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UN Women ECARO series “Integrating human security and intersectionality into WPS and humanitarian frameworks”

BRIEF 2: STRENGTHENING CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY FRAMEWORKS: TACKLING THE IMPACT OF HUMAN INSECURITY

2025



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1. Introduction

In his 2019 Report on Women, Peace and Security (WPS), UN Secretary-General António Guterres highlighted that there is “an urgent need for better analysis and concrete, immediate actions to address the linkages **between climate change and conflict from a gender perspective.**” He emphasized that understanding these intersections is crucial not only for preventing the worsening of vulnerabilities, but also for discovering new pathways to advance gender equality, enhance climate resilience and sustain peace. The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia started in February 2022 and its multidimensional impacts on countless lives have highlighted the urgent need to address the interconnected challenges of **climate change, gender inequality and conflict** within the humanitarian, development and peace nexus.

October 2025 marks significant milestones in global policy frameworks: **the 25th anniversary of UN Security Council resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325)**, which is the foundation of the WPS agenda, **the 20th anniversary of the Kyoto Protocol**, and **the 10th anniversary of the Paris Agreement**. Despite decades of progress in both WPS implementation and climate action, the intersection of climate security and gender remains marginalized in debates on security, conflict and peacebuilding. This persistent gap represents not just a challenge, but **a strategic opportunity to enhance climate resilience through gender-responsive approaches that break cycles of vulnerability.**

Recent global developments have established key policy foundations. The 28th United Nations Climate Change Conference of Parties (**COP28 Declaration on Climate Relief, Recovery and Peace**),² signed by 94 countries underscores the need for coordinated, gender-responsive climate action in conflict-affected settings as a key priority for governments and international partners. By aligning NAPs with this global framework, a more resilient, equitable and sustainable future is possible. At COP29, the **Baku call on Climate Action for Peace, Relief, and Recovery**

(**BCCAP**)³ was launched, representing a milestone initiative aimed at addressing the urgent nexus of climate change, conflict and humanitarian needs. It responds to the growing recognition that the adverse effects of climate change can act as catalysts for conflict and instability, especially in the most climate-vulnerable regions. The BCCAP emphasizes the importance of peace-sensitive climate action while prioritizing support for the most vulnerable groups, including women, children and youth, who bear the brunt of these intersecting crises. Also, COP29 marked a significant milestone by establishing a commitment of USD \$300 billion annually for climate financing by 2035 and introducing an international carbon credit trading mechanism.⁴ The conference also emphasized peace-sensitive climate action through the BCCAP initiative. Additionally, evolving global climate finance – including multilateral development banks’ pledges to increase climate-related lending to low- and middle-income countries to USD \$120 billion annually – creates new opportunities to ensure climate financing benefits women in conflict-affected regions.⁵

Since February 2022, the Ukraine war has triggered Europe’s fastest-growing displacement crisis since World War II, forcing over 6.8 million refugees to seek safety globally, with 92 per cent in Europe.⁶ According to the 2025–2026 Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRRP), the response has evolved from emergency aid to longer-term strategies focused on socioeconomic inclusion and integration. The environmental toll has been severe – approximately 21.9 million tons of carbon dioxide (CO₂) equivalent were released in the conflict’s first year alone.⁷ This environmental degradation, coupled with displacement, has created complex vulnerabilities that disproportionately affect women, who face heightened risks of gender-based violence (GBV), economic marginalization and limited access to sustainable housing solutions.

1 UN Women. 2020. [Gender climate and security: Report summary.](#)

2 UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office. 2023. [“COP 28 Declaration on Climate, Relief, Recovery and Peace.”](#)

3 UNFCCC (United Nations Climate Change). 2024. [“Call on Climate Action for Peace, Relief and Recovery.”](#)

4 UNFCCC 2024. [“COP 29 UN Climate Conference Agrees to Triple Finance to Developing Countries, Protecting Lives and Livelihoods.”](#) 24 November.

5 World Bank. 2024. [“Multilateral Development Banks to Boost Climate Finance.”](#) 12 November.

6 The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). 2025. [“Regional Refugee Response Plan 2025-2026”.](#)

7 Hryhorczuk, D., et al. 2024. [“The environmental health impacts of Russia’s war on Ukraine.”](#) Journal of Occupational Medicine and Toxicology. 19, 1.

BOX 1.

The 2025–2026 RRRP addresses the ongoing needs of refugees, particularly those displaced by the conflict in Ukraine. The focus has shifted from emergency aid to long-term strategies aimed at socioeconomic inclusion and integration into host country systems. The plan emphasizes strengthening legal and institutional frameworks for refugee residency and providing specialized support for vulnerable groups such as the elderly, children, people with disabilities and survivors of gender-based violence.

Key efforts include enhancing refugees' self-reliance through job matching, vocational training and language acquisition, while promoting social cohesion between refugees and host communities. The RRRP also supports the Ukraine Home digital platform, offering refugees real-time information on legal status and assistance, and advocates for allowing refugees to maintain cultural ties through short visits to Ukraine without losing their legal status.

The response is increasingly localized, with host governments leading the efforts and civil society organizations, including refugee-led groups, playing a prominent role in tailoring assistance to meet the specific needs of both refugees and host communities. If conditions allow for safe returns to Ukraine, the plan will adapt to support voluntary repatriation and reintegration.

The triple nexus of climate change, conflict and gender inequality creates a vicious cycle where each dimension amplifies the others. Climate change intensifies resource scarcity and displacement, exacerbating conflict dynamics. Armed conflict destroys critical infrastructure and natural resources, reducing adaptive capacity to climate impacts. Both conflict and climate stressors disproportionately burden women and girls through increased care responsibilities, heightened gender-based violence and reduced access to essential services. Yet, when empowered as decision-makers and agents of change, women demonstrate unique capabilities in conflict prevention, climate adaptation and community resilience-building.

This brief is part of the UN Women Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (ECARO) series on **“Integrating Human Security and Intersectionality into WPS and Humanitarian Frameworks,”** aiming to fill critical gaps in policy practice and promote more comprehensive and effective gender-responsive approaches to complex crises. The concept of human security is a fundamental starting point when discussing the intersection between climate and conflict as it recognizes that environmental degradation, conflict and gender inequality are deeply interconnected, often compounding risks for vulnerable populations. In doing so, human security turns the focus to individual and community well-being and resilience. The brief proposes policy recommendations to enable the WPS agenda to seize strategic opportunities, upgrade its methodological toolkit, and strengthen the cross-empowerment potential of existing mechanisms in complex crises. Through analysing emerging practices and lessons learned, it provides concrete recommendations for policymakers, practitioners and donors working at the intersection

of gender equality, climate action and peacebuilding. These recommendations directly contribute to multiple Sustainable Development Goals: SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 13 (Climate Action) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions).

The following sections examine the interlinked dynamics of conflict, climate change and gender inequality, with special attention to the war by the Russian Federation in Ukraine. They then assess the current state and potential of the WPS agenda to address these challenges. The final section outlines a comprehensive framework for integrating climate resilience into WPS implementation mechanisms. This integrated approach is essential not only for addressing the immediate Ukraine war but also for preparing the WPS agenda to respond effectively to future compound challenges, including those posed by emerging technologies and other complex threats to human security.

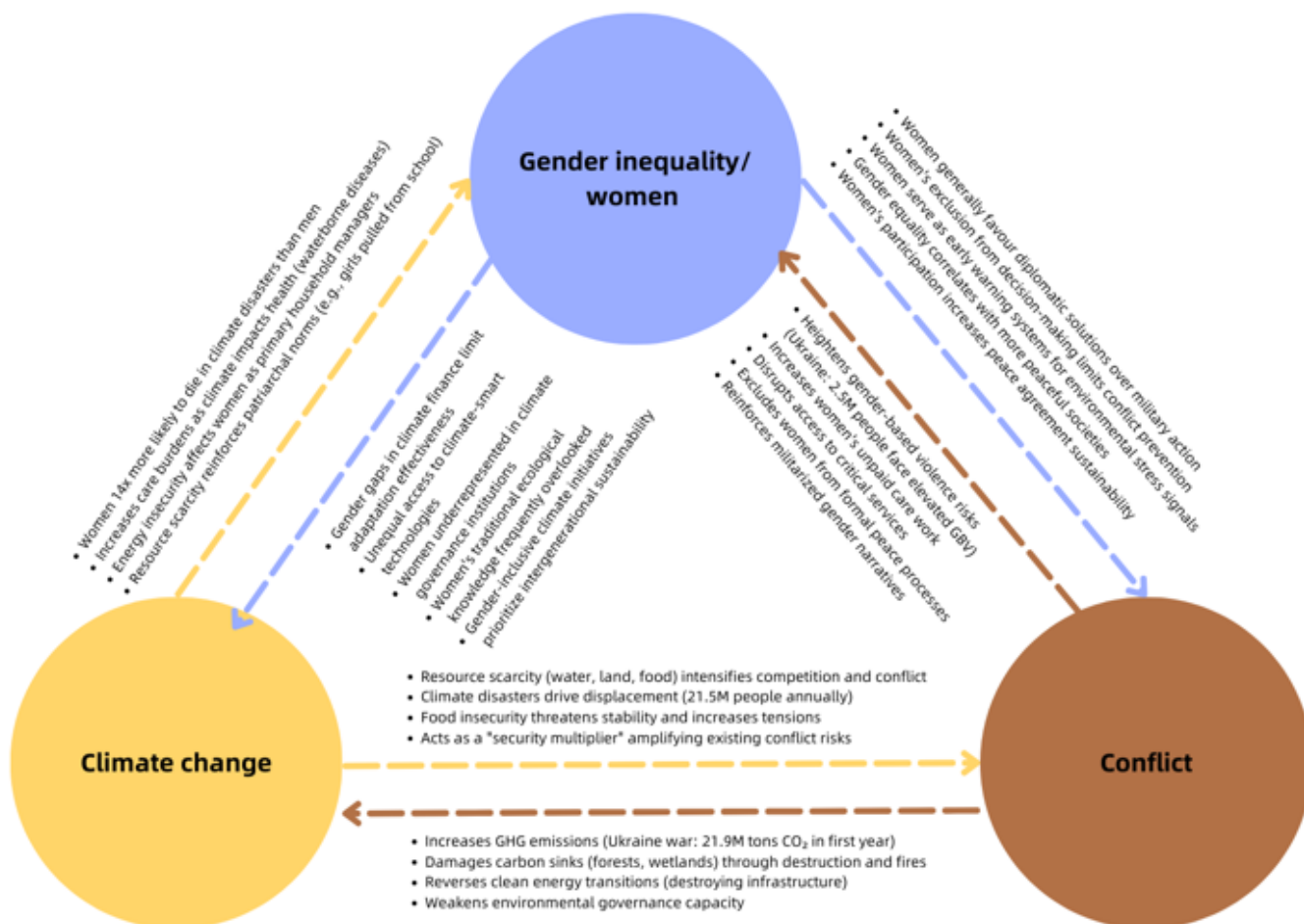
2. Intersecting dynamics of conflict, climate change and gender inequality

In today's global landscape, the interplay of climate change, conflict and gender inequality increasingly shapes human security. These intersecting challenges transcend traditional siloed perspectives, demanding a holistic approach that integrates humanitarian response, development action and peacebuilding initiatives. While these dynamics manifest to varying degrees across multiple regions, the ongoing Ukraine war offers a compelling case study of how a localized crisis can generate far-reaching transnational impacts through complex transmission mechanisms. This section delves into the substance, interactions and policy implications of these three key dimensions within the WPS framework, laying the groundwork for subsequent analysis and recommendations.

The intersection among the three elements above can be visualized through a framework of bidirectional relationships, demonstrating how climate change, conflict and gender inequality interact through complex feedback loops. Figure 1 illustrates these six critical pathways of influence, highlighting how each dimension both affects and is affected by the others, creating what policy experts refer to as a "triple nexus".

FIGURE 1.

The Triple Nexus: Six key pathways of interaction between climate change, conflict and gender



2.1 Conflict: Dynamics and enduring impacts

When analysing conflict through the WPS lens, it is important to look beyond armed hostilities themselves to examine how conflict transforms social structures, power relations and gender dynamics, and how these changes affect climate resilience and adaptive capacity. Conflict disrupts social institutions that manage natural resources and address climate threats, while simultaneously reshaping gender norms and opportunity structures, often exacerbating existing gender inequalities.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL IMPACTS OF THE WAR IN UKRAINE

As previously noted, since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the war has evolved into Europe's most severe displacement crisis since World War II. According to the latest UNHCR data, over 6.8 million Ukrainians have become international refugees overwhelmingly in Europe, while approximately 3.5 million are internally displaced.⁸ The 2025–2026 RRRP indicates that international response measures have shifted from initial emergency humanitarian aid towards more long-term socioeconomic inclusion strategies, though this transition has yet to fully integrate climate resilience and gender equality perspectives.

On 24 February 2025, the UN Security Council passed the resolution reflecting the international community's desire for a ceasefire, but it failed to effectively address the structural contradictions underlying the conflict and inadequately considered women's crucial role in post-war reconstruction and climate adaptation.⁹ Historical experience, such as the post-Bosnian war reconstruction process,¹⁰ shows that without embedding gender justice in peace processes, the long-term costs of conflict are disproportionately borne by women. On the same day the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution, many Member States reaffirmed strong support for Ukraine,¹¹ emphasizing the importance of peace based on justice and upholding international principles. There were calls for a new approach to diplomacy, focusing on common ground rather than differences.

WAR'S IMPACT ON ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION AND CLIMATE VULNERABILITY

The war of the Russian Federation in Ukraine has significantly increased the region's vulnerability to climate change, creating a negative feedback loop where conflict and climate impacts reinforce each other:

Environmental damage and pollution have escalated dramatically. According to Ukrainian environmental authorities and international environmental organizations, approximately 30 per cent of protected areas in Ukraine (about 900 protected areas covering 1.2 million hectares) have been affected by shelling, bombing, oil pollution and military maneuvers since February 2022.¹² The destruction of industrial sites, chemical facilities and energy infrastructure has caused widespread soil, air and water pollution, posing cross-border contamination risks to the Republic of Moldova, Romania and the Black Sea region. These pollutants not only cause long-term damage to ecosystems but also diminish communities' ability to adapt to climate change.¹³

Forest resources and carbon sinks have suffered substantial losses. According to satellite data from the European Forest Fire Information System, fires sparked by the war have already damaged over 100,000 hectares of natural ecosystems.¹⁴ The State Forest Resources Agency of Ukraine has recorded 78 times more fire incidents than during the same period last year.¹⁵ These losses significantly reduce the region's carbon sequestration capacity and increase greenhouse gas emissions, further intensifying climate change pressures.

Energy and water security crises have emerged as particularly challenging. Targeted destruction of energy infrastructure has caused severe energy shortages,

8 The United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). 2025. "[Regional Refugee Response Plan 2025-2026](#)".

9 United Nations. 2025. "[Ukraine war: Amid shifting alliances, General Assembly passes resolution condemning Russia's aggression](#)." 24 February.

10 Helfrich, Ashly. 2021. "[Feminine Intervention: The Bosnian War and Women's Role in Instigating Peace](#)." Undergraduate Research Journal. Volume 25.

11 United Nations. 2024. "[At Three-Year Mark of Russian Federation's Invasion, General Assembly Upholds Ukraine's Territorial Integrity, Adopting Two Resolutions](#)." 24 February.

12 Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine. Facebook post [in Ukrainian], 30 April 2022. Available at <https://www.facebook.com/EnvironmentalofUkraine/posts/332676032301514>

13 WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature). Undated. "[Assessing the environmental impacts of the war in Ukraine](#)."

14 Emerging Europe. 2022. "[Despite Russia's invasion, conservation work in Ukraine continues](#)." 10 August.

15 Gerasmychuk, Sergiy. 2023. "[Analysis of the bilateral Ukraine-Moldova relations: problematic and promising dimensions of cooperation](#)." 28 January. Ukrainian Prism Foreign Policy Council.

forcing Ukraine to increase reliance on high-carbon fossil fuels and reversing its clean energy transition commitments under the Paris Agreement. According to an analysis of World Wide Fund For Nature (WWF),¹⁶ damaged treatment facilities such as Severodonetsk, Lysychansk, Rubizhne and Popasna are spewing untreated wastewater into the environment and polluting water resources. Additionally, damage to dams – particularly major hydropower dams – could cause catastrophic impacts and long-term environmental damage. For example, if the Kyiv hydropower dam was breached, it would create a devastating flood as well as spread radioactive sediments from the Pripjat River, which flows through Chernobyl, that have accumulated behind the dam, potentially contaminating the river down to the Black Sea.

CONFLICT'S AMPLIFYING EFFECT ON GENDER INEQUALITY

The gendered impacts of the war, magnified by climate vulnerability, disproportionately affect women and girls in Ukraine and surrounding host countries:

Displacement and unequal resource access have created severe hardships. According to UN OCHA estimates, approximately 14.6 million people needed humanitarian assistance in 2024, with women and children comprising the vast majority.¹⁷ Displaced women face increasingly severe challenges in accessing food, water and healthcare – challenges further exacerbated by climate-related resource scarcities. FAO reports indicate that agricultural production disruptions caused by both conflict and extreme weather have worsened food insecurity, particularly for rural women who depend on subsistence agriculture.¹⁸

Health risks and care burdens have increased substantially. Environmental pollution from damaged industrial facilities has increased the incidence of respiratory diseases and waterborne illnesses, particularly in the east of Ukraine. As primary caregivers, women bear a disproportionate burden of care due to disrupted health systems.

Gender-based violence has risen sharply. Economic instability, displacement, deteriorating security situations

and mental health pressures have collectively led to increased risks of intimate partner violence, conflict-related sexual violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, human trafficking and harassment. UNFPA estimates that approximately 2.5 million internally displaced persons (IDPs), returnees and others affected by the war face elevated GBV risks.¹⁹ UNHCR has documented that in addition to conflict-related sexual violence, forcibly displaced women and girls also face high risks of intimate partner violence. In certain displacement settings, the risks for them were estimated to be 20 per cent higher than for non-displaced women and girls.²⁰

Energy insecurity has created gender-specific impacts.

Damage to critical energy infrastructure has forced many households to rely on unsafe energy sources. An International Red Cross (IRC) analysis shows that over 25 per cent of IDPs interviewed lacked access to sufficient heating.²¹ As primary caregivers, women are disproportionately exposed to indoor air pollution and forced to take on additional unpaid labour. In resource-scarce environments, girls are often the first to be pulled from school to assist with family survival needs, further exacerbating educational inequalities.

CROSS-BORDER CLIMATE SECURITY RISKS AND REGIONAL IMPACTS

The environmental impacts of the Ukraine war are creating broader security risks across the region:

Cross-border environmental pollution has become increasingly concerning. Russia's war on Ukraine has severely damaged the Black Sea environment, with chemical pollution endangering marine life.²² There's confirmed evidence of pollution crossing international borders – for example, pollution has made its way into Ukraine's north-eastern Sumy region via the Seym river, causing ecosystem collapse.²³ Black Sea currents have carried oil pollution into waters around Crimea, with dangerous M-100 oil settling to the seabed.²⁴

Population movements driven by compound factors present complex challenges. The combined impact of war, environmental degradation and extreme weather events has displaced millions of people, putting enormous pressure on host countries. International coordination

16 WWF. Undated. [“Assessing the environmental impacts of the war in Ukraine.”](#)

17 UN OCHA (United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs). Undated. [“Ukraine.”](#)

18 Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP). 2024. [Hunger Hotspots: FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity.](#)

19 UN OCHA. 2024. [Ukraine Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan 2024.](#)

20 Klugman, Jeni. Undated. [The Gender Dimensions of Forced Displacement.](#)

21 International Red Cross. 2022. [“Winter in Ukraine: over 25% of internally displaced people interviewed lack access to sufficient heating, more than 60% houses damaged, IRC initial analysis shows.”](#) Relief Web. 20 December.

22 Bechev, Dimitar. 2025. [“Tackling the Russia-Ukraine War's Environmental Damage in the Black Sea.”](#) Carnegie Europe. 24 February.

23 Harding, Luke and Alessio Mamo. [“We've lost some parts of nature for ever': Ukraine's war's impact on environment – photo essay.”](#) The Guardian. 24 February.

24 Ukraine War Environmental Consequences Work Group. [“Environmental consequences of the war in Ukraine: December 2024-January 2025 review.”](#) 7 February.

is taking place – Ukraine took over coordination of the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea in January 2025,²⁵ and projects like RESPONSE are addressing the environmental impact of Russia’s war against Ukraine.²⁶ However, regional response strategies often conceptually and practically separate migration management, climate resilience-building and peacebuilding work, resulting in fragmented policy interventions that struggle to address these interconnected challenges.

The above impacts of the war highlight **the urgent necessity of integrating climate resilience into the WPS agenda**. Traditional conflict response frameworks cannot adequately address the essence of contemporary compound crises. Only by adopting an integrated approach that simultaneously addresses conflict, climate vulnerability and gender dynamics can effective protection mechanisms and sustainable solutions be designed. This requires modifying WPS implementation tools to ensure they can identify and respond to climate-related security risks while fully leveraging women’s agency and leadership in response measures.

2.2 Climate change: Security dimensions

When considering climate change within the WPS framework, we focus not just on its physical environmental impacts but on how it functions as a ‘security multiplier’,²⁷ exacerbating existing vulnerabilities, transforming conflict dynamics and differentially affecting gender equality. The challenges climate change poses to human health, well-being, peace and security are forcing the international community to reassess traditional security concepts, moving towards a more inclusive, integrated and preventive understanding of security.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE AND SECURITY

The work of the UN Security Council, the Peacebuilding Commission, and the UN Secretary-General’s *New Agenda for Peace*²⁸ in recent years has highlighted how climate change affects security landscapes through multiple pathways:

Resource competition and conflict risk have intensified as climate change exacerbates water scarcity, land degradation and food insecurity, increasing competition for limited resources, especially in institutionally fragile regions.

Mobility and displacement patterns are shifting dramatically. Climate-related disasters displace an average of 21.5 million people annually, exceeding the number displaced by conflict.²⁹ When climate migration intertwines with conflict dynamics, compound vulnerabilities further exacerbate security challenges. The refugee crisis triggered by the Ukraine war, compounded with regional climate pressures, has created unprecedented complex humanitarian challenges for European host countries.

Food security and livelihoods face serious threats. Around 733 million people faced hunger in 2023, equivalent to 1 in 11 people globally and one in five in Africa, according to the latest State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) report,³⁰ with climate change’s negative impact on agricultural production being a key factor. Ukraine, as a major global food exporter, has seen its agricultural systems doubly impacted by war and climate change, threatening not only domestic food security but creating ripple effects across global food markets, particularly for African and Middle Eastern countries dependent on Ukrainian food imports.³¹

25 Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea. 2025. [“Ukraine takes over the coordination of the Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea for 2025.”](#) 21 January.

26 Council of the European Union. 2024. [“Joint staff working document: Black Sea Synergy: 4th review of a regional cooperation initiative.”](#)

27 UN Women. 2022. [“Explainer: How gender inequality and climate change are interconnected.”](#) 28 February.

28 United Nations. 2023. [Our Common Agenda. Policy Brief 9: A New Agenda for Peace.](#)

29 UNHCR. 2016. [“Frequently asked questions on climate change and disaster displacement.”](#) 6 November.

30 WHO (World Health Organization). 2024. [The state of food security and nutrition in the world 2024.](#)

31 El Bilali, H., & Ben Hassen, T. 2024. [“Disrupted harvests: how Ukraine – Russia war influences global food systems – a systematic review.”](#) Policy Studies, 45(3–4), 310–335.

BOX 2.

GLOBAL NORMS IN FOCUS: ALIGNMENT AND ACTION:

The Gender Action Plan to support implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 (Sendai GAP)³² promotes gender-responsive disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies, emphasizing the need to incorporate women’s perspectives and leadership in building resilient communities.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) includes SDGs 5 (Gender Equality), 13 (Climate Action) and 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) to ensure integrated solutions.

UN Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) prioritizes women’s leadership in peacebuilding and climate adaptation strategies, including through NAPs.

UN Security Council resolution 2242 (2015) is the eighth resolution in the WPS agenda. It links climate change to global health pandemics, rising refugee numbers, internal displacement, and the rise of violent extremism, all of which are reshaping the global peace and security landscape. The resolution emphasizes that WPS should be integrated as a cross-cutting issue in all relevant areas of the agenda. While the growing recognition of climate change’s impact on WPS is positive, the specific language used to address it warrants careful consideration.

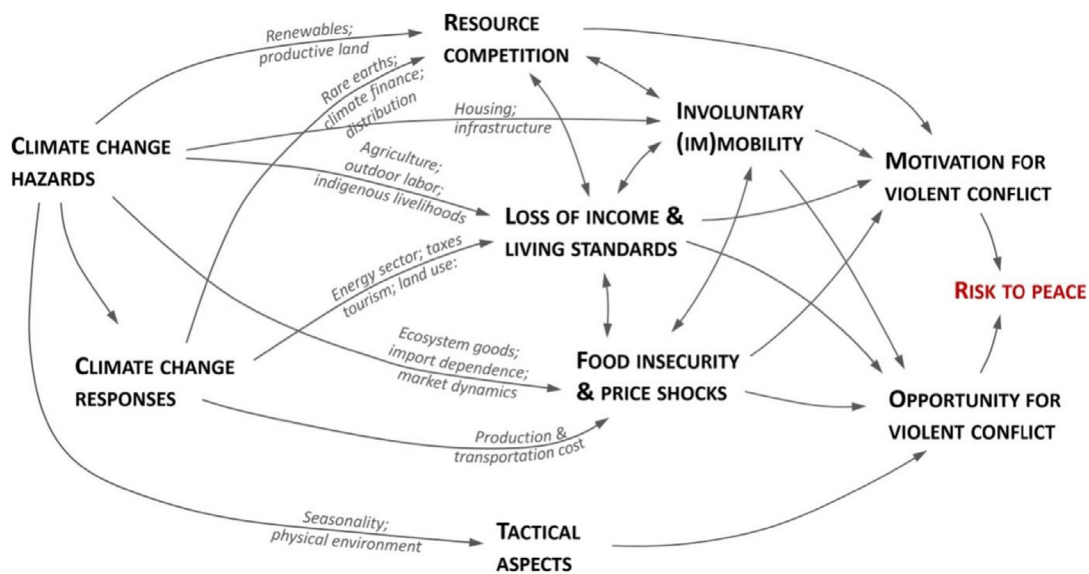
The Commission on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) General Recommendation No. 40³³ recognizes the **disproportionate impact of climate change on women** and promotes **women’s leadership** in climate action and decision-making. It links the fight for gender equality with the urgent need for **climate resilience**.

CEDAW General Recommendation N37 emphasizing the urgent need to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change while promoting gender equality and highlighting the importance of achieving gender equality as a key factor in strengthening the resilience of individuals and communities in the face of climate change and disasters.

COP 29 and Climate Finance: Ensuring Ukraine’s access to conflict-sensitive climate financing mechanisms to rebuild sustainable infrastructure and address transboundary environmental impacts.

The Paris Agreement: Supporting Ukraine and neighbouring countries in updating Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) that reflect war-induced setbacks while promoting green recovery.

FIGURE 2.
Existing climate-conflict links



Source: Buhaug, H. and others. 2023. “Climate-driven risks to peace over the 21st century.” *Climate Risk Management*, 39, 100471.

32 UNDRR (United Nations Disaster Risk Reduction. 2024. [Sendai Gender Action Plan](#).

33 CEDAW Committee. 2024. [General Recommendation No. 40 on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems](#).

ANALYSIS OF CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS AND THE WPS AGENDA

Using the climate security categorization developed by the Finnish Institute of International Affairs (FIIA), this brief will systematically analyse the connections between climate change and the WPS agenda. FIIA has divided **climate security** impacts into three groups: direct impacts, cascading impacts and transition impacts.³⁴

Impact Type	Definition	Relevance to WPS agenda & Ukraine context
Direct impacts	Changes in the physical environment and their consequences for human health and critical infrastructure, such as a storm followed by an extensive power outage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The way that conflict and climate change interact is by increasing indirect social vulnerability through disproportionate loss and damage by those exposed to both harms. Conflict can influence vulnerability to the effects of adverse weather (e.g., service and supply shortages due to conflict affect the ability to respond to extreme weather events, such as floods or hurricanes); those vulnerabilities are highest in groups with the lowest socioeconomic and political status.³⁵ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) data show that when extreme weather disasters strike, women and children are 14 times more likely to die than men, mostly due to limited access to information, limited mobility, decision-making and resources.³⁶
Cascading impacts	Occur when environmental changes are combined with socioeconomic and geopolitical factors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Russian attacks on Ukraine’s energy sector have resulted in the damage or destruction of 13 gigawatts of capacity across Ukraine. Some 30 per cent of forests in conflict zones have suffered direct damage or increased fire vulnerability, while 2.4 million hectares of land face contamination from explosives, limiting agricultural use and threatening biodiversity. Water infrastructure damage has affected not only human settlements but also crucial wetland ecosystems, with the destruction of the Kakhovka Dam in 2023 creating unprecedented environmental challenges for the entire lower Dnipro basin. These cascading impacts have significant climate implications – having contributed to the war’s massive carbon footprint, generating at least 175 million tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂ emissions).³⁷
Transition impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Associated with the mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. These entail both the potentially harmful side effects of individual climate policy measures and the wider, systemic disruptions that may stem from decarbonization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the reconstruction of Ukraine, how to balance short-term recovery needs and long-term climate resilience is a key challenge. Supporting Ukraine’s efforts, UNDP and the Government of Sweden established the Coordinated Center for Environmental Damage Assessment³⁸ to serve as a vital platform to monitor and document war-related climate and environmental impacts, while simultaneously helping to shape Ukraine’s green and sustainable reconstruction efforts in a conflict-sensitive manner.³⁹

34 Hakala, Emma et al. 2021. “[Climate change and Finnish Comprehensive Security](#).” Finnish Institute of International Affairs Briefing Paper.

35 Raleigh, Clionadh et al. 2024. “[Climate finance and conflict: adaptation amid instability](#).” The Lancet Planetary Health, Volume 8, Issue 1, e51-e60.

36 United Nations. Undated. “[Why women are key to climate action](#).”

37 Kopytsia, Ievgeniia. 2024. “[From COP28 to COP29 with Ukraine at the Front: Linking Climate, Security and Peace](#).” University of Oxford Law.

38 UNDP. 2023. “[New coordination center to assess environmental impacts of the war on Ukraine](#).” 10 March.

39 Kopytsia, Ievgeniia. 2024. “[From COP28 to COP29 with Ukraine at the Front: Linking Climate, Security and Peace](#).” University of Oxford Law.

CLIMATE ACTION'S POTENTIAL AS A PEACEBUILDING TOOL

While climate change exacerbates fragility in conflict-affected regions, integrated climate action can catalyse peacebuilding through multidimensional synergies. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) Green Industrial Recovery Programme in Ukraine 2024–2028⁴⁰ exemplifies how conflict-sensitive climate interventions can address compound vulnerabilities while fostering social cohesion:

Resource cooperation as trust-building: Joint environmental governance initiatives create platforms for dialogue across divided communities. For instance, UNIDO's support for Ukraine's circular economy transition includes establishing industrial symbiosis networks between relocated enterprises in western regions and host communities. By co-managing waste-to-energy systems and renewable energy microgrids (e.g., solar plants for relocated factories), these partnerships rebuild economic interdependence while reducing environmental risks.

Green jobs as stabilization leverage: Climate-aligned industrial recovery directly tackles post-conflict unemployment traps. UNIDO's vocational training programmes target war-affected groups – with 40 per cent women's participation. They focus on renewable energy installation (with the goal of 1,000+ people trained by 2025), 3D-printed prosthetics manufacturing (100+ jobs created in 2024) and sustainable agri-processing. Critically, these initiatives prioritize areas with high IDP concentrations, linking green skills development with livelihood restoration.

Gender-responsive climate solutions: UNIDO operationalizes the WPS framework by embedding gender equality in climate-industrial policies. Its “Women's Economic Empowerment in Western Ukraine” project

(with €600,000 Austrian funding) trains displaced women in eco-innovation and circular business models, while advocating for gender quotas in green sector investments. Early results show 35 per cent of female trainees launching waste-recycling small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), simultaneously mitigating environmental degradation and reducing economic precarity.

Systemic risk mitigation through industrial decarbonization: The programme's focus on reducing Ukraine's industrial carbon intensity (3.65 tons of carbon dioxide emissions per unit of USD manufacturing value added (CO₂/MVA) in 2022 vs. the EU average of 0.19) directly addresses conflict-environment feedback loops. By retrofitting 500+ SMEs with energy-efficient technologies and decentralizing renewable energy systems (with a target of 300,000 tons of CO₂ reduction), UNIDO not only cuts emissions but also enhances energy security – a critical factor in stabilizing conflict-prone regions dependent on damaged centralized grids.

The ongoing crisis clearly reveals how climate change functions as a ‘security multiplier’, interacting with conflict dynamics and gender inequality to create compound vulnerabilities. Traditional siloed policy responses – treating climate action, conflict resolution and gender equality as separate domains – cannot effectively address these intertwined challenges. The WPS framework has enormous potential to serve as an integrated platform for these three dimensions, but this potential must be realized through systematic methodological innovation and policy adjustments. This requires explicitly incorporating climate security considerations into WPS implementation tools, ensuring that gender-sensitive climate adaptation and mitigation actions become core components of peacebuilding work rather than optional add-ons.

2.3 Gender inequality: Structural features and transformative potential

When analysing gender inequality within the WPS framework, we examine not only its vulnerability aspects in relation to conflict and climate change but also how gender dynamics shape societal responses to conflict and environmental challenges, and women's key role as agents of change. Gender inequality is not merely a phenomenon at the level of personal experience, but a structural reality deeply embedded in social norms, institutional arrangements and power relations, influencing decision-making processes and resource allocation from household to international levels.

HOW GENDER NORMS SHAPE CLIMATE-CONFLICT RESPONSES

Gender norms profoundly influence how people understand, experience and respond to climate change and conflict, creating differentiated patterns of risk and response strategies:

Structural exclusion and decision-making participation remain significant barriers. Despite demonstrating unique adaptive capacities and innovative strategies in climate change and conflict contexts, women are systematically excluded from key decision-making processes by existing social norms. As mentioned before, female representation remains generally insufficient in global climate negotiations and conflict area decision-making bodies, limiting the integration of gender perspectives in places where climate and conflict intersect.

40 UNIDO. 2024. [Green Industrial Recovery Programme Ukraine 2024-2028](#).

Gendered access to resources creates fundamental disparities. In many societies, there are marked gender differences in access to key resources – such as land ownership, credit, technology and education – limiting women’s capacity to respond to climate change and conflict. Even where laws guarantee gender equality, gender imbalances in land ownership persist in practice, particularly in rural areas and conflict-affected regions. These inequalities are especially pronounced in climate adaptation contexts, restricting female farmers’ access to climate-smart agricultural technologies.

Care burdens and time poverty constrain women’s ability to participate in climate adaptation, conflict prevention and recovery activities. During conflicts, women’s time spent on unpaid care work often increases significantly, especially in caring for the elderly and disabled. During extreme climate events, female caregivers typically face greater health risks, reflecting the gendered connections between climate, care and health.

Gender norm reinforcement under resource pressure is well-documented. Aforementioned research shows that resource scarcity and environmental pressures often lead to the reinforcement of traditional gender norms, consequently reducing investment in girls’ education or increasing child marriage. Multiple studies in conflict-affected regions have documented a “returning to tradition” phenomena during resource-stress periods, reflecting the intensification of gender inequality during crises.

HOW GENDER INEQUALITY INFLUENCES CONFLICT DYNAMICS

Gender inequality is not only affected by conflict but plays a central role in shaping conflict causes, manifestations and resolution approaches:

Gendered conflict risk perception significantly influences outcomes. Research shows that gender norms affect people’s perception of threats and preferences for conflict resolution.⁴¹ Multiple conflict studies indicate that women generally tend to emphasize peaceful solutions, with higher proportions supporting diplomatic approaches compared to men.⁴² However, female representation in peace processes remains insufficient, causing systematic absence of important peace perspectives.

Armed conflicts feature gendered mobilization and narratives. Militarized narratives often reinforce specific

gender norms, defining the protection of female civilians as central to conflict legitimacy. These narrative frameworks simultaneously strengthen stereotypes portraying women as victims rather than agents, overlooking their active contributions to peacebuilding.

Gender-based violence serves as a weapon in many conflicts. UN bodies have documented conflict-related sexual violence cases across multiple conflict zones,⁴³ although actual numbers likely far exceed official statistics. Such violence not only causes direct harm but also negatively impacts long-term peacebuilding by destroying community cohesion and trust.

Informal peacebuilders face exclusion from formal processes. Despite women playing key roles in community-level conflict prevention and mediation, formal peace processes often exclude these “informal” contributions. Women-led initiatives often comprise high proportions of local peace initiatives, but these initiatives typically remain absent from national and international peace discussions, resulting in a loss of valuable mediation experience and local knowledge.

GENDER INEQUALITY’S IMPACT ON CLIMATE ACTION

Gender inequality structurally shapes how climate change is perceived, experienced and addressed, creating differentiated vulnerabilities and adaptation pathways:

Gender gaps in climate finance limit women’s contributions. Despite women being at the forefront of community climate adaptation actions globally, they often lack necessary financial services to scale their contributions. The proportion of official climate development assistance designating gender equality as a primary objective remains generally low.⁴⁴

Inequalities in technology access persist. Access to and use of climate-smart technologies shows significant gender gaps. Studies across multiple countries indicate that male farmers generally have greater opportunities to access climate forecast information and climate-resilient agricultural technology training than women, directly affecting adaptation capacity differences.⁴⁵

Representation imbalances in decision-making bodies limit gender integration. Women’s underrepresentation in climate policy development and implementation institutions limits the integration of gender perspectives.

41 Schwartz, J. A. and C. W. Blair. 2020. “Do Women Make More Credible Threats? Gender Stereotypes, Audience Costs, and Crisis Bargaining.” *International Organization*. 74(4), pp. 872–895.

42 Krause, J., W. Krause and P. Bränfors. 2018. “Women’s Participation in Peace Negotiations and the Durability of Peace.” *International Interactions*, 44(6), pp. 985–1016. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050629.2018.1492386>

43 Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. 2023. [Conflict-related sexual violence: Report of the United Nations Secretary-General](#).

44 UNDESA, UNFCCC and UN Women. 2016. [Report of Expert Group Meeting: Implementation of gender-responsive climate action in the context of sustainable development](#).

45 Manzoor, H. and others. 2020. “Gender focused training and knowledge enhances the adoption of climate resilient seeds.” *Technology in Society*. 63, 101388.

Female membership proportions in climate change decision-making bodies at all levels remain generally low, especially in rural areas and conflict-affected regions, weakening responsiveness to gender-specific needs.

Gendered loss of traditional knowledge represents a missed opportunity. Women often serve as important holders of community environmental and climate

knowledge, but this knowledge is systematically overlooked in formal decision-making processes. Ethnographic research has documented unique climate adaptation knowledge systems held by elderly women, including traditional methods for predicting extreme weather and water conservation techniques,⁴⁶ but this knowledge is often absent from official climate adaptation plans.

2.4 Reframing narratives: Emphasizing women's agency as change agents

Women play a transformative role in addressing the interconnected challenges of climate change and conflict. Moving beyond traditional narratives of vulnerability, it is essential to amplify their contributions as leaders, innovators and peacebuilders.

WOMEN'S MULTIFACETED CONTRIBUTIONS

1. Leaders in environmental management and resource protection

Women have demonstrated remarkable leadership in environmental conservation. For example, in Ecuador, Waorani leader Nemonte Nenquimo successfully led a lawsuit to protect Indigenous land from oil extraction, ensuring informed consent from her community before further exploitation.⁴⁷ In Kenya, Wangari Maathai's Green Belt Movement has planted over 51 million trees, combating deforestation while empowering women through sustainable income-generating activities such as forestry and beekeeping.⁴⁸ These cases highlight women's ability to integrate environmental restoration with community resilience and long-term sustainability.

2. Bridging community resilience and conflict resolution

Women often act as connectors across divided communities during crises. In Sudan's North Kordofan region, women-led initiatives in natural resource management have mediated disputes between pastoralist and farming communities.⁴⁹ These efforts not only resolved conflicts but also strengthened women's roles in decision-making processes. Similarly, in Colombia's Chocó and Antioquia regions, Afro-Colombian women have been instrumental in mediating land disputes exacerbated by illegal mining. Through training in dispute resolution and land titling, they secured land rights for thousands of families while fostering peace.⁵⁰ Such initiatives demonstrate how women bridge environmental action with reconciliation efforts to strengthen community cohesion.

46 Gutsa, Ignatius. 2021. "[Emic ethnographic encounters: Researching elderly female household heads' experience with climate change in rural Zimbabwe.](#)" *Ethnography*, 24(4), pp. 461–473.

47 Goldman Prize. 2020. "[2020 Goldman Prize Winner: Nemonte Nenquimo.](#)"

48 Boyer-Rechlin, Bethany. 2010. "[Women in Forestry: A Study of Kenya's Green Belt Movement and Nepal's Community Forestry Program.](#)" *Scandinavian Journal of Forest Research*. 25. pp. 69–72.

49 UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme). Undated "[Gender and the environment.](#)"

50 Bratspries, Rebecca. 2020. "[Territory is Everything': Afro-Colombian Communities, Human Rights and Illegal Land Grabs.](#)" *Columbia Human Rights Law Review*.

3. Drivers of climate innovation

When given equal opportunities, women bring inclusive and innovative solutions to climate challenges: In Nepal's Terai region, marginalized women have advanced forest-management practices, combining traditional ecological knowledge with modern conservation techniques to address resource scarcity and local conflicts.⁵¹ Women-led small enterprises globally are pioneering renewable energy projects and circular economy initiatives that prioritize both community needs and environmental sustainability.⁵²

WOMEN'S UNIQUE CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE CLIMATE-CONFLICT NEXUS

Early warning systems: Due to their central roles in food and water security, women are often the first to detect environmental stress signals. Integrating their observations into early warning systems has proven to enhance the effectiveness of conflict-prevention strategies.

Resource management and mediation: Women frequently act as both resource managers and mediators. In the aforementioned case in Colombia, training programmes enabled Afro-Colombian women to mediate conflicts over land use, resulting in more sustainable solutions that balanced environmental conservation with community needs.

Knowledge integration for adaptation: Women excel at blending traditional ecological knowledge with modern climate science. For instance, female farmers globally play a vital role in preserving agricultural biodiversity, which is critical for climate adaptation.

INTEGRATING GENDER EQUALITY: A STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE

Placing gender equality at the core of climate resilience and peacebuilding efforts is both an ethical obligation and a strategic necessity:

Policy synergy: Research demonstrates that integrating gender perspectives into climate adaptation policies enhances community recovery rates while reducing resource-based conflicts. For example, UN-backed projects incorporating gender equality have achieved higher success rates in post-conflict reconstruction efforts.⁵³

Triple dividend: Gender-sensitive interventions yield a "triple dividend"⁵⁴ of promoting gender equality, enhancing climate resilience and fostering stability. Evaluations show that projects explicitly designed with gender considerations outperform others in environmental sustainability, social cohesion and women's economic empowerment.⁵⁵

Bridging traditional and non-traditional security: Women-centred approaches connect traditional security concerns with emerging threats like resource scarcity. Female leaders often adopt holistic perspectives that address both immediate risks and long-term sustainability.

Intergenerational sustainability: Gender-inclusive climate-peace initiatives tend to prioritize intergenerational equity. Women-led programmes frequently incorporate long-term planning frameworks that ensure resource sustainability for future generations.

51 APFNet (Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation). 2023. [Empowering Women in Community Sustainable Forest Management: Nepal](#).

52 UN Women Europe and Central Asia. 2024. "[Empowering Women in Water Diplomacy and Management: The International Forum 'Women and Water'](#)." 12 June.

53 UNDP, UNEP, UN Women and the UN Peacebuilding Support Office. 2013. [Women and Natural Resources: Unlocking the Peacebuilding Potential](#).

54 UN Women. 2016. [Leveraging Co-Benefits Between Gender Equality and Climate Action for Sustainable Development](#).

55 Livingstone, Deborah and Chris Hearle. 2024. [Building Women's Economic Empowerment into Climate Transitions](#). WOW Helpdesk Query No. 88. London: WOW Helpdesk.

The war in Ukraine profoundly illustrates how gender inequality shapes experiences of and responses to conflict and climate crises. The traditional framework that views women solely as victims no longer accurately reflects the complex reality and misses the strategic opportunity to leverage women's agency in driving comprehensive solutions. The Women, Peace and Security agenda offers a unique advantage in integrating gender, climate and peace perspectives. However, it requires a systemic transformation: shifting from a protection-oriented approach to an empowerment-focused one, from single-sector responses to intersectional methods, and from emphasizing vulnerability to strengthening agency.

By recognizing women not only as disproportionate victims of conflict and climate change but also as key actors in addressing these challenges, the WPS framework can unlock transformative potential. This approach fosters more resilient, equitable and peaceful societies. It requires policymakers and practitioners to reassess existing strategies, design innovative interventions that integrate gender equality with climate resilience and peacebuilding goals and ensure women's meaningful participation at all levels of decision-making.

3. Transforming the WPS Agenda: Lessons learned, current challenges and strategic opportunities

As climate change, conflict and gender inequality become increasingly intertwined challenges, the WPS agenda – established firmly in international norms and national practices – offers unique advantages in addressing these compound crises. This section examines the essence, evolution and implementation mechanisms of the WPS framework, assesses its potential and limitations for integrating climate security perspectives in the current geopolitical landscape, and suggests strategic pathways

to enhance its effectiveness in the context of the ongoing war. By analysing how WPS has evolved from its initial focus on gender in armed conflict to potentially becoming a comprehensive platform for addressing contemporary compound threats, this section lays the groundwork for specific policy recommendations in Part 4, ensuring these recommendations are both normatively grounded and operationally relevant.

3.1 WPS national action plans

BOX 3.

The WPS agenda, established by UNSCR 1325, provides a crucial framework for addressing the unique impact of armed conflict on women and girls, and for promoting women's role in peacebuilding. Anchored in four core pillars – participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery – the WPS agenda recognizes that gender equality is not only a matter of human rights but also a strategic imperative for achieving sustainable peace and security. National Action Plans (NAPs) serve as the primary mechanism for translating the WPS agenda into concrete action at the national level, outlining specific objectives, strategies and indicators for advancing WPS goals within a country's unique context. NAPs are particularly relevant in terms of promising multistakeholder policy processes, allowing the engagement of various government departments, civil society and communities on a systematic basis. By 2022, 40 per cent of NAPs and 46 per cent of Regional Action Plans included climate change references. However, despite progress in adopting NAPs globally, significant gaps remain in their effective implementation and resource allocation. This brief assesses the structural limitations of traditional frameworks in addressing contemporary compound crises and highlights the strategic necessity of incorporating climate resilience into WPS approaches.

The ongoing war in Ukraine presents a complex and multifaceted test for the WPS agenda and its implementation through NAPs. The conflict has exposed key implementation gaps, including a multi-layered nature exceeding existing frameworks, insufficient institutional coordination, a weak data and evidence base, resource competition and priority tensions, substantive barriers to women's decision-making participation, and an imbalance between protection and agency. These limitations are further exacerbated by concerning trends in resource allocation, as evidenced by the UN Secretary-General's 2024 report on WPS.⁵⁶ While USD 20.5 billion in bilateral aid was

committed annually to gender equality in conflict-affected contexts in 2021–2022, this represents a decrease compared to the rising trend of the last decade. Moreover, only 5 per cent of bilateral aid was dedicated to programmes with gender equality as a principal objective and funding for women's organizations in conflict-affected countries decreased to just USD 148 million, a significant decline considering their crucial role in local peacebuilding and resilience efforts. This reality underscores the urgent need to integrate climate resilience into the WPS framework, to ensure the agenda remains relevant and effective in the face of increasingly complex challenges.

⁵⁶ United Nations Security Council. 2024. [Women and peace and security: Report of the Secretary-General](#).

3.2 The war of the Russian Federation in Ukraine: A complex test for WPS implementation

The ongoing war in Ukraine presents a complex and multifaceted test for the WPS agenda and its implementation through NAPs. Contemporary conflicts are no longer single-dimension security threats, but compound challenges deeply intertwined with various factors, including cross-border displacement, energy security shocks, food system disruptions and environmental degradation. The situation in Ukraine highlights the structural limitations of traditional frameworks in addressing contemporary compound crises.

Based on the UN Secretary-General's 2024 report on WPS,⁵⁷ this brief analysed key implementation gaps the conflict has exposed, including the following challenges:

Multi-layered crisis complexity: The conflict involves conventional armed conflict, cross-border displacement, energy security shocks, food system disruptions and environmental degradation simultaneously. This compound nature strains traditional WPS implementation models primarily designed for single-dimension armed conflicts.

Insufficient institutional coordination: There is a notable lack of effective coordination mechanisms between institutions responsible for WPS implementation and those leading climate change responses. Climate policies are typically managed by environmental departments, while WPS is often handled by gender institutions or diplomatic and defense departments.

Weak data and evidence base: Gender-sensitive climate data collection faces severe challenges in conflict zones. Infrastructure destruction and security restrictions have affected climate monitoring systems and gender statistics capabilities, leaving decision-makers without reliable data.

Resource competition and priority tensions: Significant tensions exist between humanitarian emergency response and long-term climate resilience-building. Urgent survival needs often overshadow climate adaptation investments, while insufficient climate adaptation may exacerbate future vulnerabilities.

Barriers to women's decision-making participation: Women continue to face systemic barriers to substantive participation in high-level decision-making, particularly in climate-related decisions, affecting policy design inclusiveness and effectiveness.

Imbalance between protection and agency: Current responses often overemphasize protection measures, viewing women primarily as victims rather than change agents, especially in environmental management and climate adaptation areas.

3.3 Strategic imperative: The necessity of climate integration for WPS relevance

Facing these challenges, integrating climate resilience perspectives into the WPS framework is essential for the agenda's future relevance and effectiveness, particularly considering the realities exposed by the war in Ukraine. This strategic necessity is underscored by several key factors:

Compound risk realities demand integrated responses: The war in Ukraine demonstrates that contemporary conflicts are intertwined with climate change, resource competition, displacement and gender inequality, requiring policy frameworks with equivalent integration capabilities.

Enhancing policy intervention effectiveness and sustainability: Incorporating climate resilience into WPS can significantly enhance the long-term effectiveness of policy interventions.

Activating women's potential as change agents: Climate resilience perspectives provide new opportunities for repositioning women's roles in peacebuilding. When women are viewed as change agents rather than merely victims, they can create solutions with dual benefits for climate resilience and peacebuilding.

Addressing challenges from emerging technologies: Beyond climate change, security analysis indicates that future conflicts will involve overlapping impacts of climate pressures and technological change. By integrating climate resilience into WPS, conceptual frameworks and institutional capacities can be established to address these compound threats.

Improving resource utilization efficiency and impact: Integrated approaches can enhance the cost-effectiveness of interventions, as seen when mainstreaming climate and gender considerations into conflict responses to reduce programme overlap and improve resource utilization.

Creating systemic conditions for sustainable peace: Climate insecurity is a key threat factor for post-conflict peace sustainability. Integrating climate resilience perspectives promotes a more comprehensive understanding of systemic conditions for lasting peace.

⁵⁷ [Ibid.](#)

3.4 Funding realities and challenges

To effectively implement this integrated approach, adequate funding is essential. However, the current financing picture reveals significant gaps:

As highlighted in the UN Secretary-General's 2024 annual report on WPS, funding for women's organizations in conflict-affected countries decreased to USD 142 million (0.3 per cent of bilateral aid to conflict-affected contexts), underscoring the need for more integrated and effective resource allocation.

This figure is far from the UN recommendation to allocate a minimum of 1 per cent of official development assistance (ODA) to women's organizations in conflict-affected countries, especially grass-roots groups mobilizing for peace.⁵⁸

The share of overall bilateral official development assistance with gender equality objectives has dropped from 45 to 44 per cent, after having increased during the previous decade.

When analysing climate finance specifically, instances of funding being committed to activities that address climate, peace and security, and gender as a principal objective are extremely rare.

The integration of climate perspectives into WPS represents a strategic imperative that extends beyond operational efficiency. It offers a pathway to reconceptualize women's agency in conflict settings, moving beyond protection narratives to recognize their pivotal roles in environmental management, climate adaptation and sustainable peace. The Ukraine conflict demonstrates that today's security challenges demand frameworks capable of addressing interconnected threats across institutional, conceptual and practical domains.

As we turn to practical considerations for implementation, it becomes clear that transforming the WPS agenda requires not only policy innovation but new models of collaboration, funding mechanisms and measurement frameworks that reflect the complex reality of modern conflicts. The path forward must build upon the normative foundations of the WPS framework while boldly reimagining its application in a climate-changed world.

BOX 4.

The traditional pillars of the WPS agenda – participation, protection, prevention, and relief and recovery – remain foundational, but they must expand to incorporate climate resilience as both a threat multiplier and an opportunity for innovative peacebuilding approaches. As conflicts increasingly manifest as compound crises with environmental dimensions, the WPS framework must evolve accordingly or risk diminishing effectiveness.

⁵⁸ United Nations. "Our Common Agenda policy brief 9".

4. Integrating climate resilience into the WPS agenda to combat compound crises: The way forward

The experiences of the war in Ukraine serve as a clear call for the WPS agenda to evolve in response to the realities of contemporary compound crises. On the eve of critical milestones of Beijing+30 (B+30) and the 25th anniversary of UN Security Council resolution 1325, a structured road map for effectively integrating climate resilience into the WPS framework is needed. This is not simply a technical adjustment but a strategic reimagining of traditional peace and security frameworks to address the increasingly intertwined climate-conflict-gender nexus.

The implementation gaps revealed by the war in Ukraine – ranging from the complexities of multilayered crises to insufficient institutional coordination, weak data foundations and resource competition – all demand a systemic approach. This section presents a layered pathway forward, designed to address these fundamental challenges while providing clear guidance for practical action. This approach recognizes that to achieve effective institutional change, it is essential to address both **the foundations of feasibility and the frameworks for implementation.**

4.1 Foundations of feasibility

This foundational layer addresses the fundamental enablers without which successful implementation is impossible. These elements form the bedrock for all subsequent actions, ensuring that efforts to integrate WPS and climate resilience are built on a solid base. Without addressing these underlying challenges, even the most well-designed policy frameworks will encounter significant obstacles in implementation.

DATA AND KNOWLEDGE INFRASTRUCTURE

The war in Ukraine has resulted in extensive environmental damage. At the Ukrainian pavilion at COP29 in November 2024, the Government of Ukraine reported that from “the beginning of the full-scale invasion, Russia has committed over 6,500 crimes against the environment. Related greenhouse gas emissions have reached 180 million tons [and] almost 3 million hectares of forests have been damaged by the war. 39,000 square kilometers of land has been mined, which is three times the area of Switzerland”.⁵⁹ Polluted water supplies, contaminated farmland and deforestation disproportionately affect women, who are often responsible for securing water and food for their families. Gender-sensitive data collection ensures that targeted solutions can address these specific vulnerabilities.

Short-term actions:

Conduct gender-sensitive climate and conflict risk assessments to identify vulnerabilities, needs and opportunities. The conduct of these assessments should be undertaken in a localized way.

Revise and refine indicator systems to accurately capture the differentiated impacts of climate change on diverse gender groups.

Implement gender-disaggregated environmental impact assessments to evaluate the scale of environmental damage caused by the war.

Example: The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine, in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), has initiated preliminary gender-sensitive environmental assessments. These studies track the impacts of conflict-related deforestation, water contamination and environmental-damage-induced displacement on different gender groups.

Medium-term actions:

Support existing national database systems to systematically track the gender-specific impacts of climate change and conflict.

Disaggregate data by gender, age and displacement status to inform targeted policies.

Utilize gender-disaggregated assessments to identify climate- security hotspots, addressing the specific vulnerabilities of women and girls in affected areas.

59 Sustain Europe. 2024. [A peace formula, green innovations, and plantable walls—Ukraine presents a pavilion at COP29.](#)

Collaborate with international organizations such as UNEP and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) to incorporate findings into Ukraine's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security and recovery strategies.

Establish a shared language and standardized guidance to enable capacity-building and operationalization of gender-sensitive climate initiatives across all levels of governance.⁶⁰

Create opportunities for the development of knowledge-sharing networks across institutions ranging from ministries to women's organizations at the national, regional, and local levels.⁶¹

Facilitate data-sharing platforms for comparative analysis and best practices.

Long-term actions:

Institutionalize gender-sensitive research as a standard component of National Action Plans.

Develop evidence systems to monitor trends and measure the effectiveness of gender-responsive WPS and climate initiatives.

RAISING AWARENESS AND CULTURAL CAPITAL

Short-term actions:

Launch advocacy campaigns to highlight the links between climate change, conflict and gender inequality.

Conduct public awareness campaigns focused on the gendered impacts of the war in Ukraine, such as how infrastructure damage increases climate-related stress for women (e.g., reliance on unsafe energy sources).

Mobilize media, civil society, youth and grass-roots organizations to amplify the need for climate action within the WPS and Youth, Peace and Security frameworks.

Utilize storytelling approaches to highlight the leadership roles of women in climate adaptation and peacebuilding within displaced or war-affected communities.

Medium-term actions:

Organize national and regional dialogues with women's organizations and policymakers to advocate for inclusive climate and recovery strategies.

Enhance the advocacy capacity of women-led organizations to influence climate, peace and security policies.

Long-term actions:

Establish multi-stakeholder platforms for continuous advocacy to integrate climate change into the WPS agenda.

Elevate women leaders as global advocates for climate resilience and peacebuilding.

Incorporate climate education into national curricula with a gender-sensitive lens.

LEADERSHIP PATHWAYS

Short-term actions:

Empower women as decision-makers in climate adaptation, resource management and peacebuilding processes, including on global platforms such as the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) annual Conference of the Parties (COPs).

Provide technical and financial resources for grass-roots initiatives. For example, women in conflict-affected rural areas of Ukraine can receive training in climate-resilient agricultural techniques and tools for restoring soil fertility.

Support women-led organizations in implementing community-based climate resilience programmes, particularly in conflict-affected and displacement settings.

Medium-term actions:

Provide tailored capacity-building programmes to strengthen women's roles in climate negotiations and recovery planning.

Ensure gender-balanced representation in decision-making bodies addressing climate security, humanitarian response and environmental recovery.

Support women-led organizations in participating in local decision-making processes related to climate adaptation and peacebuilding efforts.

Establish platforms for Ukrainian women to contribute to post-war recovery plans, focusing on integrating climate resilience and addressing environmental damage caused by the war.

Establish global networks to connect women leaders from conflict-affected regions for knowledge-sharing.

Long-term actions:

Institutionalize mechanisms that ensure women's leadership in climate and peace processes at all levels.

Promote global recognition of the central role of women's leadership in achieving resilience in crisis environments.

Integrate gender-sensitive approaches in national recovery and climate adaptation plans.

⁶⁰ Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. 2025, March. [Advancing gender, climate, and security in the UN Security Council: A blueprint for Action.](#)

⁶¹ Ibid.

4.2 Frameworks for implementation

With the foundational layer addressing essential preconditions, the implementation layer provides the operational mechanisms for driving systemic change. These strategies and actions are designed to create the necessary structures, processes and resources to effectively integrate climate resilience into the WPS framework.

VERTICAL GOVERNANCE COHERENCE

Short-term actions:

Establish inter-ministerial working groups to integrate gender, climate and peace priorities across government agencies.

Facilitate cooperation between humanitarian, development and climate actors through existing platforms and mechanisms.

Example: Finland's National Action Plan has established inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms that foster cooperation among various ministries, security institutions and climate actors, mainstreaming climate change into WPS implementation.

Medium-term actions:

Review existing NAPs or similar strategies to align them with national climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction and recovery strategies while also integrating a gender-sensitive approach.

Use NAP renewal processes as an opportunity to further integrate climate issues from a gender perspective as a cross-thematic issue with specific indicators.⁶²

Strengthen partnerships among governments, civil society and international organizations.

Explore partnerships that combine climate science expertise with peacebuilding experience.

Collaborate with governments to ensure community-level data are integrated into national policies.

Example: Romania has integrated gender-sensitive approaches into its national disaster risk reduction plans, particularly in refugee support programmes for Ukrainian women displaced by conflict. Focus areas include climate-adaptive shelter and healthcare services.

Long-term actions:

Institutionalize cross-sectoral collaboration to ensure sustained progress on integrated approaches.

Promote regional cooperation to share best practices and address common vulnerabilities.

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION SYSTEMS

Providing high-quality, flexible and timely funding to support women's civil society organizations that are already at the front lines of this response is essential to enable them to actively engage in climate security and climate justice efforts. This funding is critical, considering that only 0.2% of charitable donations are directed to women-led environmental programmes.⁶³ The UN Secretary-General's 2020 annual report calls for recognizing "the importance of channeling resources, including through joint and other mechanisms, to local women's groups at the front lines of climate change and supporting women's leadership in responding to these interlinked crises."⁶⁴

Short-term actions:

Increase dedicated, flexible, funding for women-led organizations and refugee-led initiatives, supporting work at the intersection of climate action and peacebuilding. A targeted 10 per cent of grants/funding being provided should go to women-led/owned organizations.

Provide rapid training for local authorities and NGOs on integrating gender-sensitive climate action.

Offer technical training to women in rural areas on climate-smart agriculture, sustainable forestry and renewable energy.

Example: The Carpathian region faces significant environmental damage due to military operations and displacement. Women's leadership in reforestation and sustainable land management is essential for restoring ecosystems and addressing conflict-induced climate vulnerabilities. Women-led initiatives in the Carpathian region are training local communities in sustainable forest management and adopting renewable energy sources. These projects, supported by UNDP Ukraine, empower women as climate resilience leaders.

Medium-term actions:

Develop customized training for government agencies and civil society on gender-sensitive climate adaptation and governance that engage women from climate-vulnerable and conflict-affected regions.

62 Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. 2025, March. [Advancing gender, climate, and security in the UN Security Council: A blueprint for Action.](#)

63 One Earth. 2023, December. [Daughters for Earth campaign launches, announcing 24 grants to women-led projects working to protect and restore the Earth.](#)

64 United Nations. 2020. [Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the organization.](#)

Allocate dedicated resources within WPS National Action Plans for implementing climate-related actions.

Long-term actions:

Institutionalize gender-sensitive training programmes within national governance systems.

Establish partnerships with international donors to ensure predictable funding for integrated approaches.

Create financing schemes (such as micro-grants) supporting women-owned small businesses focused on green recovery, such as reforestation initiatives addressing war-induced deforestation.

Support gender-responsive budgeting in climate adaptation programmes.

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING (MEL)

Short-term actions:

Develop gender-sensitive indicators to monitor progress on climate integration, women's participation and recovery efforts.

Establish indicators in Ukraine to measure the integration of women's leadership roles in climate resilience projects.

Medium-term actions:

Implement participatory MEL processes that actively involve women's organizations and local communities.

Use MEL findings to adjust and refine projects in real-time.

Long-term actions:

Institutionalize MEL frameworks to ensure continuous accountability and improvement of integrated WPS and climate strategies.

4.3 Strengthening National Action Plans through international cooperation and commitment alignment

With the foundational layer addressing essential preconditions, the implementation layer provides the operational mechanisms for driving systemic change. These strategies and actions are designed to create the necessary structures, processes and resources to effectively integrate climate resilience into the WPS framework.

LEVERAGING B+30 AND UNSCR 1325+25 REVIEWS FOR NAP ENHANCEMENT

The upcoming reviews of the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action +30 (B+30) and 25th anniversary of UNSCR 1325 (UNSCR 1325+25) provide a strategic opportunity to enhance NAPs. Instead of viewing these as compliance exercises, countries should use these processes to conduct thorough stocktaking and identify opportunities for integrating climate resilience, gender equality and conflict sensitivity. Therefore, the following recommendations are proposed:

Conduct comprehensive reviews of existing WPS NAPs to identify gaps in integrating climate change, gender equality and conflict resilience.

Engage in broad consultations with women's organizations, climate action groups and peacebuilders to ensure diverse perspectives inform the review process.

ENHANCING REGIONAL AND GLOBAL COLLABORATION

Effective NAP implementation requires strong partnerships and knowledge sharing at both regional and global levels. Collaboration can help countries access expertise, resources and best practices for integrating climate-WPS

objectives. Therefore, the following recommendations are proposed:

Strengthen collaboration with regional organizations, such as the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and international partners like UN Women and the UNFCCC.

Facilitate cross-sectoral dialogues among climate, humanitarian and peacebuilding actors to promote integrated approaches.

Develop joint initiatives that leverage the expertise of various stakeholders.

ESTABLISHING MECHANISMS FOR MUTUAL LEARNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Aligning NAPs with international commitments also requires establishing robust monitoring, evaluation and accountability mechanisms. This will ensure that progress is tracked, lessons are learned and adjustments are made as needed. Therefore, the following recommendations are proposed:

Strengthen national MEL frameworks to track progress on integrating gender equality, climate action and peacebuilding in WPS NAPs.

Develop gender-sensitive indicators to measure the effectiveness of climate-WPS integration, women's participation and overall recovery efforts.

Participate in international forums to share experiences, learn from others and contribute to the global knowledge base on climate-WPS integration.

LEVERAGING CLIMATE FINANCING MECHANISMS FOR WPS GOALS

Climate financing mechanisms have the potential to be powerful tools for advancing WPS goals, provided they are designed and implemented in a gender-responsive and conflict-sensitive manner. NAPs should outline strategies for leveraging these mechanisms to support climate-WPS initiatives. Therefore, the following recommendations are proposed:

Develop national strategies for accessing climate finance in ways that support gender equality and women's empowerment.

Advocate for gender-responsive and conflict-sensitive approaches within international climate funds and mechanisms.

Direct climate finance towards initiatives that address the specific needs and priorities of women and girls in conflict-affected and climate-vulnerable settings.

By leveraging the momentum of the upcoming reviews and following these actionable steps, governments, international agencies and civil society can ensure that gender equality, climate resilience and conflict-sensitive peacebuilding are fully integrated into the next generation of NAPs. This integrated approach is essential to addressing the complex and interconnected challenges highlighted by the war in Ukraine, and for fostering inclusive, sustainable and peaceful futures for women and communities globally. Prioritizing these recommendations provides a clear road map for governments, international partners and civil society to address the climate-conflict-gender nexus, fostering resilience, equality and peace for women and communities in Ukraine and around the world.

5. Conclusions

The triple nexus of climate change, conflict and gender inequality represents one of the most urgent and complex challenges of our time. As demonstrated throughout this brief, these challenges are not separate but deeply intertwined and mutually reinforcing, creating compound crises that traditional siloed approaches cannot adequately address. The war in Ukraine serves as a powerful illustration of this reality – where environmental degradation, resource insecurity and gender-based vulnerabilities converge to create multidimensional impacts that extend far beyond national borders.

The 25th anniversary of UNSCR 1325, the 20th anniversary of the Kyoto Protocol, and the 10th anniversary of the Paris Agreement in October 2025 represent not just milestones of progress, but a critical moment for transformation. This confluence of anniversaries offers a historic opportunity to bridge previously disconnected policy domains and create an integrated approach that recognizes women not simply as victims of climate change and conflict, but as powerful agents of resilience and change.

The evidence is clear: when women are excluded from climate security and peacebuilding processes, essential perspectives, knowledge and leadership capabilities are lost. Conversely, when women's participation is embraced, interventions become more effective, sustainable and equitable. The examples highlighted throughout this brief – from community-based adaptation initiatives to high-level policy engagement – demonstrate that women's leadership generates solutions that simultaneously address environmental sustainability, social cohesion and peace.

The WPS agenda stands at a crossroads. It can either evolve to meet these compound challenges or risk diminishing relevance in a world transformed by climate change. The path forward requires a fundamental shift in approach:

From protection to empowerment: Moving beyond narratives that position women primarily as victims to frameworks that recognize and enhance their agency as climate leaders and peacebuilders.

From sectoral to systemic: Replacing siloed interventions with integrated approaches that simultaneously address climate resilience, conflict prevention and gender equality.

From reactive to transformative: Shifting from short-term crisis responses to long-term strategies that address root causes and create systemic change.

The practical road map provided in this brief – addressing foundational enablers like data systems and leadership pathways, while strengthening implementation frameworks through governance coherence, resource mobilization and enhanced monitoring – offers a structured approach to achieving this transformation. By aligning National Action Plans with international commitments, fostering regional collaboration and leveraging climate financing mechanisms, more integrated and effective responses can be fostered.

The current funding landscape – where less than 0.035 per cent of ODA targets the climate-gender-peace nexus – reflects a critical gap between recognized needs and resource allocation. Addressing this gap is not merely a matter of financial redistribution but a strategic imperative. Investments in gender-responsive climate resilience and peacebuilding offer a “triple dividend” of promoting equality, enhancing environmental sustainability and fostering stability.

Amid the continuing impacts of the war and preparations for future compound crises, the integration of climate resilience into the WPS framework represents both an urgent necessity and a transformative opportunity. By recognizing the interconnected nature of climate change, conflict and gender dynamics, and by placing women's leadership at the centre of responses, more equitable, resilient and peaceful societies can be built – not just for women and girls, but for all.

The time for compartmentalized thinking and fragmented action has passed. The path forward demands bold leadership, institutional innovation and sustained commitment to an integrated approach that recognizes climate resilience not as an optional add-on to the WPS agenda, but as an essential component of its future relevance and effectiveness. By embracing this transformation, we honour not only the letter but the spirit of UNSCR 1325 – creating a world where women's full participation in all aspects of peace and security, including climate security, becomes not the exception but the norm.



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