

Strengthening feminist climate movements in MENA



119. Interview with research participant 4, Feminist and climate activist, Egypt, 22/7/2022

Strengthening individual and organizational capacities

Strengthening feminist climate movements in MENA requires efforts to actively invest in activists and their organizations and facilitate their access to tools and resources that would support their organizing efforts, especially at the grassroots, and expanding their reach. In this regard, research participants highlighted the importance of having access to tools, training and resources to build their organizational capacity to deliver gender transformative programs and advocacy around gender and climate justice. This includes:

- a. Increasing access to a combination of flexible long-term and short-term funding that support the development of climate and gender transformative projects with local communities.
- b. Building capacities of community led feminist initiatives to apply for new modalities of international climate funding.
- c. Extending funding to young feminist informal grassroots groups and networks, by removing earmarked funding, easing up on requirements, and allowing these groups and networks to utilize funds to support their own initiatives on the feminist-climate nexus.
- d. Building the technical capacity on gender-sensitive climate financing; the integration of SDGs into climate national and local policies; and in the domain of review of NDCs which allows building a more gender-responsive approach to climate mitigation and adaptation.
- e. Bolster the capacity on the collection, synthesis and dissemination of knowledge and data at the intersection of gender equality and environment, in response to the considerable gap in accurate, disaggregated, and detailed data and evidence about climate change impact on vulnerable communities, including women in their diversity.
- f. Supporting young feminist activists and women researchers to undertake participatory action researchers to document lived experiences of climate change and as a movement building strategy.¹²⁰

Increasing movements abilities to influence decision-making and policies

Research participants highlighted the importance of supporting movements' capacities to influence the policy arena. This includes, but not limited to:

- a. Pressuring governments to remove barriers to civic engagement to enable women's rights and feminist activists' access and influence over decision making processes at all levels.
- b. Supporting feminist actors to be visible and meaningfully engaged in climate (adaptation/mitigation) decision-making, policy making, implementation and monitoring processes at the local, national, regional and international levels.
- c. Making sure that the voice and priorities of the frontline women, and most vulnerable communities are heard and reflected at all levels of decision-making processes by pursuing their inclusion in advocacy groups and networks.
- d. Building technical capacities of women rights and feminist activists around climate governance and the decision-making process at the national and international levels to support their meaningful participation in climate action and debate at all levels.
- e. Supporting networking and the introduction of feminist actors from MENA to regional and global feminist advocacy organizations and networks to increase voice and influence.

Supporting collective action and strong alliances

Supporting regional dialogues, collective action and strong cross movements' alliances emerged in most of the interviews as pre-requisite for feminist climate movements building. This includes:

120. Macnish, P., Chakma, T., & Naidu, K. (2020). Feminist Participatory Action Research as a tool for climate justice. *Gender & Development*, 28(3). <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2020.1842040>

- a. Creating inclusive spaces for debate and dialogue amongst feminist organizations and activists with the aim to foster a collective vision to what a feminist climate justice alternative mean for the region; to be able to set political values, priorities, and align strategies; to learn from peer experiences, build relationships, and coordinate linkages among feminist activists, organizations and networks.
- b. Creating spaces for learning and engaging with other feminist movements across geographies, especially from the global south which face similar climate risks and similar economic, political, social and ecological challenges.
- c. Creating inclusive spaces for debate across movements with intersecting priorities, particularly concerning organizations working on environmental gender and social justice, to negotiate different politics, and to establish grounds for a shared political vision upon which strong, substantive, and meaningful alliances can be built. Investing in such spaces was highlighted as representing a first steps towards scoping potential collaborations, building alliances and coalitions, and eventually, stronger feminist climate movements.

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ANNEX 1: MAPPING OF STAKEHOLDERS

This annex offers selected organizations and programs operating in the MENA region in the field of climate change stakeholders and /or feminist organizations. The list is compiled by the researchers from websites and official documents of the organizations who took part of stakeholder interviews.

1. **League of Arab States (LAS), Geographical scope:** regional. LAS has several entities that deal with environmental issues, including an Arab Climate Change Negotiations Group, Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment, and other sub-entities concerned with weather and climate information. LAS main processes and initiatives include The Arab Initiative for Sustainable Development (2002); the Arab Ministerial Declaration on Climate Change (2007); Resolution of the Arab Summit on Climate Change (2010); the Arab Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2020 (2010) and 2030 (2018); the Arab Framework Action Plan on Climate Change (2010-2020).
2. **The Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC):** Geographical scope: regional. Comprised of 11 member countries, OPEC explicitly focuses on climate change in the MENA. Members coordinate during international climate change meetings. Publishes research on climate change and organizes side events at UNFCCC meetings. The fund aims to support cleaner and more efficient petroleum technologies for the protection of the local, regional and global environment, and promote the development of technologies such as carbon capture and storage.
3. **The OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID):** Geographical scope: Global. The OPEC Fund for International Development (OFID), based in Vienna, Austria, is a multilateral development finance institution which seeks to promote cooperation between its member states and developing countries as an expression of the South-South solidarity. It does this mainly by providing financial resources to assist the latter group of countries in their economic and social advancement.
4. **UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia (ESCWA):** has two sub-entities, ESCWA Sustainable Development Policies Section, Arab Centre for Climate Change Policies. It is comprised of 18 Arab countries, but works on climate change with all Arab countries. ESCWA works with its members on sustainable management of natural resources, with an emphasis on water and shared water resources, energy and efficient production and promotes equal economic policies.
5. **UN Development Program Regional Bureau for Arab States (UNDP-RBAS):** through Arab Climate Resilience Initiative (ACRI), it supports institutional capacity to address the impacts of climate change; promotes local approaches to climate change adaptation; and works on enhancing resilience in water and food security, sea-level rise and coastal erosion, and sustainable energy.
6. **Union for the Mediterranean Climate Change Expert Group (UfM CCEG):** comprised of 43 countries from the Mediterranean basin. CCEG's mandate is to share experiences and knowledge about common climate action challenges impacting the region; stimulate discussions on climate action; and catalyze the development of climate-resilient development initiatives.
7. **Green Climate Fund (GCF):** The Green Climate Fund is a fund established within the framework of the UNFCCC as an operating entity of the Financial Mechanism to assist developing countries in adaptation and mitigation practices to counter climate change.
8. **Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF):** The Global Environment Facility has a unique governing structure organized around an Assembly, the Council, the Secretariat, 18 agencies, a Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel (STAP), and the Evaluation Office. The GEF serves as a financial mechanism for several environmental conventions.
9. **The Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF):** managed by GEF for the implementation of national adaptation plans for the UN's 50 Least Developed Countries. The LDCF, along with the SCCF, is mandated to serve the Paris Agreement. Both funds are managed by the Global Environment Facility. The LDCF supports technical and institutional capacity at national and local levels, to create a policy environment that encourages investment in adaptation solutions. Priority funding areas include agriculture and food security; natural resource management; water resources; disaster risk management and prevention; coastal zone management; climate information services; infrastructure; and, climate change induced health risks.
10. **United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and its Regional Office for West Asia:** serves twelve countries of the MENA. Additionally, it collaborates with major stakeholders, private sector, youth and

others to bridge the science and policy gaps by keeping the state of the environment under review, identifying environmental threats at an early stage, developing environmental policies, strategies, legislation and supporting countries in their implementation.

11. **UN-REDD Program:** to fight against deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries.
12. **UN Women,** one of its four strategic priorities is “women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and humanitarian action. In March 2022, UN Women organized the 66th session of the Commission on the Status of Women with focus on achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programs.
13. **The Women and Gender Constituency (WGC) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC):** provides a number of ways for civil society and non-governmental organizations which work for women’s rights and gender justice, environmental protection, or both, to influence the annual conferences and help develop the UNFCCC. It provides a platform to exchange information between members and with the UNFCCC Secretariat. The constituency also ensures that meetings, workshops and conferences include the participation and representation of women’s civil society and non-governmental organizations which otherwise would not be able to attend.
14. **United States Agency for International Development (USAID):** (USAIDEnvironment) has several initiatives with focus on environment, energy, and infrastructure.
15. **European Union's Global Climate Change Alliance+ (GCCA+):** helps mainly Small Islands Developing States (SIDS) and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) increase their resilience to climate change. The EU GCCA+ also supports these group of countries in implementing their commitments resulting from the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate Change (COP21), in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the new European Consensus on Development.
16. **Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA):** JICA offers development assistance to developing countries around the world. One of its pillars deals with environmental conservation and management, water resources management, disaster risk reduction, and climate change.
17. **The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (GIZ):** active in the field of international cooperation in several areas, including economic development and employment promotion, energy and the environment, and peace and security. GIZ supports developing climate change adaptation strategies, the expansion of the use of renewable energies and improve their energy balance, forestry policy, and improving working conditions for women in the MENA.
18. **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA):** focus on Sexual and reproductive health and rights & bodily autonomy on the context of climate change.
19. **International Labor Organization (ILO):** highlighting the social dimension of climate action, and promoting social justice, decent work, just transition, and economic development that is good for people and nature.
20. **Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES):** the political feminism program focuses on advancing gender justice advocacy on the regional level as well as mainstreaming intersectional feminist approaches and solutions in public discourses across the Middle East and North Africa. The program especially focuses on re-politicizing feminist movements and on promoting the principles of feminist economics as tools to address gender, environmental, and social justice issues.
21. **Oxfam:** supports government and civil society responses and feminist movements and women rights organizations’ agendas toward strengthening an intersectional approach to climate change and gender in MENA.
22. **Kvinna til Kvinna:** focuses on the nexus between climate change and gender-based violence in conflict-affected areas
23. **Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung (RLS):** tackling social aspects of climate crisis
24. **GenderCC - Women for Climate Justice:** is a global network of organizations, experts and activists working for gender equality, women's rights and climate justice. It works on raising awareness and building capacity on gender and climate; increasing the knowledge base on gender and climate to identify effective mitigation and adaptation options; empowering women and men to actively contribute to mitigation and adaptation; enhancing cooperation on gender and climate issues at all level; and advocating for gender and climate justice as overarching, guiding principles.

Women's rights/feminist organizations and networks in MENA:

1. **Center of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR):** focus areas on intersections between gender and economics, water resource management, human rights, political participation, gender based violence.
2. **Women's Centre for Legal Aid and Counselling (WECLAC):** is an independent Palestinian, not-for-profit, non-governmental organization that seeks to develop a democratic Palestinian society based on the principles of gender equality and social justice. WECLAC is selected on the UN generation equality multi-sectorial leadership group.
3. **The Knowledge Workshop (KW):** is a feminist organization founded in Lebanon in 2015, works on research and knowledge production about local women's stories and histories, and for creating and making accessible feminist resources. KW also works on engaging women at the grassroots level, and on connecting with feminist movements to ensure the continuity of feminist presence in the region.
4. **Arab Watch Coalition (AWC):** a regional coalition of Civil Society from MENA, watching the operations of International Financial Institutions (IFIs) in the region to make sure that the development processes are inclusive, participatory, just, and sustainable for all. They engage with civil society, local communities, and right-holders to ensure their interests are reflected in the national development. The coalition main goal is to shift the development paradigms to be about achieving social, economic and environmental justice. AWC targets IFIs operating in MENA, trying to open channels of communications between the impacted communities and/or the civil society groups that represent them. On the other hand, AWC partners with other IFIs watcher organizations around the world to advocate for more opening and opportunities in IFIs policies that enable the communities to be engaged, respond to their needs and concerns, and achieve justice.
5. **The Arab States CSOs and Feminist Organizations Network (NGO CSO):** The NGO Committee on the Status of Women, NY (NGO CSW/NY), supports the work of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and UN Women. NGO CSW/NY is an untiring advocate with Member States for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls across the globe in support of the work of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women and UN Women. NGO CSW/NY supports the implementation of the 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, UN Security Resolution 1325, the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
6. **Association of Women in Green Economy (AFEV):** is an organization working with women artisans, young women and women entrepreneurs at local, national and Euro-Mediterranean level. Their working themes related to gender are economics and employment as well as education and professional training.
7. **Traditional Women Association for Development:** works on listening, guidance, and legal and psychological assistance for women victims of all forms of violence; creating all necessary measures to combat such violence; and contributing to the activation of all kinds of reporting and alert tools for all forms of violence and exploitation against women and children; Rehabilitation and development of **social mediation services**; establishing partnerships and coordinating with associations, organizations and official bodies concerned with women's and children's affairs.
8. **Association Femmes Bladi pour le Développement et le Tourisme:** women issues and development.
9. **Arab Women Association of Jordan:** strengthen the status of Jordanian women to become equal and effective partners in development. AWO is affiliated to the General Federation of Jordanian Women (GFJW), the General Union of Voluntary Societies (GUVS) and the Recycling Coalition (RC). AWO is a founding member of the Network of the Arab NGOs and a member of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
10. **Takatoat (Jordan):** is a non-governmental, independent feminist collective based in Jordan. It works to spread feminist knowledge, establish safe spaces for women and girls, support their solidarity and struggle against the dominating patriarchal culture, practices, policies and norms, enhance their effective participation in all sectors and ensure their enjoyment of rights, protection from all forms of gender-based violence, and access to freedom, justice and equality.
11. **Food for Humanity (Yemen):** A women led CSO dedicated to saving lives and relieving suffering to war torn families in Yemen providing emergency relief, training and livelihood programs

**For all women's rights,
in every corner of the world.**