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CSSF Women, Peace and Security Helpdesk

# Intersections between climate change, Serious and Organised Crime and gender

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# Abstract

As part of the global debate on climate security, this report considers the relationship between climate change, gender, and Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) as an item relevant to this debate and interlinked with women, peace and security (WPS). From a bottom-up approach, the report considers five case studies where it unpacks the effects of climate change increasing the gendered vulnerabilities of women, girls, men and boys to SOC. The findings reveal, for the first time, patterns pointing at the intersection between climate change, the exacerbation of pre-existing inequalities, and the capacity of SOC to thrive as a new gap in the literature and in policy-making. These findings are discussed in light of the global regulatory framework, the transition to a green economy and the climate security debate. The report concludes with recommendations to integrate the climate–gender–SOC nexus within the climate security agenda, including the establishment of synergies with WPS.

## Summary

Climate change is considered a ‘threat multiplier’ and as posing some of the ‘most pressing and serious threats’ to human security due to its effects exacerbating individuals’ vulnerability. For the first time, the report establishes the existence of a nexus between the effects of climate change increasing gender vulnerability and, as a result, individuals’ exposure to Serious and Organised Crime (SOC). The study therefore situates and discusses the climate–gender–SOC nexus within the global debate on climate security and, in particular, its synergies with women, peace and security (WPS).

The report considers five case studies of situations undergoing the sudden-onset and slow-onset effects of climate change, explaining how these impacts increase gender inequality and SOC. These scenarios are: 1) drought, the rise of terrorism, criminal activity and armed conflict in Syria and Mali; 2) extreme weather, food insecurity and shifts in drug cultivation in Afghanistan; 3) hotter temperatures and increases in drug-related homicides in Guatemala and Mexico; 4) floods and high sea levels increasing human and drug trafficking in Bangladesh and the Caribbean; and 5) environmental crime and climate change in Latin America. The findings reveal a pattern or gap in climate and human security. As would be expected, the vulnerabilities of women, girls, men and boys are aggravated as a result of climate change, resulting in people becoming less resilient and experiencing a higher risk of participating in or being victims of SOC. Accordingly, the climate–gender–SOC nexus undermines the conditions for gender equality, climate security and the rule of law necessary for sustainable development and long-lasting peace. Conversely, the evidence suggests that integrating a gender equality perspective to climate change mitigation and adaptation

strategies has the potential to break the vicious cycle between environmental degradation, inequality and crime by improving individuals' resilience in a sustainable manner.

The report takes note of the risks of transitioning to a green economy, considering its effects on gender and SOC. Focusing on the extraction of critical minerals increasingly demanded for the technological needs of adaptation and mitigation to climate change, the study identifies clear-cut trade-offs involved in a green transition. Cases like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), South Africa and the Amazon show that the extraction of strategic minerals is fuelling gender harms and increasing levels of SOC. One could say that, due to the high prices of green minerals in international markets, transitioning to a green economy is attracting SOC and its multifaceted criminal effects – money laundering, tax evasion, social insecurity, weak governance – in the same way as traditional SOC activity.

The research considers that the general findings still apply to the trade-offs of a global energy transition. The *direct* effect between improving gender equality through gender-sensitive initiatives to climate adaptation and mitigation and its *indirect* effect reducing the capacity of SOC to thrive make this approach – that is, gender-sensitive schemes to climate change and conflict – applicable both to the challenges arising from climate change and from a green transition.

The findings on the climate–gender–SOC nexus are discussed in light of the existing regulatory framework. While an overall compartmentalisation of international law regimes and policies overlooking the nexus is stressed, the study notes an incipient recognition of the links between climate security, gender and human rights within the global debate. This is consistent with the findings of this report and with the emphasis in current research. The report therefore stresses that the climate–gender–SOC nexus should be integrated as part of the climate security debate, especially within the WPS agenda considering their mutual synergies. To this end, it makes suggestions for research and recommendations for policy-making, programming and law enforcement.

# Introduction

Climate change has been labelled a ‘threat multiplier’<sup>1</sup> and as posing some of the ‘most pressing and serious threats’ to human security. This is due to its effects exacerbating individuals’ vulnerability, placing them at a greater risk of harm.<sup>2</sup> Given the interdependence between humans and the environment, the negative impacts of climate change implacably affect human beings, and do so in gendered ways, according to the different roles and situations of women, girls, men and boys in society. Certainly, the climate crisis is not gender neutral due to the high rates of gender inequality that, coupled with the effects of climate change, are considered ‘the greatest sustainable development challenge of our time’.<sup>3</sup>

Gender discriminatory practices related to land tenure, lack of credit, unequal pay, low levels of decision-making, and sexual and gender-based violence result in women and girls being disproportionately affected by climate change.<sup>4</sup> Fewer than one in five of landholders worldwide are women, despite women comprising almost 80 per cent of the agricultural workforce and producing up to 80 per cent of food in developing countries.<sup>5</sup> The gender food security gap widened from 6 per cent in 2019 to 10 per cent in 2020 due to COVID-19 related effects disrupting food supply and increasing food prices.<sup>6</sup> While disaggregated data is not available, evidence suggests that climate displacement affects women and girls in developing countries more negatively and in unique ways. For example, through an increased risk of gender-based violence, child marriage, and poor access to sexual and reproductive healthcare services, and through a greater burden of unpaid and domestic work.<sup>7</sup> Women’s survival rates to disasters are 14 times lower than men’s due to their more limited access to economic relief and assistance and to social norms constraining their freedom of movement.<sup>8</sup> Even heat stress has a stronger impact on women and girls’ reproductive health due to their compromised capacity to thermoregulate during pregnancy and around menopause, potentially diminishing their ability to withstand a warmer climate.<sup>9</sup>

In a globalised economy characterised by the transnational nature of crime, the effects of climate change intersect with individuals’ gender vulnerabilities, aggravating them and, as a result, increasing their exposure to Serious and Organised Crime (SOC). SOC is not a problem of the few. It affects most of the world’s population (79.2 per cent live in countries

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<sup>1</sup> UN Security Council (2021), ‘The UN Security Council and Climate Change, No.2’, Security Council Report, 21 June, p 7.

<sup>2</sup> UN General Assembly (UNGA) (2022), ‘Resolution A/RES/76/300’, 1 August.

<sup>3</sup> UN 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, E/CN.6/2022/3, 4 January, para. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Halonen T (2023), ‘Securing Women’s Land Rights for Increased Gender Equality, Food Security and Economic Empowerment’, *UN Chronicle*, 15 June.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> UN 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, E/CN.6/2022/3, 4 January, para. 8.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, para.11.

<sup>8</sup> Okai A (2022), ‘Women are hit hardest in disasters, so why are responses too often gender-blind?’, UNDP, 24 March.

<sup>9</sup> Lo E, Sharp G (undated), ‘Heat stress and women’s health over the reproductive life course’, Cabot Institute for the Environment, University of Bristol ([www.bristol.ac.uk/cabot/what-we-do/women-heat/](http://www.bristol.ac.uk/cabot/what-we-do/women-heat/)); Ayeb-Karlsson S (2020), ‘When the disaster strikes: Gendered (im)mobility in Bangladesh’, *Climate Risk Management* 29.

with high levels of SOC and 79.4 per cent in countries with low resilience).<sup>10</sup> While it so often targets the most marginalised, SOC has overall long-lasting consequences. It makes societies less secure, diminishing state capacity to counter crime, driving back development and threatening the natural environment.<sup>11</sup>

Climate change puts individuals' livelihoods at risk in different ways; for example, floods destroy crops and infrastructure and drought precludes rainfed agriculture and dries fertile pastures for cattle. These slow-onset and sudden-onset events increase human vulnerability, threatening human security. This is even if the links between climate change, gender and SOC are not always direct and when impacts are contingent on contextual factors contributing more or less to the relationship.<sup>12</sup> This is one important reason for the debate on climate security that acknowledges the negative impact of climate change amplifying pre-existing risks to human security, ecosystems, national security and society in general.<sup>13</sup> An additional effect of climate change – evidenced by this report – is its impact exacerbating contexts in which SOC is present as people look for coping mechanisms; for example, increased exposure to trafficking, smuggling or recruitment by criminal groups as a result of climate-induced migration or displacement.

The effects of climate change are just one among the many drivers of SOC and conflict.<sup>14</sup> Other drivers include weak or lack of state infrastructure that leaves individuals without a security net, mismanagement of resources, and population growth that increases competition for natural resources. Importantly, gender is another driver of SOC in the context of climate change.

This report provides evidence of the existence of a climate–gender–SOC nexus, the threat it poses to human security,<sup>15</sup> and specific gender manifestations. The aim is to increase public awareness and provoke discussion and action in local and international spaces. The findings identify a general trend underpinning the workings of the climate–gender–SOC nexus.

As climate change aggravates the pre-existing inequalities between women, girls, men and boys, it makes them more vulnerable to SOC in different ways according to their social roles. There is an emerging recognition of the links between climate, security and gender in the global debate, although with two relevant limitations. First, SOC is not yet specifically mentioned in this debate, despite being an important security issue in many contexts around the globe.<sup>16</sup> Second, gender is conceptualised quite poorly and not inclusively. The climate security debate is limited to emphasising that women and girls are more negatively affected by climate change due to pre-existing gender discrimination and inequality, and the need to incorporate a gender perspective. This – however – is not further explored.<sup>17</sup> Even so, gender

<sup>10</sup> Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime (2021), 'Global Organized Crime Index 2021', pp 12, 16.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, p 13.

<sup>12</sup> For instance, the capacity for harm of drivers like scarcity of resources (food, water, energy) or criminal infiltration of mineral and metal extraction will depend on a diversity of local circumstances increasing vulnerability. Such circumstances include, for example, levels of good governance, population growth, the percentage of the population who depend on natural resources for livelihood, pre-existing ethnic or religious divisions exacerbated by the effects of climate change, and, critically, gender inequalities.

<sup>13</sup> UN Security Council (2023), 'With Climate Crisis Generating Growing Threats to Global Peace, Security Council Must Ramp Up Efforts, Lessen Risk of Conflicts, Speakers Stress in Open Debate', SC/15318, 13 June; UN Secretary-General (2009), 'Climate change and its possible security implications', Report of the Secretary-General, A/69/350, 11 September.

<sup>14</sup> Nett K, Rüttinger L (2016), *Insurgency, Terrorism and Organised Crime in a Warming Climate: Analysing the Links Between Climate Change and Non-State Armed Groups* (Berlin: Climate Diplomacy), October, p 9.

<sup>15</sup> Human Security 'is an approach to assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of their people'. See UNGA (2012) 'Resolution 66/209', 25 October.

<sup>16</sup> UN Security Council (2021), 'The UN Security Council and Climate Change, No.2', Security Council Report, 21 June; includes one single reference to organised crime.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

is gaining relevance with regards to climate security. Research and UN bodies increasingly acknowledge the need for gender- and climate-sensitive approaches to improve resilience *both* to climate change and to security. Hence, there are calls to integrate the climate, human rights, and women, peace and security (WPS) agendas to achieve a sustainable development and peace.<sup>18</sup>

What does the intersection of climate, gender and SOC mean for people? These are harms of unique gravity due to the complexity of the discrimination factors involved that result in a regression on three fronts of international peace and security – climate change, gender inequality and SOC. The report charts the linkages between these harms. First, it provides evidence of five contexts where climate change intersects with gender and SOC. It then goes on to note regulatory gaps in international law, policy and research. Finally, the report makes recommendations to address these gaps in programming and policy.

## Methodology

The report relies on a desk review of existing literature to answer the question 'What is the nexus between climate change, gender and SOC?'

The research identifies five negative effects of climate change, testing how these are related to gender and SOC. It relies on an intersectional analysis, a tool to understand the compounded causes and effects of vulnerability. Intersectionality is recognised by international human rights law (IHRL) and applied, in particular, to situations involving gender discrimination. Intersectionality means, according to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), that gender is 'inextricably linked' with other factors, identities and situations that result in unique and aggravated effects for individuals belonging to those groups as a result of structural marginalisation.<sup>19</sup> This implies an approach to 'gender' as a *social construction* of identity (in opposition to sex, which is biologically determined) and, therefore, intersecting and co-constructed by other contextual factors that can be modified by altering the conditions underlying vulnerability.<sup>20</sup> The report analyses this vulnerability to better expose the relationship between gender, climate change and SOC, by looking into its dynamic and effects. Also, this criminogenic and rights-based approach is well suited to the aim of the report – which is to incite regulatory, policy and programmatic responses from a preventive perspective.

Due to the narrow focus of the research, the report recognises limitations such as the absence of primary research and of a greater analysis of the many drivers of SOC. Nor does the research consider all possible avenues – like that approaches to SOC might be harmful to climate change.

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<sup>18</sup> UN Secretary-General (2021), 'Women and peace and security', Report of the Secretary-General, S/2021/827, 27 December, paras. 73–77; UNGA (2022), 'Resolution A/RES/76/300', 1 August; Kezie-Nwoha H, Yoshida K, Bond H (2021), 'Defending the Future: Gender, Conflict and Environmental Peace', Centre for Women, Peace and Security, Policy Brief 03; Bastick M, Risler C (2022), *Women Speak: The Lived Nexus Between Climate, Gender and Security* (Geneva: Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF)).

<sup>19</sup> CEDAW (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) (2010), 'General Recommendation No.28 on the core obligations of states parties under Article 2 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women', CEDAW/C/GC/28, 16 December, para. 18.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 5.

# The climate–gender–SOC nexus

The five situations described below provide evidence of the intersection between climate change, gender and SOC as interlinked realities. This relationship poses a major security concern, because the compounding factors involved imply a simultaneous regression in three mainstays of international peace and security. The examples chosen demonstrate an underlying pattern or gap. As would be expected, the vulnerabilities of women, girls, men and boys are aggravated as a result of climate change, resulting in people becoming less resilient and experiencing a higher risk of participating in or being victims of SOC. Accordingly, the nexus undermines the conditions for gender equality, climate security and the rule of law necessary for sustainable development and long-lasting peace. Conversely, the evidence suggests that integrating a gender equality perspective to climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies has the potential to break the vicious cycle between environmental degradation, inequality and crime by improving individuals' resilience in a sustainable manner. This finding is critical. It suggests that gender – the human factor differently conditioning women, girls, men and boys – is critical to addressing both climate change and SOC. It reveals the need for responsive action where gender is at the forefront.

## 1. Drought, the rise of terrorism, criminal activity and armed conflict: Syria and Mali

### Syria

Syria had already been hit by a five-year drought and severe water mismanagement when the civil war broke out in 2011. The country has been affected by increasing desertification, decreasing rainfall and biodiversity loss that have severely affected the rural population, 60 per cent of whom live on rainfed or irrigation agriculture or raise livestock. As of 2007, 1.3 million Syrians dependent on agriculture had lost their crops and 85 per cent of herders had lost their livestock.<sup>21</sup> Food insecurity and water scarcity pushed huge numbers of rural workers to migrate to urban areas. In very poor rural areas, like Jabl El-Hoss, women accounted for only 14 per cent of migrants, suggesting that climate-induced migration of rural people was predominantly men.<sup>22</sup>

Factors like a failed government response, fragility, corruption and environmental mismanagement created a perfect breeding ground for jihadist extremists to benefit from the livelihood insecurity and humanitarian crisis.<sup>23</sup> The terrorist group Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) expanded from neighbouring Iraq into large swathes of Syrian territory. ISIS seeks to establish a caliphate based on extremist Salafism. It involves a highly divided and hierarchical society based on gender, with traditional roles attributed to men (warriors,

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<sup>21</sup> Nett K, Rüttinger L (2016), *Insurgency, Terrorism and Organised Crime in a Warming Climate: Analysing the Links Between Climate Change and Non-State Armed Groups* (Berlin: Climate Diplomacy), October, p 24.

<sup>22</sup> Abdelali-Martini M, Ibrahim K, Dhehibi B (2016), 'Migrants from marginal dry areas in Syria: destinations, employment, and returns', *IZA Journal of Migration* 5 (23), p 8.

<sup>23</sup> Nett K, Rüttinger L (2016), *Insurgency, Terrorism and Organised Crime in a Warming Climate: Analysing the Links Between Climate Change and Non-State Armed Groups* (Berlin: Climate Diplomacy), October, p 20.



providers and protectors) and women (religiously sanctioned and empowered women slaves).<sup>24</sup> ISIS obtains illicit proceeds from SOC activity (such as trafficking in drugs, cultural objects, extortion) and the seizure of oil fields. It was able to recruit between 60 and 70 per cent of its fighters locally, pay them five times the normal wage. It also provided infrastructure and social services, irrigation projects and clean water to the disaffected population in controlled areas.<sup>25</sup> In this way, ISIS was able to exploit the security crisis in Syria – humanitarian, social, political – exacerbated by climate change. ISIS relies on a strong transnational network to recruit fighters, plan attacks worldwide and obtain funds.<sup>26</sup> Social behaviour under ISIS rule is especially detrimental for women and girls, whose lack of autonomy affects all spheres of their human rights. Further, women and girls belonging to religious minorities, like the Yazidis, have been subjected to gendered forms of SOC such as trafficking for sexual slavery, enslavement and smuggling.<sup>27</sup> The international community has responded to these gender-based harms by creating investigative mechanisms, namely, an Independent International Commission of Inquiry and the International Impartial Independent Mechanism. They consider these harms to constitute genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.<sup>28</sup>

## Mali

Poverty in Mali affects 60 per cent of the population, of which more than half, over 12 million, live in rural areas.<sup>29</sup> Climate change in Mali is causing increasingly erratic rainfall and desertification.<sup>30</sup> In turn, competition over access to water resources is aggravating ethnic divisions between communities and pushing many pastoralist Tuareg, who claim historical discrimination by the state, to join jihadist groups.<sup>31</sup> In 2012, the Tuareg rebellion preceded a civil war against the Government of Mali. It was led by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and Ansar Eddine, its Tuareg affiliates. They took over the biggest cities in northern Mali from where the state had withdrawn, leaving the population with a complete lack of public administration and essential services; these have been absent since then.<sup>32</sup> AQIM is seeking to establish an Islamic State ruled according to sharia law. It relies on SOC for funding, predominantly through activity such as kidnap for ransom, smuggling and trafficking.<sup>33</sup>

Malian women and girls have been particularly affected by the dual burdens of climate change and armed conflict. On the one hand, changes in climatic conditions have exposed them to internal displacement, decreased income, reduced access to education, increased incidents in polygamy (legal in Mali), malnutrition, water-borne diseases, expulsions from fertile lands, and the impact of pollution on reproductive and maternal health, and child mortality. Also, due to their gender roles as family carers, women must travel longer distances to secure food, water and firewood, which has resulted in increasing incidents of sexual violence – often committed

<sup>24</sup> Speckhard A, Ellenberg M (2023), 'ISIS and the Allure of Traditional Gender Roles', *Women & Criminal Justice* 33 (2), pp 153–155.

<sup>25</sup> Nett K, Rüttinger L (2016), *Insurgency, Terrorism and Organised Crime in a Warming Climate: Analysing the Links Between Climate Change and Non-State Armed Groups* (Berlin: Climate Diplomacy), October, p 24.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, p 21.

<sup>27</sup> Human Rights Council (2016), 'They came to destroy: ISIS Crimes Against the Yazidis', A/HRC/32/CPR.2, 15 June.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid; UNGA (2017), 'Resolution A/RES/71/248', 11 January.

<sup>29</sup> World Bank (2022) 'Data, Rural population – Mali'

(<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.RUR.TOTL?locations=ML>)

<sup>30</sup> Bastick M, Risler C (2022), *Women Speak: The Lived Nexus Between Climate, Gender and Security* (Geneva: Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF)), p 27.

<sup>31</sup> Aly Mbaye A, Signé L (2022), 'Climate change, development, and conflict-fragility nexus in the Sahel', Brookings Global Working Paper No.169, Brookings Africa Growth Initiative, March 2022, p 24

<sup>32</sup> Van Cauwenbergh L (2023), 'Mali: Security Situation Set to Get Worse Following UN Withdrawal', *Credendo*, 10 July.

<sup>33</sup> Kouts T (2019), 'Illicit Financial Flows: The Role of Al Qaeda and Its Affiliates in the Islamic Maghreb', OECD Development Co-operation Working Paper 63, OECD Publishing, Paris, December, p 11.

by jihadists.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, driven by the aim of statehood, AQIM and its affiliates have established a system of sexual and gendered-based violence that institutionalises forced marriage to ensure control over and intermingling with the local population.<sup>35</sup> The International Criminal Court (ICC) considers these forced unions a gateway to SOC in the form of sexual slavery. It is prosecuting them as crimes against humanity and war crimes.<sup>36</sup>

### Security gaps: climate, gender and SOC

- Water scarcity threatens the livelihood of the rural population and increases inter-community conflicts. Terrorist organisations reliant on profits from SOC exploit these vulnerabilities, recruiting men as fighters and using women for sexual exploitation. **The international community does not address climate change as a driver of terrorism or criminal activity.**

### Approaches to address the nexus:

- In Mali, women-led movements are seeking the integration of gender and climate security in three national arenas: i) the WPS agenda; ii) climate change commitments, and iii) peace negotiations (Bastick and Risler 2022, p 32). These are important entry points for policy-making on the climate–gender–crime nexus post-conflict.
- In Syria, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) are investing in supporting rural women to process food (growing and selling), with very efficient results for the recovery of livelihoods of smallholder families.

## 2. Extreme weather, food insecurity and shifts in drug cultivation: Afghanistan

Most of the evidence shows that SOC takes advantage of the effects of climate change increasing human vulnerability. However, SOC may also have to ‘adapt’ itself to climate change to maintain revenue streams. For instance, shifting trends in opium cultivation and production are already taking place in Afghanistan.<sup>37</sup> Although this fact is not explored by the literature in relation to climate change, the effects of climate change increasing competition for fertile land are likely to affect available spaces for drug cultivation and distribution. Due to the drought at the start of 2022, opium yields declined from 38.5 kg/ha in 2021 to 26.7 kg/ha in 2022.<sup>38</sup> To maintain flows of revenue (Afghanistan supplies around 80 per cent of opium users in the world), criminal networks will need to ensure fertile soil for cultivation. The impacts of climate change on SOC are potentially long-lasting. If more pressure is exerted on farmers to cultivate illicit opium poppy, this will imply more competition and conflicts for land to grow food and produce legal commodities. This in turn risks aggravating the humanitarian crisis in

<sup>34</sup> Bastick M, Risler C (2022), *Women Speak: The Lived Nexus Between Climate, Gender and Security* (Geneva: Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF)), pp 29–30.

<sup>35</sup> ICC, *Le Procureur c. Al Hassan, Rectificatif de la Décision portant modification des charges* (Chambre Préliminaire I), ICC-01/12-01/18, 23 avril 2020, pp. 47-55.

<sup>36</sup> ICC (2020), *Le Procureur c. Al Hassan, Rectificatif de la Décision portant modification des charges* (Chambre Préliminaire I), ICC-01/12-01/18, 23 avril.

<sup>37</sup> UNODC (2021), ‘Drug Situation in Afghanistan 2021: Latest findings and emerging threats’, New York, November, p 4.

<sup>38</sup> UNODC (2022c), ‘Opium cultivation in Afghanistan: Latest findings and emerging threats’, New York, November, p 4.

Afghanistan, where two-thirds of the population are in need of humanitarian assistance.<sup>39</sup> Further, shifting trends in opium cultivation, production and distribution in relation to climate change would affect global illicit drug markets and organised criminal activity. For instance, any decline in opium production could be accompanied by an increase in methamphetamine manufacture which, mixed with opium, increases the risk of heart strain and has unpredictable consequences for human health.<sup>40</sup>

Afghanistan is one of the most vulnerable countries to the effects of climate change, which is increasing the number of extreme weather events such as droughts, storms, floods, landslides and avalanches.<sup>41</sup> Of the country's 40 million citizens, 45 per cent are poor and 73 per cent live in rural areas.<sup>42</sup> Advancing desertification is causing erosion and making floods and landslides more frequent, while the mean annual temperature has increased by 0.6 per cent since 1960. Extreme heat or freezing are more frequent.<sup>43</sup> Changing climatic conditions, the overuse of grazing land and illegal logging are degrading the environment and reducing the availability of natural resources. The risk of violent conflicts over land and water has continued to increase, including as a result of ethnic divisions over access to pastures, especially between nomadic Pashtun pastoralists and sedentary Hazara.<sup>44</sup>

Water scarcity in Afghanistan is making cultivation of staple crops like wheat, rice and maize unreliable, threatening the livelihood of millions. According to the UN, food insecurity and malnutrition, fuelled by acute drought and aggravated by the rise in global food prices, are at 'historic highs' – affecting 95 per cent of Afghans, rising to 100 per cent in women-headed households.<sup>45</sup> This context, compounded by the deteriorating political, social and economic situation, has provided a 'push' factor for farmers to turn towards illicit poppy production as the most viable alternative to feed their families, considering low levels of education and the high unemployment rate.<sup>46</sup> Opium is less water intensive, highly productive and directly collected by 'middlemen' for drug networks.<sup>47</sup>

Although the Taliban banned the cultivation of opium poppy and all narcotics in April 2022, this year's harvest was largely exempted from the decree. This resulted in an increase of 32 per cent in opium cultivation over the previous year.<sup>48</sup> Even if the Taliban finds shifting away from opium cultivation strategic for a number of reasons (finding new revenue sources like taxation and mining, demonstrating authority to enforce a general ban, overcoming the public

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p 3; OCHA (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) (undated), 'Afghanistan: The Alarming effects of climate change' ([www.unocha.org/news/afghanistan-alarming-effects-climate-change#:~:text=Humanitarian%20impact&text=A%20record%20of%2020million%20people,people%20dangerously%20close%20to%20famine](http://www.unocha.org/news/afghanistan-alarming-effects-climate-change#:~:text=Humanitarian%20impact&text=A%20record%20of%2020million%20people,people%20dangerously%20close%20to%20famine))

<sup>40</sup> UNODC (2022c), 'Opium cultivation in Afghanistan: Latest findings and emerging threats', New York, November, pp 4, 23; ADF (Alcohol and Drug Foundation) (2023), 'Opium' (<https://adf.org.au/drug-facts/opium/>)

<sup>41</sup> Afghanaid, 'Is Afghanistan affected by climate change?' ([www.afghanaid.org.uk/news/is-afghanistan-affected-by-climate-change](http://www.afghanaid.org.uk/news/is-afghanistan-affected-by-climate-change))

<sup>42</sup> Trading Economics (2023b) 'Afghanistan – Rural Population' (<https://tradingeconomics.com/afghanistan/rural-population-percent-of-total-population-wb-data.html>)

<sup>43</sup> Nett K, Rüttinger L (2016), *Insurgency, Terrorism and Organised Crime in a Warming Climate: Analysing the Links Between Climate Change and Non-State Armed Groups* (Berlin: Climate Diplomacy), October, p 30.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p 31; Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) (2022), 'Afghanistan, Climate, Peace and Security Fact Sheet', February, p 1.

<sup>45</sup> United Nations (2022), 'Afghanistan: Food insecurity and malnutrition threaten "an entire generation"', *UN News*, 15 March.

<sup>46</sup> Nett K, Rüttinger L (2016), *Insurgency, Terrorism and Organised Crime in a Warming Climate: Analysing the Links Between Climate Change and Non-State Armed Groups* (Berlin: Climate Diplomacy), October, p 32.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> UNODC (2022c), 'Opium cultivation in Afghanistan: Latest findings and emerging threats', New York, November, p 5.

crises of food production and drug addiction), a sustainable ban is unlikely.<sup>49</sup> First, the global demand for heroin is pervasive. Second, a workable ban is linked to farmers being able to produce enough sellable agricultural products to survive. Yet, any crop substitution for opium would require higher levels of water, which are unavailable due to the severe drought derived from climate change.<sup>50</sup>

Reduced livelihood opportunities have also made young people at risk of recruitment by armed groups. Typically, the Taliban has recruited fighters among unemployed men from rural communities, who are then educated in madrasas, mosques and camps.<sup>51</sup>

Gender vulnerability to climate change in Afghanistan has worsened due to the political context which, since 2021, has resulted in more discriminatory norms against women and girls. Women are prohibited from travelling without a man relative, receiving post-primary education, and accessing many public places and employment, except in the healthcare and primary education systems.<sup>52</sup> Women who work in agriculture have no rights of ownership or decision-making; they must travel longer distances to provide for their families; girls are the first to drop out of school or to be sold during economic stress; and women experience greater health risks while taking care of others affected by climate-induced diseases like cholera.<sup>53</sup> Since they cannot leave home unless accompanied by a man family member, lack of freedom of movement heightens women's risk of being harmed by natural disasters.<sup>54</sup>

In lower numbers than men, Afghan women are also involved in illicit opium trafficking, mostly due to economic need and family connections. The income provides them with a degree of economic independence, which they dedicate to family expenses.<sup>55</sup> Due to gender norms, the status of women in the hierarchy of criminal organisations remains low and their relationships restricted to the family man or the 'good' trusted man (a trusted male trafficker who is a family friend or neighbour). This is contrary to other countries like the US, China and in Latin America, where women have acquired status in criminal networks.<sup>56</sup> However, Afghan women involved in drug networks also take advantage of their gender. As a woman, they can more easily traffic and distribute drugs without being registered by guards at checkpoints or borders. Half of Afghan women involved in drug trafficking report experiences of gender-based violence by their intimate partners who are drug users.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Nemat O (2023), 'Why the Taliban's opium ban will probably fail', Chatman House, 28 July.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> European Agency for Asylum (2023), 'Country Guidance: Afghanistan', Luxembourg, p 62.

<sup>52</sup> Leclerc G, Shreeves R (2023), 'Women's rights in Afghanistan: An ongoing battle', Briefing, European Parliament, April.

<sup>53</sup> Monash Gender Peace and Security (undated), *Afghan women at the forefront of climate change: A collection of stories, essays, photos and artwork by Afghan women* (Melbourne: Monash University) (<https://sites.google.com/student.monash.edu/afghan-women-climate-change/home?authuser=1>)

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, p 14.

<sup>55</sup> Azizi H, Eichinger N, Roszkowska, M (2022), 'Afghan Women and the Opiate Trade', UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, pp 7, 18.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p 8.

## Security gaps: climate, gender and SOC

- Extreme weather causing food insecurity affects Afghans in gendered ways that bring them in contact with SOC. Men farmers increasingly grow opium and are recruited by armed groups, while a smaller percentage of women traffic in and sell drugs. **The international community does not address the connections between food insecurity and the increase in drug production and trafficking.**

## Approaches to address the nexus:

- Before its withdrawal from Afghanistan, the US military invested in the technical skills of Afghan women in agriculture (via engagement teams of women). The projects increased the availability in food and water in harsh climate conditions, attesting to the possibility of leveraging the efforts of an entire population to secure livelihoods. Further, gender equality improved. On seeing the successful results, Afghan men became more tolerant of the engagement of women in business and commerce (Prescott 2014, p 800). This approach may not be feasible in the current climate in Afghanistan, but it might work in other contexts around the globe affected by food insecurity and water shortages.

## 3. Hotter temperatures and increase in drug-related homicides: Guatemala and Mexico

### Guatemala

Like other countries in Central America, Guatemala has been experiencing severe periods of high temperatures and drought. These multiply natural disasters such as storms, flooding and mudslides, resulting in major damage to staple grain production, mainly maize and beans.<sup>58</sup> Poverty affects 50 per cent of the population, who cannot afford a basic food basket. Meanwhile, stunted growth in children is the highest in Latin America – affecting 50 per cent of children under five.<sup>59</sup> In 2015, El Niño (the unusual warming of surface waters in the Pacific Ocean) caused drought and consecutive years of crop failures. This resulted in between 50 and 90 per cent of crops being lost, leaving 3.5 million people in need of humanitarian assistance.<sup>60</sup>

Guatemala is at the epicentre of drug-trafficking routes coming from South America towards the North. Its location has influenced the formation of two kinds of drug criminal networks: transnational organisations that occupy territory with no state presence and push people into trafficking in drugs nationally and across borders, and urban mafias, who are increasingly involved in drug trafficking and the ensuing high homicide rates.<sup>61</sup> These criminal networks thrive on the effects of food insecurity induced by climate change. On the one hand, the cultivation of opium in rural areas has increased as an alternative source of income, multiplying income almost 20-fold, especially in areas of weak state presence that are now

<sup>58</sup> Beteta H et al. (2021), 'Comprehensive Development Plan for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and south-southeast Mexico', Volume 1, United Nations, Santiago, p 80–81.

<sup>59</sup> Arias I et al. (2022), *Invisible Threads: Addressing the root causes of migration from Guatemala by investing in women and girls* (Washington DC: Population Institute), September, pp 5, 12.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, pp 26, 36.

occupied by the mafias.<sup>62</sup> On the other hand, mass migration from the countryside is flowing to urban areas inside Guatemala and to the United States, due to more difficult farming conditions and the violence caused by the expansion of trafficking networks in rural areas.<sup>63</sup>

The ways climate change is inducing SOC are gendered, differently affecting men, young people and women. Migration involves mostly rural men and boys aged between 15 and 45 years, with an average of 6 years of education. However, the profile is diversifying, with an increasing number of families, indigenous people and lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual, intersex, queer/questioning+ (LGTBIQ+) people on the move.<sup>64</sup> Migration creates demand for human smuggling services provided by criminal networks operating in Central America and Mexico towards the US. These networks tend to abuse migrants and get involved in other forms of transnational organised crime, such as drug trafficking and the corruption of government officials.<sup>65</sup> Migration is producing a feminisation of agriculture, with more women facing increased responsibilities while also assuming greater autonomy.<sup>66</sup> When rural women decide to migrate, it is due to a lack of social services, including education and reproductive health services, which leaves them with few possibilities to prosper. In this context, trafficking in – and gender-based violence against – women and girls is highly prevalent due to pre-existing gender discrimination amplified during the internal armed conflict (which took place from 1960 to 1996). This has gone largely unpunished.<sup>67</sup>

In urban areas dominated by transnational gangs (called '*maras*'), young people are at huge risk of recruitment and exploitation by criminal groups. This is due to their low education levels, marginalisation, a culture of violence and attraction to the gang lifestyle. Gangs are dominated by men and notorious for a culture of machismo that is fuelling some of the highest rates of violence against women and girls.<sup>68</sup> However, studies find that as many as 40 per cent of gang members may be women/girls.<sup>69</sup> Gangs are notorious for extortion, kidnapping and robbery, and are increasingly involved in cross-border drug-related activities.<sup>70</sup> Critically, street gangs and drug-trafficking organisations are responsible for the vast majority of homicides, 68 per cent of which take place in urban settings.<sup>71</sup> Guatemala has the highest homicide rate and one of the highest femicide rates in the world (murder against women and girls due to their gender). It is also the second most dangerous place for children under 19.<sup>72</sup>

Women in Guatemala, and Latin America in general, are not only victims of SOC but also active participants. This reality is at odds with the lack of knowledge on the nature of women's participation in illicit drug trafficking and smuggling, given that the focus of research has been

<sup>62</sup> Nett K, Rüttinger L (2016), *Insurgency, Terrorism and Organised Crime in a Warming Climate: Analysing the Links Between Climate Change and Non-State Armed Groups* (Berlin: Climate Diplomacy), October, p 39.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, p 40.

<sup>64</sup> Arias I et al. (2022), *Invisible Threads: Addressing the root causes of migration from Guatemala by investing in women and girls* (Washington DC: Population Institute), September, p 10.

<sup>65</sup> US Department of Justice (2023), 'Justice Department Announces Historic Guatemalan Human Smuggling Extraditions at Joint Task Force Alpha Summit', Office of Public Affairs, 16 March; National Security Council (undated), 'Transnational Organized Crime: A Growing Threat to National and International Security' (<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/administration/eop/nsc>)

<sup>66</sup> Arias I et al. (2022), *Invisible Threads: Addressing the root causes of migration from Guatemala by investing in women and girls* (Washington DC: Population Institute), September, p 13.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, p 14.

<sup>68</sup> Smith C, Hare T (2020), 'Addressing the Sex and Gender-Based Violence in Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador Fueling the U.S. Border Crisis', Pulte Institute for Global Development, Policy Brief Series No.2, April, p 2.

<sup>69</sup> Lacey M (2008), 'Guatemalan gang culture conquers the abused with abuse', *The New York Times*, 9 April.

<sup>70</sup> Nett K, Rüttinger L (2016), *Insurgency, Terrorism and Organised Crime in a Warming Climate: Analysing the Links Between Climate Change and Non-State Armed Groups* (Berlin: Climate Diplomacy), October, pp 36, 38.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid, p 36.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid pp 35–36.



on drug abuse and incarcerated women.<sup>73</sup> This gap is an obstacle to formulate effective policies, programmes and for law enforcement that operate from the assumption that drug trade and smuggling are just activities carried out by men. Independent research reveals that women have high-profile roles running drug cartels in Latin America ('narcas'), even if most women are in prison for low-level trafficking offences.<sup>74</sup> Also, there is increasing evidence that women in Latin America (nicknamed 'Mama Africas') play an important role as local contacts linking, assisting migrants and running smuggling networks that move thousands of people from Africa and Asia across the region every year.<sup>75</sup>

## Mexico

Increasing temperatures and decreasing rainfall are seriously affecting Mexico. Pessimistic predictions for Southern Mexico estimate a rise in temperature between 3.5 and 4.5°C and a reduction in precipitation between 10 and 25 per cent by the end of the century.<sup>76</sup> Studies have established a robust and strong correlation between rising temperatures in Mexico and killings related to drug-trafficking organisations. Baysan et al. (2019) measured the effects of temperature and violence in all municipalities in Mexico between 2007 and 2011. They found a positive and significant effect on interpersonal and inter-group violence across all specifications, where a  $1\sigma$  (standard deviation) increase in temperature in any given month was associated with a 28 per cent increase in the rate of drug-related killings.<sup>77</sup> The finding is consistent with other studies on temperature and conflict outside Mexico.<sup>78</sup> Further, the authors found no significant relationship between temperature and other typically economically motivated activities in drug trafficking, such as extortion and kidnapping. This suggests that rising temperatures (but not other economically motivated activities) have the effect of increasing violent crime.<sup>79</sup>

Homicide rates in Mexico, so often related to drug-trafficking, show gender trends. While there is no available data on the men/women split in firearms ownership,<sup>80</sup> of the 34,000 killings in 2021, men represented 89 per cent of victims.<sup>81</sup> Firearms were behind 60 per cent of femicides in 2022.<sup>82</sup> Firearms are changing the nature of domestic violence, increasing the number of femicides (6 out of 10 women were fatally shot in 2018) and spilling violence against women out onto the streets.<sup>83</sup> While the killing of men is directly related to drug trafficking, femicide is an indirect rather than a direct consequence of drug trafficking, and is surging. The country registered 427 femicides in 2015, compared to 1,004 homicides in 2021, which represents a 135 per cent increase.<sup>84</sup> Femicide is underpinned by discriminatory stereotypes around the role of women and girls, identified by factors such as the existence of sexual violence before the killing, killing in the context of an intimate relationship or

<sup>73</sup> Pieris NJ (2014), 'Women and drugs in the Americas: A policy working paper', Organization of American States and the Inter-American Commission of Women, January, p 24.

<sup>74</sup> Eulich W (2023), "'Narcas' sheds light on the women who run drug smuggling cartels', *The Christian Science Monitor*, 9 August.

<sup>75</sup> Rojas R (2020), 'Latin America's Lucrative People Smuggling Networks', Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP), 9 July.

<sup>76</sup> Beteta H et al. (2021), 'Comprehensive Development Plan for El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and south-southeast Mexico', Volume 1, United Nations, Santiago, pp 81–82.

<sup>77</sup> Baysan C et al. (2019), 'Non-economic factors in violence: Evidence from organized crime, suicides and climate in Mexico', *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* **168**, p 442.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, p 442.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p 444.

<sup>80</sup> GunPolicy.org (undated), 'Mexico – Gun Facts, Figures and the Law' ([www.gunpolicy.org/firearms/region/mexico](http://www.gunpolicy.org/firearms/region/mexico))

<sup>81</sup> Adams O (undated), 'Understanding the dynamics of femicide in Mexico', *Vision of Humanity* ([www.visionofhumanity.org/understanding-the-dynamics-of-femicide-of-mexico/](http://www.visionofhumanity.org/understanding-the-dynamics-of-femicide-of-mexico/))

<sup>82</sup> Gandoy Vázquez W, García Hidalgo X (2022), 'Mexico's Bold Move Against Gun Companies', Arms Control Association, September.

<sup>83</sup> Beatley M (2020), 'America's Gun Fuel Mexico's Domestic Violence Epidemic', *Foreign Policy*, 27 May.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

relationship of trust, or the display of women's bodies in the street. Since President Felipe Calderón (2006–2012) launched the war on drugs in 2007, a consequence has been a more overt circulation of weapons, and direct confrontation between drug cartels and between these and the state. This has resulted in higher rates of homicide and femicide, public killings, and enforced disappearances of women and girls.<sup>85</sup>

### Security gaps: climate, gender and SOC:

- Hotter temperatures causing food insecurity in Guatemala and Mexico increase people's vulnerability to drug-trafficking organisations. This is resulting in higher homicide and femicide rates. **The regulatory framework does not address temperature increase as one of the drivers of SOC-related violence.**

### Approaches to address the nexus:

- Rural women in Guatemala who receive remittances tend to have a more diverse diet, demonstrating that money managed by women results in improved family well-being (Arias 2022, p 13).
- Programming for young urban migrants should not homogenise their background but consider their intersecting identities (girls, indigenous, LGBTBI+) to reach the most vulnerable (Ibid, p 21).

## 4. Floods and high sea levels increasing the levels of human and drug trafficking: Bangladesh and the Caribbean

### Bangladesh

Bangladesh is the seventh most climate-vulnerable country in the world. Sudden-onset events like cyclones are causing super floods (two in 2020) resulting in loss of life, land, livestock and homes. These phenomena are compounded by slow-onset processes like irregular rainfall and the increasing salinity of water (due to human interference), which are damaging crops, trees and fish growth, and reducing the availability of fresh water.<sup>86</sup> The Bangladeshi Government estimates that over the past decade, 700,000 people have been displaced each year due to natural disasters.<sup>87</sup> According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), sudden-onset disasters causing high mortality and destruction are damaging protection systems and slow-onset events are aggravating the scale of unsafe migration, trafficking, public health and gender-based violence<sup>88</sup>. These impacts affect Bangladeshi men and women in gendered ways.

<sup>85</sup> Loaiza L (2023), 'Mexico's Rising Femicides Linked to Organized Crime', *Insight Crime*, 11 July.

<sup>86</sup> Clewett P (2022), 'Climate, Crime and Exploitation: The gendered links between climate-related risk, trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants', Policy Brief, UNODC, October.

<sup>87</sup> US Department of State (2023), 'Trafficking in Persons Report: Bangladesh' ([www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/bangladesh/](https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/bangladesh/)).

<sup>88</sup> Clewett P (2022), 'Climate, Crime and Exploitation: The gendered links between climate-related risk, trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants', Policy Brief, UNODC, October, p. 39.



Many Bangladeshi men migrate each year to Gulf countries and East Asia, where they work in exploitative conditions. Most migrate through informal channels where they become the target of traffickers. Added to this threat is the pressure of paying debts for high recruitment fees, which they contracted before departure with legal and illegal agencies.<sup>89</sup> Destination countries have recorded tens of thousands of cases of underpayment, physical abuse and overwork,<sup>90</sup> pointing at the existence of close links between these migration flows and forced labour.

Disasters entrench patriarchal norms making Bangladeshi women and girls more at risk of sexual violence. For instance, freshwater shortages increase hardship, a desire to migrate and increase the chance of sexual exploitation; women and girls must travel longer distances to collect water, raising the number of sexual assaults; those working in land-based fishing face more harassment by men (especially if required to dive under the water to catch shrimp); and more children are not attending school and experiencing harassment.<sup>91</sup>

According to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), climate change threatens the lives of more than 19 million Bangladeshi children, especially those living around rivers and coastal areas who are undergoing higher pressure on vital services like proper housing, food, health and education.<sup>92</sup> Flooding, erosion and storms are driving children from school to work, with estimates of around 1.7 million child labourers in the country. Most children not attending school live in urban slums or in hard-to-reach or disaster-prone areas.<sup>93</sup> Increasing numbers of families impoverished by extreme climate conditions are migrating to major cities. Here, children face deprivation and are pushed into dangerous forms of labour and early marriage.<sup>94</sup>

Bangladeshi women and girls are discriminated against in various ways that put them at high risk of exploitation by traffickers and smugglers. Only 33 per cent of women are employed, mostly in informal work, which makes them more economically dependent than men.<sup>95</sup> This economic vulnerability, aggravated by the effects of climate change and toleration of violence against women (87 per cent report having experienced gender-based violence during marriage),<sup>96</sup> is exploited by SOC networks. According to the US Department of State, natural disasters are placing people, especially women and girls, among groups most at-risk of trafficking, with victims increasingly targeted by traffickers through social media for purposes of sex and labour exploitation.<sup>97</sup> UNODC reports that in places like Maharashtra and West Bengal, traffickers recruit women and girls for sexual exploitation by leveraging promises of stardom via Tik Tok and other social media.<sup>98</sup>

Since 2017, more than 700,000 Rohingya have been forced to flee from Myanmar to Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. This is an area that is exceptionally vulnerable to the impacts of natural disasters like flash floods and landslides, which devastate refugee camps.<sup>99</sup> Rohingya

<sup>89</sup> US Department of State (2023), 'Trafficking in Persons Report: Bangladesh' ([www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/bangladesh/](http://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/bangladesh/))

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Clewett P (2022), 'Climate, Crime and Exploitation: The gendered links between climate-related risk, trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants', Policy Brief, UNODC, October, p. 32.

<sup>92</sup> UNICEF (UN Children's Fund) (2019a), 'A Gathering Storm: Climate change clouds the future of children in Bangladesh', United Nations, Geneva, 8 April.

<sup>93</sup> Hossain M (2022), 'Climate disasters drive Bangladesh children from classrooms to work', UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), 9 May.

<sup>94</sup> UNICEF (UN Children's Fund) (2019a), 'A Gathering Storm: Climate change clouds the future of children in Bangladesh', United Nations, Geneva, 8 April.

<sup>95</sup> Trading Economics (2023a), 'Bangladesh – Labor Force, Female'

(<https://tradingeconomics.com/bangladesh/labor-force-female-percent-of-total-labor-force-wb-data.html>)

<sup>96</sup> Concern Worldwide (2022) 'Gender inequality in Bangladesh: Engaging men and boys to close the gap', 28 February ([www.concern.net/news/gender-inequality-in-bangladesh-closing-the-gap](http://www.concern.net/news/gender-inequality-in-bangladesh-closing-the-gap))

<sup>97</sup> US Department of State (2023), 'Trafficking in Persons Report: Bangladesh' ([www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/bangladesh/](http://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/bangladesh/))

<sup>98</sup> Clewett P (2022), 'Climate, Crime and Exploitation: The gendered links between climate-related risk, trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants', Policy Brief, UNODC, October, p 30.

<sup>99</sup> Grey A-M (2021), 'How the Climate Crisis Impacts Rohingya Refugees', UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), 26 August.

refugees, especially women and girls, are exploited by trafficking networks, mainly for forced labour and sexual exploitation. These factors are aggravated by lack of reporting mechanisms in camps and lack of access to justice mechanisms, resulting in impunity for SOC.<sup>100</sup>

## The Caribbean

The Caribbean is a hotspot for tropical storms, cyclones and rising sea levels, which are expected to rise 0.5 meters above the high-tide line over the next 50 years. Coastal flooding will be a significant risk for coastal airports and seaports in the 2030s, requiring significant technical adaptation measures to ensure economic security.<sup>101</sup> Since 2011, the region has been suffering from a plague of floating sargassum, a large seaweed that grows with pollution, fertilisers and floods. This is significantly damaging the fisheries sector, causing: fishing gear to become ineffective; fewer days at sea and lower catches; changes in fish behaviour and target species; and health problems and damage to the tourism industry.<sup>102</sup> The effects of climate change, compounded by the overexploitation of fisheries, water pollution, habitat destruction and coastal erosion, have reduced fish production by 300,000 tons across the region over the last 30 years.<sup>103</sup>

These impacts are striking 'frontier' coastal communities hard, as these communities live below sea level, depend on the sea for their livelihoods and are difficult to reach due to weak infrastructure.<sup>104</sup> SOC groups are exploiting these vulnerabilities in ways that differently affect men and women. Men fisherfolk are increasingly allowing organised criminal groups to use their boats for trafficking in drugs, arms and people in order to provide for their families.<sup>105</sup> Young men are increasingly enlisted in gangs for illegal activities (selling drugs, acting as lookouts for drug dealers, housebreaking), child labour and transactional sex.<sup>106</sup> As gateways of trafficking, coastal communities have become battlegrounds for 'turf wars' between criminal groups seeking to control illegal flows of drugs and other forms of illegal activity.<sup>107</sup> Gender norms are contributing to this violence, because the high tolerance of domestic violence against women and children has the effect of normalising violence in society more broadly.<sup>108</sup>

Jamaica illustrates these trends. Trafficking in drugs and people is highly organised and works in parallel with markets controlled by transnational networks based in Colombia and Mexico. These networks use the country as a trans-shipment and storage point for drugs on the way to international marketplaces.<sup>109</sup> Due to lax US arms control and Jamaica's close proximity, weapons are easily available and fuel a high number of homicides that occur in attempts to protect drug production, trafficking systems and gang recruitment.<sup>110</sup>

As a sub-region of small island developing states vulnerable to extreme weather, Caribbean populations (especially women and children) are constantly faced with displacement, placing them at a high risk of trafficking. Caribbean women and girls, especially those in more marginalised situations like women with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual,

<sup>100</sup> US Department of State (2023), 'Trafficking in Persons Report: Bangladesh' ([www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/bangladesh/](http://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/bangladesh/))

<sup>101</sup> UNECE (UN Economic Commission for Europe) (2020), 'Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation for Transport Networks and Nodes', United Nations, Geneva, p.7

<sup>102</sup> FAO (undated), 'Climate Change Adaptation in the Eastern Caribbean Fisheries Sector' ([www.fao.org/in-action/climate-change-adaptation-eastern-caribbean-fisheries/topics/sargassum/ru/](http://www.fao.org/in-action/climate-change-adaptation-eastern-caribbean-fisheries/topics/sargassum/ru/))

<sup>103</sup> Bolaji K (2020), 'Climate-related security risks and violent crime in Caribbean "frontier" coastal communities: issues, challenges and policy options', Issue Brief No.15, UN Development Programme, p 7.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid, p 3.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, p 7.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid, p 3.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid, p 8.

<sup>109</sup> Global Organized Crime Index (undated) 'Jamaica' (<https://ocindex.net/country/jamaica>)

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

transgender, queer, intersex, asexual) and the elderly, experience the impacts of environmental migration and disaster displacement more negatively. This is because of their societal exclusion (they face higher unemployment and reduced access to livelihoods), which reduces their ability to withstand climate disasters.<sup>111</sup> The number of displaced children due to tropical cyclones and hurricanes has increased sixfold in five years (761,000 children were internally displaced between 2014 and 2018), making children more at risk of trafficking and exploitation.<sup>112</sup> Reports across the region identify trends of trafficking in children: the largest numbers are girls for the sexual exploitation, followed by labour migration, where boys are over-represented.<sup>113</sup>

The Caribbean is multiplying international partnerships and receiving huge amounts of humanitarian aid to counter the effects of climate-related disasters. Surprisingly, research using quantitative data analysis across the region from 2000 to 2018 shows that surges in humanitarian aid are not significantly correlated with an increase in corruption, which is mainly determined by levels of development and governance in each country.<sup>114</sup> Consistent with this finding, qualitative analyses reveal the perception among humanitarian aid workers that corrupt countries remain corrupt and corruption levels do not get worse with infusions of humanitarian aid.<sup>115</sup>

## Security gaps: climate, gender and SOC

- Floods and high sea levels are 'push' factors of migration and displacement. They increase the exposure of men to smugglers (Bangladesh) and drug-traffickers (the Caribbean), and of women and girls to sexual exploitation. **Policy-making does not address the exacerbation of SOC as a structural consequence of natural disasters.**

## Approaches to address the nexus:

- Some initiatives stress a three-pronged approach against trafficking based on prevention (addressing the root social, economic and cultural causes), prosecution and protection (victims' rights, assistance and compensation) (2003 OSCE Action Plan; UNODC 2006; The Brookings–Bern Project on Internal Displacement 2011). The OSCE Action Plan identifies a gender-sensitive structural response to trafficking, including: i) eliminating discrimination against women in employment; and ii) gender education on equal and respectful relationships to prevent violence against women.

<sup>111</sup> Bleeker A et al. (2021), 'Advancing gender equality in environmental migration and disaster displacement in the Caribbean', Studies and Perspectives Series – ECLAC, No.98, International Organization for Migration (IOM), Santiago, pp 24.

<sup>112</sup> UNICEF (2019b), 'As impact of climate crisis worsens, Caribbean islands see six-fold increase in number of children displaced by storms', United Nations, Geneva, December.

<sup>113</sup> Marcus R et al. (2023), 'Children Affected by Internal Migration and Displacement in Latin America and the Caribbean', UNICEF, p 3.

<sup>114</sup> Fasehun S (2021), 'Impact of Humanitarian Aid on Facilitating Corruption: A Look at Nations in Central America and the Caribbean', George Mason University.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

## 5. Environmental crime and climate change: Latin America

There is an intricate relationship between environmental crime and climate change. Unlawful practices such as illicit deforestation, mining, fishing and wildlife killing cause environmental degradation, contributing to changes in climate patterns like extreme weather and drought, as well as increasing scarcity of resources and population movement.<sup>116</sup> Criminal networks are diversifying their activities towards environmental crime, which is harder to detect than conventional crime, involves lower sanctions and is among the most financially rewarding, especially illegal trafficking in wildlife, timber and fish.<sup>117</sup>

Latin America is a hotspot of environmental crime, although other areas exist, for instance, in Africa (illegal mining in Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)) and in South Asia (for example, illegal fishing).<sup>118</sup> In Mexico, the liberalisation of mining has been exploited by drug-traffickers taking advantage of dismantled protections.<sup>119</sup> Further, control over Chihuahua's illegal wood industry has sparked conflict between the Sinaloa and Juárez cartels.<sup>120</sup> In Colombia, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia or FARC) generated 20 per cent of its funding from illegal gold mining in 2016.<sup>121</sup> In Central America, Guatemala's Maya biosphere is being decimated (via 'slash and burn') to make way for landing strips and drug flights, while Honduras's Río Plátano's biosphere is being illegally harvested by settlers for trafficking in timber.<sup>122</sup> These environmental crimes happen with the complicity of corrupt officials, who facilitate illicit permits for transport, and transnational criminal networks that supply exotic timber to Asian markets and illegal minerals to Europe, the US, Turkey and beyond.<sup>123</sup>

Deforestation caused by illegal land invasions, logging and mining is degrading the environment. Compounded by droughts and erratic and heavy rainfall, environmental degradation is causing irreparable damage to the small-scale farming and riverside fishing practised by indigenous peoples, leading to their displacement.<sup>124</sup>

Changes to wildlife hunting associated with global warming may pose serious risks to the health and life of local populations. Research in the Amazon to predict patterns of polycystic echinococcosis, a neglected life-threatening zoonosis associated with the handling and consumption of wildmeat, shows that extreme climate events (like El Niño) disrupt hunting practices and increase the risk of parasite spillover from animals to humans.<sup>125</sup> Such evidence could also have implications for similar hunting-related zoonoses.

While the traditional thinking is that drug trafficking, especially coca cultivation, is the main driver of deforestation, according to UNODC, its impact is becoming minimal compared to other environmental crimes. Cattle ranching, mining and wildlife trafficking resulting from the

<sup>116</sup> Walker S (2021), 'Environmental crime: The not-so-hidden obstacle to combat climate change', *Global Initiative*, 31 October.

<sup>117</sup> Europol (undated), 'Environmental Crime' ([www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas-and-statistics/crime-areas/environmental-crime](http://www.europol.europa.eu/crime-areas-and-statistics/crime-areas/environmental-crime))

<sup>118</sup> Clewett P (2022), 'Climate, Crime and Exploitation: The gendered links between climate-related risk, trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants', Policy Brief, UNODC, October, p 20.

<sup>119</sup> Tran D, Hanacek K (2023), 'A global analysis of violence against women defenders in environmental conflicts', *Nature Sustainability*, June, p 3.

<sup>120</sup> Jones K (2021), 'Organized Crime and the Environment in Latin America: A Fatal Encounter', *Insight Crime*, 3 March.

<sup>121</sup> Walker S (2021), 'Environmental crime: The not-so-hidden obstacle to combat climate change', *Global Initiative*, 31 October.

<sup>122</sup> Jones K (2021), 'Organized Crime and the Environment in Latin America: A Fatal Encounter', *Insight Crime*, 3 March..

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> San-José A, Mayor P, Carvalo B, Rodó X (2023), 'Climate determines transmission hotspots of Polycystic Echinococcosis, a life-threatening zoonotic disease, across Pan-Amazonia', *PNAS*, **120** (33).

diversification of finances of drug-trafficking groups are leaving a major environmental and human footprint in the Amazon.<sup>126</sup> In Brazil, indigenous communities suffering from drug-related violence either free or succumb to working for criminal groups in exploitative conditions. They have experienced around 20 per cent more homicidal violence between 2009 and 2019 than non-indigenous areas.<sup>127</sup> Further, the triple crisis of deforestation, climate change and pollution causes air pollution from fires – resulting in severe health risks in the Brazilian Amazon. In 2019, 2,195 hospitalisations were officially recorded due to respiratory illness attributable to these fires. Even this figure might not capture the full impact of the problem, given that many people in the Amazon have limited access to health facilities.<sup>128</sup>

Environmental crime in the region is undermining smallholders and communities in gendered ways. The remoteness of illicit mining is associated with patterns of trafficking in women and girls in Peru and forced labour of men in Colombia.<sup>129</sup> Crucially, violence against women environmental defenders has emerged as a gendered harm unique to environmental crime. Studies with large data samples identify gendered patterns of harm against women environmental defenders in the extractive industries, especially in Brazil, Colombia and Mexico.<sup>130</sup> These harms typically include criminalising women’s activism, repression, violent targeting, displacement and assassination, and are often accompanied by sexual violence.<sup>131</sup> These studies stress the extreme gender-discriminatory *modus operandi* of the extractive industries: the erasure of existing egalitarian gender schemes by persecuting and killing community leaders and imposing binary gender relations that punish women’s environmental activism and confine them to reproductive and care-taking roles. Due to these criminal patterns, the extractive industries have been associated with ecocide and genocide-like practices taking place through the destruction of gender egalitarian relations.<sup>132</sup>

Amazon women are at the intersection of harms caused by environmental crime and gender discrimination due to higher inequality rates that increase their vulnerability to risks. Only 30 per cent own land and 5 per cent have access to technical assistance for agriculture. They also experience health complications due to air pollution and the wildfires caused by illegal activities, while malnutrition due to low agricultural production is highly prevalent among children and indigenous women. Further, gender-based violence is particularly high against women, girls and LGBTIQ+ people, especially when it takes the form of human trafficking, sexual exploitation, child labour and femicide. The Brazilian Amazon state of Acre registered the highest feminist rate in the country in 2019, and the state of Amazonas the fourth highest.<sup>133</sup>

The ‘other side of the coin’ is that gender relations are evolving because of environmental crime. Amazon women are becoming stronger through their defence of the environment. They are increasingly recognised as leaders of respected movements and critical repositories of traditional knowledge about nature and climate, which positions them as the best interlocutors regarding environmental issues.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>126</sup> UNODC (2023), ‘The Nexus between Drugs and Crimes that Affect the Environment and Convergent Crime in the Amazon Basin’, New York.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Human Rights Watch (2020), ‘The Air is Unbearable: Health Impacts of Deforestation-Related Fires in the Brazilian Amazon’, 26 August.

<sup>129</sup> Clewett P (2022), ‘Climate, Crime and Exploitation: The gendered links between climate-related risk, trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants’, Policy Brief, UNODC, October, p 21.

<sup>130</sup> Tran D, Hanacek K (2023), ‘A global analysis of violence against women defenders in environmental conflicts’, *Nature Sustainability*, June, p.2.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid, p 3.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid; Folly M, Erthal Abdenur A (2021), ‘Protecting the Amazon by Empowering its Women’, PeaceLab, 17 February.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> da Silva F (2022), ‘# 16 Days / Brazilian women fighting to protect the Amazon’, *Worlds of Education*, 5 December.

## Security gaps: climate, gender and SOC

- Environmental crime is a source of gendered patterns of trafficking in women for sexual exploitation and men for forced labour. It threatens the livelihoods of indigenous communities, causing displacement, vulnerability and violence against women environmental defenders as a unique form of environmental crime.
- The misunderstanding of gender is one important factor preventing adaptation and mitigation strategies by the local population, including to prevent environmental crime.

## Approaches to address the nexus:

- The CEDAW Committee recommends: (i) considering the technical knowledge and skills of indigenous women and girls and their prior consent in all decision-making affecting the environment; and (ii) protecting the work of women environmental defenders (CEDAW 2022: General Recommendation 39, paras. 23, 60).
- Technology can efficiently contribute to protect both the environment and indigenous peoples (Ibid, para. 55). Indigenous women in Brazil are preventing environmental crime by mapping climate change hotspots. This allows the creation of an 'indigenous climate alert system' to warn about illegal deforestation, mining and logging (Folly and Abdenur 2021).



# Regulatory gaps: setting out the thinking

## Gaps in international law and policy

International law and policy regulate climate change, gender inequality and SOC separately. However, regulatory frameworks overlook the interlinks between the three factors, whose compounding effect results in unique and aggravated harms. A fragmented approach to harms is clearly apparent in hard (treaty) law. First, SOC regulation only considers certain gendered harms such as trafficking in women and girls (for example, the Palermo Protocol), their prostitution, and child sexual abuse. However, it does not consider how diverse gender identities (cisgender, transgender, non-binary, queer, gender fluid) are at risk from SOC, and how specific gender harms should be addressed.<sup>135</sup> Second, the Paris Agreement on climate change links action against climate change to respect for human rights obligations, gender equality and support for women, in parallel to a growing body of evidence emerging on climate change and WPS.<sup>136</sup> Yet climate legislation critically overlooks the role of SOC as one of the unintended effects of climate change, which adds complexity to mitigation and adaptation strategies. SOC diverts the potential of human action from the field of sustainability to the field of criminality. Likewise, the scientific body, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), stresses gender and other inequalities as factors diminishing resilience to climate change, but it overlooks SOC as a major obstacle to address the very inequalities undermining adaptation and mitigation strategies.<sup>137</sup>

Despite the compartmentalisation in regulation, a climate security agenda inclusive of gender factors is emerging and influencing climate legislation. The linking of the 'urgent threat of climate change' by the Paris Agreement to the protection of gender equality and human rights has unintended positive effects. A first unintended consequence is that the climate–gender–SOC relationship would fit the agendas of climate change and international human rights law. A second such consequence is that the nexus equally fits the women, peace and security agenda, in view of the increasing references (by the UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council and Secretary-General) to counter this threat by integrating climate change and human rights obligations, including their gender dimensions.<sup>138</sup>

<sup>135</sup> United Nations (2003), 'Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime', ('the Palermo Protocol'), A/55/383, adoption 15 November 2000, entry into force 25 December 2003; United Nations (2002), 'Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography', A/RES/54/63, adoption 16 March 2001, entry into force 18 January 2002.

<sup>136</sup> United Nations (2016), 'Paris Agreement to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change', UN Doc. FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1 Decision 1/CP.21, adoption 12 December 2015, entry into force 4 November 2016; UN Secretary-General (2021), 'Women and peace and security', Report of the Secretary-General, S/2021/827, 27 December; Kezie-Nwoha H, Yoshida K, Bond H (2021), 'Defending the Future: Gender, Conflict and Environmental Peace', Centre for Women, Peace and Security, Policy Brief 03; Bastick M, Risler C (2022), *Women Speak: The Lived Nexus Between Climate, Gender and Security* (Geneva: Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF)).

<sup>137</sup> IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) (2023), 'Climate Change 2023, Synthesis Report, Summary for Policymakers', IPCC, Geneva, A.2.6; C.5.3.

<sup>138</sup> UNGA (2022) 'Resolution A/76/L.75', 26 July; UNHRC (2021), 'Resolution 48/13', 18 October; UN Secretary-General (2021), 'Women and peace and security', Report of the Secretary-General, S/2021/827, 27 December.

Not by chance, there is an emerging recognition of the climate–gender–SOC nexus in international human rights law and the women peace and security (WPS) agenda, which could act as entry points to further recognise this relationship in international law and policy.

On the one hand, WPS Resolution 2242 (2015) mentions ‘the impacts of climate change’ as an issue of the changing global context, so, implicitly linking it with WPS but without further analysis. WPS Resolution 2467 (2019) explicitly recognises ‘the link between sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations and the illicit trade in natural resources’, including conflict minerals, calling for their responsible production but, similarly, without drawing further consequences.<sup>139</sup> In this regard, feminist legal scholars have been critical of the WPS’s narrow approach to gender harms noting its predominant militaristic and ‘carceral’ agenda protecting women, mostly from sexual violence, while ignoring the wide range of gender experiences of harms they experience – where factors such as climate and SOC situate.<sup>140</sup> Interestingly, the limited approach of WPS resolutions to climate security stands in opposition with the growing body of research demonstrating the links between climate change, gender and security.<sup>141</sup>

On the other hand, the CEDAW Committee’s General Recommendation No. 37 recognises trafficking of women and girls following natural disasters due to a lack of state protection.<sup>142</sup> And the Committee’s General Recommendation No. 39 on indigenous women and girls highlights the absence of protective laws ensuring their right to land and natural resources; hence, their particular vulnerability to displacement, the killing of environmental defenders, trafficking and other forms of gender-based violence in the context of environmental crime committed by organised networks.<sup>143</sup>

These initiatives evidence the potential to address the climate–gender–SOC nexus in regulatory frameworks through a preventive approach – based on resilience to climate change, gender equality and human rights. However, law enforcement policies adopt a repressive crime-based approach, including those of the UK, the EU, Interpol and Europol. They focus on training and international cooperation to stop illicit financing flows, but leave the root causes of SOC unaddressed, including ‘push’ factors such as climate change and gender inequality.<sup>144</sup>

## Gaps in the global discussion

Two important global debates are creating mutual synergies in policy and research. On the one hand, the climate and security debate acknowledges climate change as a ‘threat multiplier’ and one of the ‘most pressing and serious threats’, whose impact affects not only the maintenance of international peace and security but, more generally, the fulfilment of

<sup>139</sup> UNSC (2015), ‘Resolution 2242’, 13 October; UNSC (2019) ‘Resolution 2467’, 23 April.

<sup>140</sup> Otto D (2017), ‘Women, Peace and Security: A Critical Analysis of the Security Council’s Vision’, London School of Economics, 9 January.

<sup>141</sup> See, for instance, Kezie-Nwoha H, Yoshida K, Bond H (2021), ‘Defending the Future: Gender, Conflict and Environmental Peace’, Centre for Women, Peace and Security, Policy Brief 03; Bastick M, Risler C (2022), *Women Speak: The Lived Nexus Between Climate, Gender and Security* (Geneva: Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF)); Smith JM, Olosky L, Grosman Fernández J (2021), ‘The Climate-Gender-Conflict Nexus: Amplifying women’s contributions at the grassroots’, Georgetown Institute for Women Peace and Security.

<sup>142</sup> CEDAW (2018), ‘General Recommendation No.37 on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change’, CEDAW/C/GC/37, 13 March, para. 75.

<sup>143</sup> CEDAW (2022), General Recommendation No.39 on the rights of Indigenous women and girls’, CEDAW/C/GC/39, 31 October, paras. 7, 21, 23, 37, 60.

<sup>144</sup> HM Government (2023), ‘Economic Crime Plan 2, 2023–2026’, London, p 6; European Commission (2021), ‘Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime 2021–2025’, Brussels 14 April; Interpol (2022), ‘Crime, Law Enforcement and Climate Change’, Background Paper, September; Europol (2022), ‘Environmental Crime in the age of climate change’, Threat Assessment.



human rights. Hence, the priority of integrating the climate change and human rights agendas.<sup>145</sup> The recent recognition of the new human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment illustrates the intersections between climate and human security.<sup>146</sup> On the other hand, the debate on climate and gender attests to the growing recognition that gender-sensitive adaptation and mitigation strategies are effective both for improving ability to withstand climate change and supporting women. The nexus between climate/the environment and gender was already identified in the Beijing Declaration. It has also been emphasised by ecofeminism, which stresses that women are repositories of knowledge on the environment and must be factored into decision-making.<sup>147</sup> Likewise, this report provides examples of successful initiatives that improve gender equality and climate resilience concomitantly.

The two debates – climate and security and climate and gender – are developing relevant interlinks and overlaps, evidenced by the increasingly debated nexus on climate, gender and security. This debate goes beyond the sum of the two components. It emphasises that integrating climate and gender is not only needed to improve sustainable and equal gender solutions. Their integration becomes critical from a security perspective because gender-sensitive approaches to climate change uniquely promote sustainable development, which is an essential condition for a long-lasting peace. Evidence of the climate–gender–security nexus is found, for instance, in the Secretary-General reports (including on WPS) and, more timidly, in resolutions from the UN General Assembly and the Human Rights Council.<sup>148</sup> Further, convincing evidence of this nexus is found in joint initiatives from UN bodies such as UN Women, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Department of Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA). It is also present, especially, in an increasing number of civil society organisations that, from a community-led perspective, advocate for the climate–gender–security nexus, including by integrating domestic obligations on WPS and climate change.<sup>149</sup>

How does the debate on climate and security relate to the nexus between climate, gender and SOC? The latter squarely fits within the climate security agenda – and its gender dimension. First, SOC is relevant to both human and climate insecurity. The present report provides consistent evidence using five case studies that climate change and gender inequality are drivers of SOC, which in turn perpetuates the effects of climate change and gender inequality. Second, the report provides evidence of initiatives (see text boxes) that gender-sensitive approaches to climate change are effective tools for improving individuals' resilience and coping mechanisms, thereby, *indirectly* reducing SOC. Accordingly, it makes sense that people working on SOC and climate security should seek ways to recognise this relationship –

<sup>145</sup> UNGA (2022), 'Resolution A/RES/76/300', 1 August; UN Security Council (2021), 'The UN Security Council and Climate Change, No.2', Security Council Report, 21 June.

<sup>146</sup> UNGA (2022), 'Resolution A/RES/76/300', 1 August.

<sup>147</sup> UN Women (1955), 'Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Beijing +5 Political Declaration and Outcome', pp 155–164; Buckingham S (2004), 'Ecofeminism in the twenty-first century', *The Geographical Journal* **170** (2).

<sup>148</sup> UNGA (2022), 'Resolution A/RES/76/300', 1 August; UNHRC (2021), 'Resolution 48/13', 18 October; UN Secretary-General (2021), 'Women and peace and security', Report of the Secretary-General, S/2021/827, 27 December; UN 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, E/CN.6/2022/3, 4 January.

<sup>149</sup> UNEP (UN Environment Programme), UN Women, UNDP (UN Development Programme) and UNDP (UN Department of Political Affairs) (2020), 'Gender, Climate & Security: Sustaining inclusive peace on the frontlines of climate change', June; Kezie-Nwoha H, Yoshida K, Bond H (2021), 'Defending the Future: Gender, Conflict and Environmental Peace', Centre for Women, Peace and Security, Policy Brief 03; Bastick M, Risler C (2022), *Women Speak: The Lived Nexus Between Climate, Gender and Security* (Geneva: Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance (DCAF)); Smith JM, Olosky L, Grosman Fernández J (2021), 'The Climate-Gender-Conflict Nexus: Amplifying women's contributions at the grassroots', Georgetown Institute for Women Peace and Security.

the climate–gender–SOC nexus – as an issue relevant to the climate security agenda and its ramifications for this nexus.

## Transitioning to a green economy

Scarce attention in regulatory frameworks to climate change and gender inequality as drivers of SOC leads to the question, ‘Is there evidence that a green economy can change SOC patronage networks?’

Certainly, there are trade-offs in the transition to a green economy. A good example is the demand for green or critical minerals for use in clean technology, which is fuelling SOC due to the skyrocketing prices of these minerals on international markets.<sup>150</sup> For example, the extraction of minerals for electric cars in DRC, with 50 per cent of the world’s cobalt, is leading to the unsafe work of an estimated 40,000 children – resulting in the death and injury of many. This trend has been confirmed in judicial processes involving some of the biggest companies, such as Apple, Google, Dell, Microsoft and Tesla.<sup>151</sup> According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), child labour occurs in one in four artisan mine sites in DRC, where they are engaged in processes such as collecting, sorting, washing, crushing and transportation. This reveals the challenges of enforcing child labour prohibitions, bringing companies into compliance with international standards and providing social services to the most marginalised.<sup>152</sup> Likewise, in South Africa, the illegal mining and smuggling of chrome for industrial equipment has flourished in the north-east, representing 10 per cent of the total production.<sup>153</sup> This is causing huge environmental degradation, attacks on nearby communities, and growing mafias that smuggle chrome to Mozambique or to domestic ports. This then vanishes into legal supply and ends up in China.<sup>154</sup> Illicit chrome mining is a clear phenomenon of gender-based and economic marginalisation in South Africa, carried out by thousands of ‘zama zamas’, who are predominantly undocumented men foreigners from poorer countries prone to unemployment and organised in heavily armed groups that often clash with the police.<sup>155</sup>

SOC results in gendered harms when transitioning to a green economy. The above examples regarding artisanal mining in critical supply chains show the *multiple* ramifications of SOC in this emerging context. Criminal groups dealing with strategic minerals exploit the work of the most marginalised. For instance, this affects impoverished children and migrants in the above examples in the DRC and South Africa. It similarly affects other marginalised groups like indigenous peoples in whose territories most critical minerals are found.<sup>156</sup> In Latin America, the illegal mining of strategic minerals is associated with trafficking in women and girls to work in brothels, sexual violence and sexually transmitted diseases.<sup>157</sup> Yet, the consultation of women in extractive projects in the region is low due to patriarchal norms (which, for example,

<sup>150</sup> Hunter M, Ofosu-Peasah G (2022), ‘Organized crime threatens green minerals’, *Global Initiative*, 14 December (<https://globalinitiative.net/analysis/organized-crime-green-minerals-cop-27-climate-change/>)

<sup>151</sup> Walker S (2021), ‘Environmental crime: The not-so-hidden obstacle to combat climate change’, *Global Initiative*, 31 October.

<sup>152</sup> Maiotti L, Katz B (2019), ‘Interconnected supply chains: a comprehensive look at due diligence challenges and opportunities sourcing cobalt and copper from the Democratic Republic of the Congo’, OECD, Paris, pp 34–37.

<sup>153</sup> Skrdlik J (2022), ‘Illicit Chrome Mining Economy Thriving in South Africa’, *Organized Crime and Corruption Report Project*, 27 June 2022.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid; Mogakane T (2023), ‘Limpopo “zama-zamas” nabbed with R1m chrome’, *Sunday World*, 17 April.

<sup>156</sup> Horvitz G (2023), ‘The Global Energy Transition: Critical Minerals & Indigenous Rights’, Resilience.org, 22 August.

<sup>157</sup> OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) (undated), *Responsible Business Conduct in the Extractive and Minerals Sector in Latin America and The Caribbean* (Paris: OECD Publishing), pp 27, 31.

lead to their limited access to land and resources), resulting in companies overlooking women's specific views and needs.<sup>158</sup>

Other risks are likely to exacerbate because of SOC's involvement in the extraction of green minerals. Illegal extraction is prone to accelerate existing conflicts (racial and cultural abuse, dispossession, environmental damage) if these are not addressed.<sup>159</sup> As of 2020, a total of 310 conflicts linked to mineral extraction (35 per cent of all environmental conflicts) had been identified in Latin America.<sup>160</sup> Further, the extractive industry is on the list of illicit businesses underpinning money laundering, and the corruption of military, police and government officials to grant mining and exploitation permits and to protect operations.<sup>161</sup> This criminal dynamic results in tax abuse and a subsequent reduction in critical tax revenue in developing countries. This in turn adds to the already low tax and favourable permit conditions granted by governments to attract the investment of extractive companies.<sup>162</sup> As a highly profitable market, the global energy transition is becoming a target of SOC in the same way as traditional criminal activities such as trafficking in drugs, firearms, women and girls, or smuggling.

While recognising the trade-offs of transitioning to a green economy, the IPCC stresses with high confidence that its negative effects are minimal compared with the potential synergies for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also points out the possibility of reducing these contradictions by reinforcing governance, training, technology transfer, investment, and context-specific, gender-based and other equity considerations with the effective participation of the affected populations.<sup>163</sup> The IPCC's scientific approach is consistent with the findings of this report. The key to addressing vulnerability to climate change – as one of the drivers of SOC – lies in differently supporting women, men, girls and boys according to their gender needs and experiences.

The findings of this report suggest that, despite the trade-offs, transitioning to a green economy can contribute to reducing vulnerability to SOC and patronage networks by increasing resilience. The case of the Emberá indigenous community exemplifies that the human (gendered) factor of individuals and communities is crucial to increasing resilience, by adapting to climate change in situations where individuals are dependent on SOC. The Emberá have experienced displacement from their land in the west of Colombia due to violence between drug gangs and the presence of the National Liberation Army of Colombia (Ejército de Liberación Nacional or ELN).<sup>164</sup> Donor initiatives (see the section below) are supporting sustainable agriculture projects that offer farmers an alternative livelihood to coca production, while at the same time introducing new green filters to establish a system of water treatment to provide for basic services like drinking water, hygiene and sanitation.<sup>165</sup> These projects attest to the impact of a green economy in keeping individuals and communities away

<sup>158</sup> Ibid, p 30.

<sup>159</sup> Horvitz G (2023), 'The Global Energy Transition: Critical Minerals & Indigenous Rights', Resilience.org, 22 August.

<sup>160</sup> Camilo Morales Muñoz H, Dieffenbacher J, Munayer R, Mosello B (2023), 'Climate security and critical minerals mining in Latin America: How can business help?', *Climate Diplomacy*, 17 March.

<sup>161</sup> OECD (undated), *Responsible Business Conduct in the Extractive and Minerals Sector in Latin America and The Caribbean* (Paris: OECD Publishing), pp 27, 28.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, p 22.

<sup>163</sup> IPCC (2023), 'Climate Change 2023, Synthesis Report, Summary for Policymakers', IPCC, Geneva.

<sup>164</sup> Al Jazeera (2022), 'Colombia says agreement made with ELN rebels on displaced people', 4 December.

<sup>165</sup> ICRC (2012), 'Colombia: Putumayo farmers build a better future by planting cocoa', 13 July; Fundación Global Nature (undated), 'Water and sanitation access for the Embera indigenous communities in Alto Sinú' (<https://fundacionglobalnature.org/portfolio/acceso-al-agua-y-saneamiento-para-las-comunidades-indigenas-embera-del-alto-sinu/?lang=en>)

from SOC and the potential of green technology for leveraging the living conditions of marginalised communities.

A green economy can also yield positive results for gender equality. Emberá women and girls are responsible for getting water for domestic and community use. A green system that makes water available has a considerable impact on their lives as a driver of empowerment. It relieves them from travelling long distances using time and energy, which has in the past prevented them from attending school, obtaining alternative income, and participating in community issues or recreation.<sup>166</sup> However, more can be done to improve the position of Emberá women and girls through green and gender-sensitive approaches. As Emberá women have traditionally been discriminated against in accessing income, basic health, education and the management of natural resources, initiatives that support their participation in water management can further increment their resilience, as some donors have duly understood.<sup>167</sup>

The current report provides evidence of five contexts where climate change, by exacerbating gender inequalities, contributes to increase people's vulnerability to SOC. This finding suggests that gender-sensitive responses to climate change – like other ways of addressing human vulnerability – are powerful tools against SOC. In other words, the findings point at the direct effect between improving gender equality through climate adaptation and mitigation strategies and the *indirect* effect of this approach reducing the capacity of SOC to thrive. Consequently, in answering to the above question, while there is no direct evidence that a green economy alters patronage networks, the findings indicate that by directly improving individuals' resilience in gendered ways, a green economy makes people less at risk from SOC. So, a green economy *indirectly alters* the capacity of patronage networks to prosper.

## Suggestions for research

The following are suggestions for research based on the findings of the report and the state of the current debate. They seek to clarify the scope of the climate–gender–SOC nexus and to identify entry points to integrate this nexus within the climate security and WPS agendas in view of the mutual synergies.

Based on the findings and the state of the debate:

- *How is SOC relevant to the nexus between climate, gender and security?*
- *What synergies exist between climate change as one of the drivers of SOC and WPS?*
- *In what international, regional and local spaces can the climate–gender–SOC nexus be promoted as part of a climate, gender and security agenda?*

Based on the lessons from gender-sensitive adaptation strategies to climate change:

- *'Identify synergies between the climate security and WPS agendas and situations where the climate–gender–SOC nexus is present'*. Non-exhaustive examples identified in this report include the proliferation of terrorist and extremist groups (Mali, Syria), increased drug production and trafficking (Afghanistan, The Caribbean), homicide and femicide rates (Mexico, Guatemala), and smuggling and trafficking in women and girls (Bangladesh).

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<sup>166</sup> SDGF (Sustainable Development Goals Fund) (undated), 'Case Study: Indigenous women participating in water management in Panama' ([www.sdqfund.org/case-study/indigenous-women-participating-water-management-panama](http://www.sdqfund.org/case-study/indigenous-women-participating-water-management-panama))

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

- *‘What are the impacts of environmental crime on gender, peace and security?’* Non-exhaustive situations identified in this report include violence against women environmental defenders, trafficking in women for sexual exploitation, and forced labour of men and children in forced mining (DRC and Latin America).
- *‘How do gender-sensitive approaches to climate change reduce the chances of individuals being involved in SOC?’* Initiatives mentioned in this report include training women in agricultural skills and food processing (Syria, Afghanistan) and integrating technology and the knowledge of indigenous women into alert systems to reduce environmental crime (Brazil).

Other suggestions for research:

- *How is climate change affecting shifting trends in SOC, including drug cultivation, production and distribution? How do shifts in criminal activity related to climate change affect gender relations, human security and climate adaptation and mitigation?*
- *What are the gendered consequences of wildlife crime and how can gender be integrated in responses to this crime?*
- *What working places should be prioritised to learn effectively on the relationship and responses to the climate–gender–SOC nexus?*
- *What lessons learned from poorly implemented projects on climate change could be applied to address the intersection between climate change, gender and SOC?*
- *What are the environmental and gender risks of the involvement of SOC in critical mineral extraction? What initiatives can ensure that supply in critical minerals becomes a tool for sustainable and gender-inclusive development?*

# Initiatives

Very few initiatives address the climate–gender–SOC nexus, with most only targeting two of these factors. However, due to the nature of the relationship, many initiatives, as with those identified here, allow the integration of the entire nexus. The initiatives captured here are aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that aim to end poverty while tackling climate change and environmental protection, in particular, goals number 5 (gender equality), 7 (affordable and clean energy), 11 (sustainable cities and communities), 12 (responsible consumption and production), 13 (climate action), 14 (life below water), 15 (life on land) and 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions).

## Gender, climate and security

- The UN Secretary-General report on WPS advocates for the integration of climate security in the WPS agenda. The 2021 WPS report refers to concrete measures in this regard, that is: (i) a joint inter-agency climate security mechanism (DPPA, the UNDP and UNEP) with a gender perspective; (ii) integrating the climate–gender–security nexus into domestic policies like nationally determined contributions and national adaptation plans; (iii) climate financing that ensures women’s participation in allocation; and (iv) advancing sub-agendas like the protection of women environmental defenders.<sup>168</sup>
- UN Women, UNDP, UNEP and DPPA are creating synergies on the climate–gender–security nexus. With this in mind, they have gathered evidence demonstrating the benefits of this approach in successful country pilot projects.<sup>169</sup>
- The UK has created a new Conflict, Security and Stability Fund (CSSF) Gender, Peace and Security portfolio to promote research and innovation projects on WPS.<sup>170</sup> This provides an opportunity to create synergies between climate security, gender and SOC.
- The UK is supporting the Gender-Transformative and Equitable Natural Resources (GENRE+) project in Mali. This provides a good example of the potential synergies that exist between the Gender, Peace and Security portfolio and SOC in programming.<sup>171</sup> The project centres on women’s participation in natural resources. It has supported women to be village councillors and increased their access to natural resources (from 51 to 90 per cent), with more than 75 per cent community approval. This dynamic demonstrates an alternative approach to SOC. By improving gender equality and levels of food security in target communities, women and girls become less at risk of sexual exploitation and men less vulnerable to recruitment by terrorist organisations. As the Mali case study showed, these issues are at the heart of the climate–gender–SOC nexus.

<sup>168</sup> UN Secretary-General (2021), ‘Women and peace and security’, Report of the Secretary-General, S/2021/827, 27 December.

<sup>169</sup> UNEP et al. (2020), ‘Gender, Climate & Security: Sustaining inclusive peace on the frontlines of climate change’, June.

<sup>170</sup> UK Government (2023), ‘Conflict, Stability and Security Fund: Annual Report 2021 to 2022’, 22 May.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.



## Climate, gender and SOC

- ‘The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Operational Guidelines on the Protection of Persons in Situations of Natural Disasters’ incorporate a gender-protection perspective to deal with trafficking, child labour, contemporary forms of slavery and other forms of exploitation during natural disasters.<sup>172</sup>

## Climate and SOC, potentially integrating gender

- The UK’s CSSF with the United Nations Multi-Donor Fund, and other donors like the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), are supporting farmers from the Emberá indigenous community in Colombia, who have been displaced as a result of drug violence and the ELN armed group, with alternatives to coca production.<sup>173</sup> Also, Fundación Global Nature is introducing green filters, which are allowing the development of basic services like drinking water, hygiene and sanitation.<sup>174</sup> These projects would benefit from a gender equality perspective. Emberá women and girls are responsible for collecting water for the community, but have no rights or decision-making in water management. In Panama, the Sustainable Development Goals Fund has identified this potential and is running projects to support Emberá women and girls in water management.<sup>175</sup>

## SOC and gender, potentially integrating climate

- UNODC and UN Women have launched a learning module on gender and organised crime for people programming. From a prevention perspective, the training clarifies the notion of gender in contexts of organised crime, stressing an intersectional approach to vulnerability, and ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors. These trainings provide spaces where a climate change perspective would fit.<sup>176</sup>
- The UNODC Toolkit to Combat Trafficking in Persons seeks to implement the preventive approach of the Trafficking in Persons Protocol. Article 9 of the Protocol obliges the adoption of ‘comprehensive’ measures to alleviate vulnerability to trafficking, especially of women and girls, mentioning poverty, underdevelopment and inequality. These circumstances could encompass climate change as a driver of trafficking.<sup>177</sup>
- El PACCTO (Europe-Latin America) is helping Latin American countries to integrate a gender perspective to fight organised crime. As climate exacerbates the gendered causes and effects of SOC, its inclusion would contribute to reinforce this strategy.<sup>178</sup>

<sup>172</sup> The Brookings–Bern Project on Internal Displacement (2011), ‘IASC Operational Guidelines on the Protection of Persons in Situations of Natural Disasters’, January, pp 20–25.

<sup>173</sup> UK Government (2023), ‘Conflict, Stability and Security Fund: Annual Report 2021 to 2022’, 22 May; ICRC (2012), ‘Colombia: Putumayo farmers build a better future by planting cocoa’, 13 July.

<sup>174</sup> Fundación Global Nature (undated), ‘Water and sanitation access for the Embera indigenous communities in Alto Sinú’ (<https://fundacionglobalnature.org/portfolio/acceso-al-agua-y-saneamiento-para-las-comunidades-indigenas-embera-del-alto-sinu/?lang=en>)

<sup>175</sup> SDGF (undated), ‘Case Study: Indigenous women participating in water management in Panama’ ([www.sdghfund.org/case-study/indigenous-women-participating-water-management-panama](http://www.sdghfund.org/case-study/indigenous-women-participating-water-management-panama))

<sup>176</sup> UNODC (2022b), ‘Launch of the UNODC/UN Women Gender and Organized Crime Module’, New York, December.

<sup>177</sup> UNODC (2006), ‘Toolkit to Combat Trafficking in Persons’, New York, pp 167–188.

<sup>178</sup> Rava C (2021), ‘Latin American institutions consider the gender approach essential in fighting organised crime’, El PACCTO, Europe-Latin America, 21 June.

# Conclusion

This report illustrates five scenarios of the nexus between climate change, gender and SOC as a growing threat to climate and human security. All scenarios evidenced a similar gap in international law and policy: that is, that individuals' gendered vulnerabilities to SOC are aggravated by the effects of climate change. Yet, this finding suggests a constructive proposition. Gender-sensitive initiatives to increase climate resilience can be empowering tools that, by reducing gender vulnerability to climate change, suppress the capacity of SOC to thrive.

This finding identifies gender-sensitive solutions to climate change – the human factor – as a central factor to directly increase individuals' resilience and *indirectly* diminish SOC. This has important implications and challenges for policing and programming. First, integrating gender approaches to adaptation and mitigation becomes relevant to address SOC in contexts of climate insecurity and inequality. Hence, there is increasing value in creating synergies between SOC, climate security and WPS, including within CSSF portfolios. Second, policy-making may prioritise a preventive approach, revisiting the current crime-based framework, tackling the root causes and specific harms arising from the climate–gender–SOC nexus. This demands a community-led participatory approach to policing and programming to grasp how people experience this relationship. Here, relevant questions might be: (i) 'How does climate change aggravate your situation as a woman, girl, man or boy and place you at a higher risk of SOC?'; and (ii) 'What would be the best way to improve your resilience as a woman, girl, man or boy to climate change and, as a result, to SOC?'

The international community is still far from addressing this nexus in view of the regulatory gaps. However, looking at this issue constructively, there is growing interest in climate security and its interlinks with WPS, which has clear overlaps with the climate–gender–SOC nexus established by this report. It could be a question of establishing synergies to 'join the dots'.



# Recommendations

These recommendations seek to guide CSSF teams when revisiting SOC in relation to climate change and gender:

1. Understanding the nexus. The evidence shows that gendered vulnerabilities to SOC are exacerbated by the effects of climate change. Accordingly, a first step for programme teams to move forward might be to unpack the impacts of climate change in their country/region, seeing how these are gendered and *identify* if/how these are linked with patterns of SOC. Research and a first-hand approach reaching out to partners working locally, who are supporting women and men at the forefront of climate change and SOC, may provide concrete insight into the issue at stake: 'How does climate change aggravate the marginalisation of women, girls, men and boys, placing them at a higher risk of SOC?' Answering to this question would be most useful to identify entry points to discuss with donors and partners, and in programming.

2. Revisiting priorities to SOC to tackle its root causes. The evidence shows that climate and gender-sensitive approaches increase people's resilience, including to SOC. Programme teams may seek to support similar initiatives, building on identified links between vulnerability to climate change and SOC in their country/region. This approach to SOC corresponds to one of the CSSF's overarching objectives: building resilience, including by 'tackling risks at source – in particular climate change and biodiversity loss'.<sup>179</sup> In line with the evidence of this report that climate change acts as a driver of SOC, along with the potential of climate and gender-sensitive initiatives to build resilience, programme teams may consider adopting alternative approaches that support gender-sensitive adaptation strategies to climate change with potential to deter people from involvement in SOC. Likewise law enforcement policies should not overlook considering the root causes of SOC in relation to climate change as part of any long-term and effective framework.

3. Creating synergies between SOC, climate security and WPS. Linking SOC with the climate security and WPS agendas aligns with both UK policies under the CSSF's objectives and with international obligations under the Paris Agreement ('a country-driven, gender-responsive, participatory' approach to adaptation) and WPS agenda.<sup>180</sup> The new CSSF Gender, Peace and Security portfolio offers an opportunity to create synergies between climate security, gender and SOC, including through research and programming to advance these concrete issues. One example of these synergies might be digging into the gendered dimensions of climate change and SOC within critical supply chains and its potential mitigation factors.

4. A preventive approach to programming and policy-making. Programme teams reviewing programming and policy-making may seek to adopt a preventive approach to SOC to address its connections with climate change and gender, thereby strengthening the above-mentioned

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<sup>179</sup> UK Government (2023), 'Conflict, Stability and Security Fund: Annual Report 2021 to 2022', 22 May.

<sup>180</sup> United Nations (2016), 'Paris Agreement to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change', UN Doc. FCCC/CP/2015/10/Add.1 Decision 1/CP.21, adoption 12 December 2015, entry into force 4 November 2016; UN Security Council (2000), 'Resolution 1325', 31 October; UN Secretary-General (2021), 'Women and peace and security', Report of the Secretary-General, S/2021/827, 27 December.

goal of building individuals' resilience to climate change. This includes law enforcement strategies whose response should not just be reactive (containing illicit flows, reinforcing capacity and cooperation) but should also address the human factors – like climate change and gender inequality – underpinning SOC. A preventive approach to policy-making and programming should consider:

- i) The root causes: how the different vulnerabilities of women, girls, men and boys to SOC aggravate as a result of slow-onset and sudden-onset climate events.
- ii) Coping mechanisms: climate and gender-sensitive approaches to increase individuals' resilience in ways that support them against SOC.

5. A participatory and intersectional approach. Programming should be informed by the effective and meaningful participation of those who are affected by climate change and SOC. Participation is essential to understand how individuals experience the compounding risks of climate change and SOC. This will help elicit their gender perspective as a woman, girl, man or boy, in addition to other intersecting vulnerabilities such as economic status, ethnicity, religion, migrant status, sexual orientation, etc. increasing vulnerability in those contexts. Relevant questions that CSSF teams may consider in programming to elicit these perspectives might be:

- i) How is climate change increasing your vulnerability as a woman, girl, man or boy and in what ways do you experience the risks of SOC?
- ii) What would be helpful to gain resilience against these threats?
- iii) How do you think this could be best done?
- iv) What are the main difficulties you would expect, including in relation to your family, community, SOC patronage networks, the environment and the state?
- v) How do you think these difficulties could be best overcome?

6. Supporting initiatives. Another entry point to recognise the climate–gender–SOC nexus may be supporting initiatives, local and international, that adopt a climate and gender-sensitive approach, ensuring that climate and gender sensitivity are applied throughout; for example, in analysis, policy-making, programming. It would be important to *explain* to partners the specific ways in which climate and gender are important drivers of SOC in programme teams' country/region.

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