Women in Migration Network

ONLINE WEBINAR

MIGRATION, DISPLACEMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN WEST ASIA AND ASIA PACIFIC REGIONS: THE CLIMATE CRISIS AND ITS IMPACT ON WOMEN´S LIVELIHOODS.

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A Brief Report

Women In Migration Network

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Migration, Displacement and Human Rights in West Asia and Asia Pacific Regions:

The Climate Crisis and its Impact on Women´s Livelihoods

Introduction and Overview

The Women in Migration Network (WIMN), with the support of Solidarity Center, hosted the virtual event, *Migration, Displacement and Human Rights in West Asia and Asia Pacific regions: the Climate Crisis and its Impact on Women's Livelihoods* on January 19, 2023.

The webinar complemented WIMN's parallel event, *"Migration, displacement and women's human rights in the climate crisis,"* held last year during the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66). That event was part of WIMN's regional and international dialogue series, *Bridging Migration and Gender: Building More Powerful Movements*, supported by the Robert Bosch Stiftung, which seeks to foster intersectional feminist approaches to reducing inequalities. This webinar focused on the West Asia and Asia Pacific regions, which because of time zone issues, had not been able to fully participate in the 2022 event.

Both webinars were organized as part of WIMN's work to develop a feminist analysis of migration and climate change—addressing intersections, structural issues, and concrete impacts as well as differences in analyses and policies. This nexus of gender, climate and migration is itself an important element in WIMN's effort to build a collective, grassroots-driven Feminist Migration Policy.

The January event included participants from international, regional, and local organizations, global and regional donors, regional media, governments, and academics from various universities. Simultaneous interpretation in Arabic, Bahasa and Tagalog was provided during the webinar – an attempt to balance the power disparities that also exist at the linguistic level. The video recording is available only in English due to technical limitations.

Drawing on members, allies and other contacts, WIMN convened speakers from the West Asia and Asia Pacific regions. Their conversation explored how climate change and extreme weather events impact women's livelihoods and how those impacts may lead to displacement and/or migration.

Aya Ibrahim, a researcher at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), spoke to the impact of climate change on the Arab region, including examples from West Asia. She focused on livelihoods (in relation to impacts such as increase in temperature, water shortages, agriculture productivity) and explained how extreme weather events and changing climate patterns link to migration and displacement.

A panel of women leaders then spoke to the main challenges women are facing due to the climate crisis and their experiences in organizing and responding to these challenges. Panelists included Aydah Akao, Coordinator of the Network of Indigenous Peoples in the

Solomon Islands (NIPS); Editha Barrientos, Representative of Sandigan Bahrain; and Triana K. Wardani, Secretary-General of SERUNI - Serikat Perempuan Indonesia.

The panelists concluded by sharing key policy demands to serve as initial inputs towards a collective advocacy platform.

Webinar highlights

- **Climate change affects the basic resources of any country, especially food and fresh water, and triggers displacement.**

  Devastating storms, floods, wildfires and droughts have a huge impact on agricultural production and fishing, the main sources of income and livelihoods for women in many regions.

  Panelists highlighted how specific consequences of global warming (hotter temperatures, more severe storms and droughts, rising oceans and more) are affecting people's lives. For example, sea level rise is forcing people to move as they lose their homes and lands they use for gardening, affecting food security and livelihoods. These situations, together with the lack of services to ameliorate these effects, are triggering displacement and not only the loss of homes, but heritage and traditions.

- **Women are taking the lead in implementing activities to protect the environment and hence, their lives.**

  Panelists shared examples of strategies led by organized women to address the devastating impacts of climate change:

  - conserving and restoring the forest
  - documenting the challenges and thinking collectively about the future
  - raising awareness
  - developing new ways to preserve food and collect water, among others

  The work with the communities is very much focused on mitigation and adaptation and towards building resilience, strengthening communities and being in the forefront against climate change.

  If we are able to adapt, migration patterns can decrease, commented Triana K. Wardani. Collective organic farming, part of a wider agro-ecological movement, is one such strategy of community resilience that also helps to mitigate causes of climate change and adapt to its consequences.

  Aya Ibrahim mentioned that the Lebanese government is taking into consideration the role of women in dealing with climate change. A recent national communication on implementing the Paris Agreement emphasized the importance of women's roles and included a gender analysis assessing the role of women in various aspects of governance, policy and planning processes related to climate change.

⇨ **Evidence-based data is key to understanding the impacts of climate change and to develop both effective policies and advocacy campaigns.**

Global warming and climate change are behind most so-called "*natural disasters*"[1]. Panelists shared how quality information is needed on impacts, which in turn would contribute to better planning and more accurate responses, while raising awareness. The Regional Initiative for the Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR) was presented during the webinar. It is a regional initiative to assess the impacts of climate change on freshwater resources in the Arab region and to examine implications for socioeconomic and environmental vulnerability based on regional specificities.

⇨ **An understanding of climate change and its impacts is critical to raise awareness, organize, and prevent misinterpretations and abuses.**

Quality and accessible information is crucial to strengthen the organizing and advocacy of self-organized communities on disaster risk reduction, building resilience and other actions to tackle the impacts of climate change, including securing human rights and protections, and fighting against abuses from other stakeholders.

Triana K. Wardani critiqued the utilization of adaptation and mitigation programs that bring in foreign investment and debt for the benefit of a handful within the ruling classes. She described how the Indonesian government diverted subsidies intended to reduce fossil energy to provide substantial subsidies for the well-to-do to purchase electric cars.

⇨ **Governments of Global South nations, impoverished by colonialism and current global power relations, bear the negative consequences of climate change. It is imperative that countries of the Global North, made rich through colonialism and neo-colonialism, bear the costs of the climate crisis.**

While populations from the Global South are the ones withstanding the worst of the environmental crisis, the world's wealthiest countries are responsible for 80% of carbon emissions, the major contributor to climate change. Wealthier countries must shoulder the bulk of the costs and consequences of the climate crisis.

In 2009, at the COP15 climate conference in Copenhagen, high-income economies pledged to mobilize a total of $100 billion annually to fund adaptation and mitigation projects by 2020. In 2015, when countries signed the Paris Agreement, they committed to strike a balance between mitigation and adaptation, and proposed the principle of *common but differentiated responsibility and respective capabilities*, which in reality continued to undermine financial support for climate impacted, impoverished nations. Following the advocacy work of many civil society organizations and at the urging of small island states, COP27 (2022) agreed to extend financing to cover loss and damage

[1] *Disasters are not natural, but rather the consequences of human activities and policies*. Elizabeth Ibarra, An intersectional feminist dialogue & NGO CSW66 parallel event.

too. It remains to be seen how the fund will work, and if support will reach affected populations.

The panelists highlighted that in some cases there are laws and action plans, but implementation is a challenge. As Aydah Akao mentioned, Solomon Islands has a specific law for Disaster Risk Reduction (DDR) but the Ministry in charge has no capacity (especially human resources) to implement it. In other cases, there is no visible commitment and governmental responses are insufficient and inadequate. Triana K. Wardani stated that the projects for adaptation and mitigation of global warming and climate change that are being carried out by the Indonesian government do not begin to address the full impact of loss and damage experienced by the people of Indonesia.

⇨ **Alliances are critical to resist and minimize the impacts of the climate crisis.**

We will be stronger if we work together, said Editha Barrientos from Sandigan. The webinar was a space for knowledge-building to understand how everything is connected and the need to join forces. Climate change is a global issue, and a response requires global and inter-sectoral cooperation (workers and migrants' rights, feminists, environmental defenders…) SERUNI in Indonesia organizes women working on plantations in alliance with youth, farmers, and other organizations. They work together to raise awareness and demand their rights. As she put it, *it is very important to strengthen the communities on the ground.*

Towards a collective advocacy platform: Key policy demands

Panelists were asked to build on their experiences and highlight some key policy demands to include in a collective advocacy platform.

While gendered impacts of climate change are specific and contextual, panelists shared that many women face similar situations in very different contexts when confronting those impacts. These common struggles and subsequent policy demands are useful to build collaboration, even while appreciating local nuances. Panelists urged:

- Women and communities more generally, must be compensated for losses from climate change-related disasters.
- Adaptation plans and policies should be implemented across diverse sectors and on different levels. This includes job and skills training and direct financial support to impacted people to ensure that while migration may be an option, it is not the only one for the safety and survival.
- If migration becomes necessary, supporting policies must ensure migrants' rights in transit and in the countries of destination, including the protection of cultural heritage and practices, and special attention to the needs and rights of women.
- Various sectors and groups affected by policies on displacement and climate crisis must be part of its design and implementation—certainly, women, but also workers,

children, and people with disabilities. For example, such policies must have indicators to measure women's integration in sectoral policies like energy, water, and waste management. An inclusive policy should lead to smoother and more effective implementation.

- Climate policies must be formulated based on scientific data and include a rights-based and gender responsive legal framework, especially in the arena of public services.
- More collaboration and partnerships with local and community-based NGOs are needed, including frontline work against climate change and demands for accountability by transnational corporations.
- Local governments should map organizations working on climate mitigation and adaptation and engage them in the design and implementation of policies.

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WIMN appreciates the participation of all in this webinar and is grateful for the generous support and collaboration of the Solidarity Center. This webinar was part of the on-going WIMN's effort to build greater understanding of interconnection of migration and climate change from a feminist perspective, including identification of points of convergence or disagreement across sectors and regions.

WIMN aims to create a collective and feminist mobility advocacy platform from the bottom up that can be owned by members and allies and used in multiple policy spaces; we will be convening intersectoral spaces to broaden our discussions.

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