



United Nations Secretary-General's Campaign *UNiTE by 2030* *to End Violence against Women*

ACTION CIRCULAR

February-March 2022

Edition Theme: Ending Violence Against Women and Girls in the Context of Climate Change

1. Introduction



This **Orange Day**, 25 February, in the lead up to the sixty-sixth session of the [Commission on the Status of Women](#) (CSW 66), taking place between 14-25 March under the priority 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 programmes*; the UNiTE campaign will focus on the linkages between **violence against women and girls (VAWG)** and **climate change**.

2. Impact of Climate Change on VAWG

Eliminating violence against women and girls and climate change are two of the most pressing global emergencies and sustainable development challenges of our time. Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is the most widespread and pervasive human rights violation worldwide, affecting around 1 in 3 women throughout their lifetime.¹

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BACKGROUND

Orange Day

The United Nations Secretary General's Campaign UNiTE to End Violence Against Women has proclaimed the 25th of each month as "**Orange Day**," a day to raise awareness and to take action to end violence against women and girls.

As a bright and optimistic colour, orange represents a future free from violence against women and girls, for the UNiTE Campaign.

Orange Day calls upon activists, governments, and UN partners to mobilize people and highlight issues relevant to preventing and ending violence against women and girls, not only once a year, on 25 November (the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women), but every month.

You can find further information on the [UNiTE](#) campaign [here](#).

2. Impact of Climate Change on VAWG Continued.

Climate change is threatening our planet's sustainability with devastating social, cultural, economic, health and human rights impacts. It is widely recognized as a phenomenon which affects women and girls disproportionately, especially the most marginalized, and it is also a serious aggravator of VAWG.

In the aftermath of climate-induced disasters, women and girls face a heightened risk of the whole spectrum of gender-based violence including rape, sexual assault and harassment, intimate partner violence, child marriage, trafficking and sexual exploitation. For instance, in Vanuatu, following two tropical cyclones in 2011 there was a 300% increase in domestic violence cases reported to the Tanna Women's Counselling Centre.² In Bangladesh after Cyclone Sidr in 2007 research found an increased rate of trafficking in affected districts.³

Displacement linked to climate change can exacerbate VAWG as women staying in shelters or temporary settlements are at increased risk of rape, sexual harassment, and other forms of violence due to the lack of safe and accessible infrastructure and services.⁴ A report by CARE found that one out of five women who are refugees or who have been displaced because of a natural disaster has experienced sexual violence.⁵ VAW is further intensified because women face greater barriers in reporting violence and in accessing essential services such as health and social services. In many cases there is a breakdown of law enforcement and resources that were used on violence prevention interventions may be diverted.

Slow-onset climate events such as heavier rainfalls and prolonged droughts are making it more difficult to safely secure resources and generate income, exacerbating harmful social norms and structural inequalities, creating tensions and stressors in the home and community.



Chandra Kala Thapa and Bir Bahadur Thapa carry newly-harvested eggplant to sell in a nearby village. Nepal, 2016 ©UN Women/Narendra Shrestha

Where women and girls make more frequent and longer journeys to obtain food or water, they may be exposed to greater risks of sexual violence whilst in public spaces. Furthermore, where men feel that their traditional role as “provider” is threatened due to poor harvest or livestock loss and ensuing food insecurity, they may attempt to reassert harmful notions of masculinity through violence.

There is also growing concern of the impact of climate change on child marriage and sexual exploitation. Girls may have to drop out of school to help secure food or water and child marriage may be used as a survival strategy by families facing food scarcity.⁶ Some studies have highlighted that male food vendors, farmers and landowners have exploited resource scarcity and demanded sex from women in exchange for food.⁷

Finally, the climate crisis has also exacerbated violence, harassment and threats against women environmental human rights defenders which impedes their activism and undermines overall global efforts to prevent and mitigate against climate change. In 2020, at least 331 environmental defenders were killed, including 44 women, 69 per cent defending land, indigenous peoples' and environmental rights and 28 per cent women's rights.⁸ Indigenous women environmental human rights defenders are at particular risk because of the intersection of sexism, discrimination and racism.⁹

3. Advocacy on VAWG and Climate Change & Suggested Actions

As we approach CSW66, the UNiTE campaign will focus its advocacy efforts on highlighting the intersections between climate change and VAWG to focus global attention on the urgent need for greater cross-sectoral action to prevent and respond to VAWG in contexts of climate and environmental crises and disasters.



While there has been increased international attention over the last decade in understanding and addressing gender-climate issues in policies and programmes, and in incorporating gender equality in global normative frameworks and processes for climate change action, the impact of climate change on VAWG has received much less focus. The [Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change \(UNFCCC\)](#) and the [Glasgow Climate Pact](#) recognize the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment, but they do not specifically address VAWG.

As member states negotiate the [CSW66 Draft Agreed Conclusions](#), there are opportunities to raise greater awareness and understanding of the impact of climate change on VAWG and to promote more integrated and coordinated action on these two global emergencies.

SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES: TAKE ACTION THIS ORANGE DAY!

All UNiTE Campaign partners including UN and international organizations, governments, civil society and women's rights organizations, private sector, youth groups, universities, sports associations, schools etc are encouraged to:

- ✓ **Orange** their workplace, schools, communities and online spaces to raise awareness about the impact of climate change on VAWG, between 25th February -25th March.
- ✓ **Coordinate a national or local dialogue to raise awareness of the intersections and impacts of climate change on VAWG** in your particular context to **catalyze cross-sectoral collaboration** across the climate change and EAW sectors and explore possible strategies and solutions.
- ✓ **Advocate for integration of EAW in climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction** policies and programmes including National Adaptation Plans and National Adaptation Programmes of Action.
- ✓ **Advocate for climate change to be included in the EAW Emergency Response Plans** that the Secretary General called for in [Our Common Agenda](#) and other EAW policies and processes.
- ✓ **Call for urgent action to be taken to protect the rights of women's environmental human rights defenders** and to strengthen mechanisms for preventing violence and abuse against them and improving access to justice.
- ✓ **Advocate for increased financing to prevent and respond to VAWG in the context of climate change**, prioritizing funding for women's rights organizations including grassroots women and women human rights defenders.
- ✓ **Engage [Generation Equality Forum commitment makers](#) in your country or region** to inspire further action to deliver progress on the Gender-Based Violence Action Coalition and the Feminist Action for Climate Justice Action Coalition [blueprints](#)



MAIN PRINCIPLES OF UNiTE CAMPAIGN ADVOCACY

- ✓ **Honour and acknowledge women's movements** and their leadership in the 16 Days of Activism and in preventing and ending violence against women and girls in general.
- ✓ **'Leave No One Behind'**: Apply a human rights-based approach and focus attention on the most underserved and disadvantaged groups of women and girls experiencing intersecting forms of harm in efforts to prevent and end violence against women and girls.
- ✓ **Survivor-centred**: Take a respectful and 'do no harm' approach to the telling and/or retelling of survivor stories, only with their informed consent and under conditions in which they feel empowered to exercise their agency. This and the empowerment principles are vital for the engagement of survivor advocates/activists on their own terms. All UNiTE partners must ensure that survivor advocates' rights, safety, dignity and confidentiality are prioritized and upheld. For more information, please refer to [Ensuring survivor-centered and empowering approaches](#).
- ✓ **Multi-sectoral**: Everyone in society has an important role to play in ending violence against women and girls and we all must work together across sectors to address the various aspects of violence against women and girls.
- ✓ **Transformative**: Fostering critical examination of gender roles, regimes and practices, while seeking to create or strengthen equitable gender norms and dynamics for fundamental, lasting changes for women and girls.
- ✓ **Elevate the voices of young feminists**: While the world has been reviewing progress made over the past 25 years since the adoption of the [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action](#), it is time to create platforms to elevate voices of the next generation of feminists who are shaping their future now.

4. Suggested Social Media Messages



Globally 1 in 3 women experience violence in their lifetime. A failure to eliminate violence against women poses a risk to climate change mitigation, adaptation & resilience. We cannot address the climate crisis without ending violence against women. [Read more here](#) #SDGs #ViolenceAgainstWomen. #OrangeDay @SayNO_UNiTE

Ending violence against women and girls IS possible. Here's how:

Recognize
 Collaborate
 Support civil society and women's rights organizations who have been on the front line protecting women and girls in complex and intersecting crises. [Learn more](#)

No climate justice without gender equality!
No gender equality while violence against women and girls still exists!

[Support](#) civil society and women's rights organizations today

Climate change-induced disasters
 Human-induced disasters
 Shrinking civil society spaces
 Limited funding are ongoing challenges for civil society and women's rights organizations to reach the most marginalized women and girl survivors of violence.

[Take action](#), this #IWD and #CSW66

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<http://unwo.men/QxoC50I4EK2>

#SDGs #OrangeDay

Climate change not only threatens our planet's sustainability, it also exacerbates violence against women and girls. We must act now. Read the update from @SayNO_UNiTE:

<http://unwo.men/q6TO50I4Nf9> #SDGs

#EndViolenceAgainstWomen

Ending violence against women and girls IS possible. Here's how:

Recognize
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 Support CSOs/WROs who have been on the front line protecting women & girls in intersecting crises. [Learn more](#)

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5. Initiatives and programmes to tackle VAWG and climate change

Action Coalitions

The [blueprints](#) of the Action Coalition on GBV and the Action Coalition on Feminist Action for Climate Justice provide a unique platform for advancing on cross-sectoral work across the EVAW and climate change sectors through collective commitments on climate justice and gender-based violence. The collective commitment on **Advancing Gender in the Environment Partnership** will scale up action on GBV and Climate change by creating a GBV-ENV center to fund, build the capacity of and create communities of practice for environment and climate organizations working on the intersections of gender-based violence and gender-responsive climate action at all levels. For more information join the CSW side event co-convened by UN Women and leaders of the Action Coalitions on GBV and Feminist Action for Climate justice along with other partners. Further details available, [here](#)



Special Rapporteur Report on VAWG in the context of the climate crisis

The Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences has issued a call for inputs on her report on violence against women and girls in the context of the climate crisis, including environmental degradation and related disaster risk mitigation and response, to be presented at the 77th session of the General Assembly.

Inputs should be sent by 31 March 2022: <https://t.co/hnRhmjNCRE>

Gender-Responsive Resilience Building in the Caribbean.

Efforts to build resilience to climate change and disasters in developing countries will not be effective or sustainable if they do not take gender into consideration, including the different risks that women and girls face such as sexual and gender-based violence. In the Caribbean¹⁰, a knowledge, attitudes, behaviours and practices (KABP) analysis was conducted by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), on behalf of UN Women, under the EnGenDER Project¹¹ to increase understanding of gender-related perceptions and biases and how they play out in coordination mechanisms for climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction (DRR) as a basis for determining how they can be challenged at the individual and institutional level. Further information can be found [here](#)

Supporting Women at the forefront of the World's Evolving Crises: The United Nations Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF)

is the only multi-partner trust fund dedicated to accelerating programmatic and institutional support for local women's organizations working in fragile settings to respond to crises and build lasting peace. Since its launch in 2016, WPHF has funded and supported the capacity of over 450 local and grassroots civil society organizations in 26 crisis-affected countries around the world.

Financing Local Projects Led by and Working Alongside Women Responding to SGBV and Climate Change on the Front Lines



WWW Nausori network members take part in a group discussion on peace and security priorities. ©FemLINKpacific/Carolyn Kitione

In the **Solomon Islands**, WPHF has supported the **National Protection Committee (NPC)** - alongside the Ministry of Women, Children, Youth and Family Affairs to implement its Protection and Gender in Emergency Response Project. Aimed at addressing SGBV in times of humanitarian and climate related disasters, this project is enabling the rapid localization of gender inclusive humanitarian response and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) across the Solomon Islands. The project supported the establishment of the Provincial Protection Committees in Isabel and Makira provinces, facilitating key links to rural and local areas and placing women and girls at the heart of the disaster response of their communities. The project is enhancing SGBV data collection methods and directly supporting marginalized groups at heightened risk of SGBV during disasters and building the protection

capacity of national and provincial emergency response teams.

In Fiji, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu, the WPHF has supported **FemLINKpacific** to implement its Pacific Women's Weather Watch Project entitled "Innovating and Leading as First Responders". Targeting local rural women leaders, the project focuses on capacity building and communications with local women leaders. Emphasizing the importance of receiving accurate, timely and accessible information, the Women's Weather Watch project is allowing rural women make well informed decisions before, during and after a disaster. Through virtual learning exchanges, women leaders are empowered to share their experiences and security priorities, many of which highlighted GBV as a specific protection issue which arises for individuals and communities during disasters and climate crisis. The project is placing women as key decision makers and stakeholders at all stages of crises, establishing the WWW as a key policy tool, empowering rural women leaders to advocate for policy change at the local and national level.



Young women leaders in Tavua showcase their banner highlighting the various ways COVID-19 and TC Harold had affected their human security priorities. ©FemLINKpacific/Carolyn Kitione

The Esperanza Protocol: An effective response to threats against human rights defenders

The [Esperanza protocol](#), named after the hometown of the Indigenous Women and Environmental Human Rights Defender, Berta Cáceres, killed in 2016 further to years of uninvestigated threats, was launched in December 2021. The protocol provides guidelines based on international human rights law, primarily to governments and justice officials, to promote an adequate response to threats against human rights defenders, and in particular, support the effective investigation, prosecution, and punishment of such threats. Under the Spotlight Initiative, in Latin America, UN Women worked with the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL) to ensure that the protocol was gender-responsive by ensuring that women human rights defenders participated in the development of this tool and that the unique and diverse perspectives of women human rights defenders informed the whole process.



SPOTLIGHT INITIATIVE

The [EU-UN Spotlight Initiative](#) through its comprehensive and multi-stakeholder approach, focused on leaving no one behind, can help policy makers ensure that effective gender-responsive environmental laws, policies, strategies and accountability mechanisms are in place and; that gender strategies and laws in turn take into account environmental factors such as climate change, land rights and control of natural resources. The Spotlight Initiative can also support the integration of the prevention of gender-based violence into climate initiatives, from adaptation to resilience to emergencies response. It is also well placed to accompany the implementation of Climate Adaptation projects, ensuring that these benefit all members of communities, particularly those most marginalized. See below some examples of interventions addressing the intersection of climate change and violence against women and girls:

1. In **Vanuatu**, the Spotlight Initiative has strengthened institutional capacities to ensure that violence against women and girls is systematically addressed following weather-related disasters.
2. In **Mozambique**, the Initiative provided mobile data, remote working equipment and psychosocial assistance for at-risk women and girls during Cyclone Chalane.
3. In **Uganda**, the Initiative provided sexual and reproductive health services in refugee, border and flood-affected districts and enabled civil society organizations to combine resources to respond to the needs of vulnerable groups.
4. In **Liberia**, the Initiative engaged the National Traditional Council of Chiefs and Elders to identify key economic interventions, such as climate-smart agriculture, as an alternate source of income for practitioners of female genital mutilation (FGM).

UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. Learning from practice: Adaptive programming to prevent violence against women and girls

Civil society and women's rights organizations (CSOs/WROs) have been operating in complex crises and their essential, lifeline work has become increasingly important as VAWG spiked during the global COVID-19 pandemic.

Since 2021, the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund) has collaborated with nearly 100 past and current grantees and researchers for the "Learning from Practice" Prevention Series focusing on preventing violence against women. The [Adaptive programming](#) brief in this series references UN Trust Fund grantees' adaptations to COVID-19 pandemic, and other emerging crises, including climate-related challenges, political tensions and insecurity. For instance, the paper highlights how climate change and environmental hazards create chronic and acute stressors that exacerbate or amplify preexisting violence against women risk factors, such as poverty, rigid gender roles, and personal and community conflict and require development actors to have adaptive capacity. Crises such as natural disasters and humanitarian emergencies can pose significant challenges to and require the adaptation of violence against women prevention programming.

In **Fiji** where natural disasters such as hurricanes cause environmental vulnerability and states of emergency, **femLINKpacific** quickly adopts media technology-based adaptation to amplify prevention measures through existing networks in rural, urban and informal settlements in three Divisions of Fiji. The project also strengthens the women-led media network, enabling women and girls from diverse backgrounds to use community media platforms to discuss the prevalence and causes of gender-based violence and how to end it.

Operating in the country with the highest femicide rate in the Latin American region¹⁶, grantee **Centro de Estudios de la Mujer in Honduras (CEM-H)** must respond to the impact of natural disasters on top of COVID-19's and the surge of violence against women human rights defenders. CEM-H ensures access to food is maintained during crises by transmitting ancestral knowledge and agro-ecological knowledge for food production in the domestic environment of women and girls. The activity generates an exchange of experiences and virtual meetings with women in the territories, peasant women and defenders of life.

Different adaptations that CSOs/WROs have implemented in response to challenging and intersecting crises beyond COVID-19 have not only informed their own approaches to adapt during the global pandemic, but also improved the preparedness of the field of EAW. Practice-based knowledge produced by CSOs/WROs need to be valued and amplified, and conversations about learnings and best practices need to be continued.

For further information, join the UNTF and Spotlight Initiative webinar on [Resiliency to Crisis in Programming to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls](#) (details in the events section).

You can also find out more about the UNTF in their [report to CSW](#)



6. Events

March 1. **Resiliency to Crises: Lessons from Civil Society Organizations in the prevention of violence against women and girls.** (UNTF, Spotlight Initiative) - The webinar creates space for a knowledge exchange between CSO's and other stakeholders on resilience to the continuing impact of COVID-19 and other crises. A new online knowledge hub to co-create, collaborate and amplify knowledge, SHINE will also be presented. Tuesday March 1, 8.00-10.00 am. Register, [here](#)

March 14. **CSW66 Side event. The Forgotten Voices-The Impact of Climate Change on Violence against women** (Organized by the Icelandic Prime Minister's Office in cooperation with UN Women National Committee Iceland) More information on the event will be announced later [here](#)

March 16. **CSW66 side event Climate Change and the impact on Violence Against Women** - Convened by UN Women and leaders of the Action Coalitions on GBV and Feminist Action for Climate Justice under the umbrella of the Generation Equality Forum side event will highlight the impacts of climate change on gender-based violence against women and girls and identify strategies for preventing and responding to GBV in the context of climate change. It will explore how environmental and sustainable development initiatives can better mitigate against GBV related risks and the integration of GBV prevention and response into climate change related policies and programmes, including those which focus on the role of women's rights organizations and women human rights defenders in addressing the impacts of climate change. Register [here](#)

March 16. **Climate Crisis: A threat to gender equality and the Sexual and Reproductive Rights of Women and Girls in humanitarian and development settings** (Hosted by UNFPA and CC IDWG,) - This event will highlight the impact of climate change on women and girls. . It will consolidate high level partnerships and raise awareness of the need for strengthened national evidence, policies and the strong linkages of preparedness, DRR and AA in mitigating the impact of climate change on women and girls. Register [here](#)

March 16. **No time to lose: Child marriage and the Triple Crisis (Climate Change, COVID and Conflict)** - UNFPA and UNICEF will support the governments of Canada and Zambia on the organization of a side-event on Child, Early and Forced Marriage in a context of crisis. Register [here](#)

March 17. **CSW66 side event Challenges and Synergies for Addressing GBV and Climate Change in the Arab region** (UNFPA) - With the upcoming 27th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP27) to the UNFCCC in Egypt, there is real momentum in the Arab region to mobilize action and resources to strengthen the resilience of systems and partnerships to adapt to climate change with a gender lens to leave no one behind, to prevent exacerbating the risks of gender-based violence and to adopt more coherent approaches to advance gender equality across all sectors. Register [here](#).

March 16. **CSW66 Side event on Addressing vulnerabilities of women and girls to trafficking in persons** (Coordinated by ICAT, OSCE/ODIHR) - ICAT identified gender discrimination, gender-based violence and inequality impacting women and girls as core drivers making women and girls vulnerable to trafficking. The side event aims to raise awareness of factors including the impacts of climate change, which contribute to heighten vulnerabilities of women and girls to trafficking in persons, as well as to appropriate measures to comprehensively address them at the global and regional levels. It will likewise launch the ICAT Issue Brief on Vulnerabilities as well as provide an overview of the updated [National Referral Mechanism Handbook](#). The panel will be informed by voices of survivors of trafficking, particularly of OSCE/ODIHR International Survivors of Trafficking Advisory Council. Register [here](#)

March 17. **The Gender Dimensions of Forced Displacement (GDFD): New Evidence to Guide Policy** - The event will present research from the GDFD program on the ways that gender inequality compounds impacts of forced displacement in terms of multidimensional poverty, livelihoods, gender-based violence, and social norms. Further information is available [here](#)

7. Relevant resources

United Nations Secretary General (2022). Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes. [Report of the Secretary-General](#)

Draft Agreed Conclusions of CSW66 and all official papers available [here](#)

ARROW and UN Women Regional Office for Asia-Pacific (2021). [Training Manual on Gender and Climate Change Resilience](#)

GBV AoR Helpdesk. (2021). [Climate change and gender-based violence: What are the links?](#)

Castañeda Camey, I., Sabater, L., Owren, C. and Boyer, A.E. (2020). [Gender-based violence and environment linkages: The violence of inequality](#). Wen, J. (ed.). Gland, Switzerland: IUCN.

Owren, C., Senior Gender Programme Manager, International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (2021). [Understanding and addressing gender-based violence as part of the climate emergency](#). Available [here](#) together with other expert papers

Gevers, A., Musuya, T., and Bukuluki, P. (2020). [Why climate change fuels violence against women](#). *United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)*.

UN Women Fiji Multi-country Office. (2014). [Climate change, disasters and gender-based violence in the pacific](#).

UN Women Regional Office for Asia-Pacific (2020). [Climate change, gender equality and human rights in Asia – Regional review and promising practices](#)

[Gender-based Violence and Environment Linkages Center](#) (GBV-ENV Center)

The GBV-ENV Center is coordinated under Advancing Gender in the Environment (AGENT), a ten-year collaboration between the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Office of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GenDev). The Center is a platform for gathering resources and tools, for mobilizing learning and forging collaborative action on the intersection of climate change and gender-based violence. Access the GBV-ENV center here.

8. Endnotes

1. WHO (2021) Violence against Women Prevalence Estimates, 2018.
2. UN Women Fiji Multi-country Office. (2014). [Climate change, disasters and gender-based violence in the pacific](#).
3. IOM (2016) [The Climate Change-Human Trafficking Nexus](#).
4. CEDAW General Recommendation No.37 (2018) on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change; UN Women Fiji Multi-country Office. (2014). [Climate change, disasters and gender-based violence in the pacific](#).
5. UNFCC (2019). [Climate Change Increases the Risk of Violence Against Women](#).
6. UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). (2017). [Horn of Africa: A call for action](#).
7. Gevers et al. (2020) Why climate change fuels violence against women
8. Front Line Defenders, *Global Analysis 2020* (Dublin, 2021)
9. Castañeda Camey, I., Sabater, L., Owren, C. and Boyer, A.E. (2020). [Gender-based violence and environment linkages: The violence of inequality](#). Wen, J. (ed.). Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. 272pp.
10. The analysis was developed based on data from nine countries: Antigua and Barbuda, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Suriname.
11. UN Women and International Institute for Sustainable Development. (2021). [Gender-Responsive Resilience Building in the Caribbean: Understanding the role of knowledge, attitudes, behaviours, and practices in coordination mechanisms for climate change and disaster risk reduction](#). A. Dazé and C. Hunter (authors).