



POLICY BRIEF

CLIMATE CHANGE AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS (SRHR) EDUCATION: INFORMATION FOR POLICYMAKERS

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PHOTOGRAPHY

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BCCSAP: Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan

CBO: Community-Based Organization

CC: Climate Change

CESCR: Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights

CRE: Climate-related event

COP: Conference of the Parties

CSO Civil Society Organization

CEDAW: Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

GBV: Gender-based Violence

GGCA: Global Gender and Climate Alliance

IPCC: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

NAPA: National Adaptation Programme of Action

NEP: National Environment Policy

NHP: National Health Policy

NPDM: National Plan for Disaster Management

NWDP: National Women's Development Policy

NCCC: National Climate Change Commission

NAP: National Action Plan

OHCHR: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

SHIRIM: Share-Net International Rapid Improvement Model

SNBD: Share-Net Bangladesh

SRHR: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

UNFCCC: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

WGC: Women & Gender Constituency

RR: Reproductive Rights

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNFCCC: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) is one of the leading research and capacity-building organizations working on climate change and development in Bangladesh. ICCCAD's mission is to generate and disseminate knowledge on climate change with specific attention to capacitate future leaders on climate adaptation and development issues. ICCCAD provides capacity building, policy support, and knowledge management services in areas such as loss and damage, climate finance, SDGs, adaptation, LLA, NBS, and migration. By focusing on such work in Bangladesh, ICCCAD allows international participants to gain direct knowledge of the issues in a real-world context. Through the expertise of ICCCAD and its local partners, international organizations will be exposed to relevant and grounded knowledge that can be shared and transmitted around the world for the benefit of other LDCs, and their governments, donors, and international NGOs.

“Women hold up half the sky, there is no way you can manage change climate which is the sky, without women.”

- CHINESE PHRASE

1. ABOUT ICCCAD

The International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCCAD) is one of the leading research and capacity-building organizations working on climate change and development in Bangladesh. ICCCAD's mission is to generate and disseminate knowledge on climate change with specific attention to capacitate future leaders on climate adaptation and development issues. ICCCAD provides capacity building, policy support, and knowledge management services in areas such as loss and damage, climate finance, SDGs, adaptation, LLA, NBS, and migration. By focusing on such work in Bangladesh, ICCCAD allows international participants to gain direct knowledge of the issues in a real-world context. Through the expertise of ICCCAD and its local partners, international organizations will be exposed to relevant and grounded knowledge that can be shared and transmitted around the world for the benefit of other LDCs, and their governments, donors, and international NGOs.

1.1. ABOUT SHERE-NET BANGLADESH (SNBD)

Share-Net Bangladesh is the country hub of Share-Net International, a Knowledge Platform focusing on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). Share-Net Bangladesh is the first of Share-Net International's country hub, drawing on the years of experiences and interventions by practitioners, researchers, and policymakers in the field of sexual reproductive health, especially placing SRHR at the center of human rights. Share-Net Bangladesh aims to bring together the Communities of Practice (CoP) that consist of social and medical researchers, development practitioners, health workers, government officials, and legal experts to engage with one another to find solutions and take critical issues forward. Share-Net Bangladesh is hosted by RedOrange Communications.

1.2. WHAT IS SHIRIM?

Share-Net Bangladesh is the first of Share-Net International's country hubs, drawing on the years of experiences and interventions by practitioners, researchers, and policymakers in the field of sexual reproductive health, especially placing SRHR at the Centre of human rights. This policy brief has been developed for the knowledge product 'Need Assessment' under the Share-Net International Rapid Improvement Model (SHIRIM) connected to the theme "Climate change and SRHR education and information for policymakers." Share-Net International Rapid Improvement Model (SHIRIM) aims to contribute to a better understanding of which strategies can be used effectively by the policymakers to successfully move newly acquired knowledge towards policy, influencing and improving practice. This model uses the collaborative approach as a structured learning system to facilitate collaboration between the country nodes and to stimulate sharing of experiences and knowledge.

1.3. THE SHIRIM OBJECTIVES

- Exploring different strategies that effectively influence the complex processes by which evidence informs policy.
- Improving understanding of which strategies contribute to successful knowledge translation and use in the specific context of each Share-Net Country Node.
- Facilitating learning, collaboration, and exchange between Share-Net Country Nodes.
- Developing capacity of participating staff from the Share-Net Country Nodes secretariats concerning knowledge brokering.
- Sharing and applying knowledge about the most effective strategies that contribute to successful knowledge translation and use in the specific context.
- Sustaining strategies and approaches that contribute to successful knowledge translation and use.

2. WOMEN, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND SRHR:

The risk of climate change disasters and their impact on local people is increasingly determined by health, economic, and security inequalities. These inequalities are gendered and intersectional-specific. Despite expanding research on the economic, social, and health effects of climate change on women, only two governments (Liberia and Peru) have special legislation addressing the nexus of climate change and gender. In terms of sexual and reproductive health care, rights, and services, none of the 190 INDCs examined by the WGC included the right to access sexual and reproductive health services in the aftermath of climate change and climate change-related catastrophes.

2.1. CLIMATE CHANGE

For the first time, the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report provides a more detailed regional assessment of climate change, including a focus on useful information that can inform risk assessment, adaptation, and other decision-making, and a new framework that helps translate physical changes in the climate – heat, cold, rain, drought, snow, wind, coastal flooding and more – into what they mean for society and ecosystems.

2.2. SRHR

Defined at ICPD as “certain human rights that are already recognized in national laws, international human rights documents, and other consensus documents. These rights rest on the recognition of the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the

highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. It also includes their right to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion, and violence, as expressed in human rights documents”.

The Guttmacher-Lancet Commission on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights defines SRHR as “a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being about all aspects of sexuality and reproduction, not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction, or infirmity. Therefore, a positive approach to sexuality and reproduction should recognize the part played by pleasurable sexual relationships, trust, and communication in promoting self-esteem and overall well-being. All individuals have a right to make decisions governing their bodies and to access services that support that right. Achieving sexual and reproductive health relies on realizing sexual and reproductive rights, which are based on the human multiple rights of all individuals: including the right to life, the right to be free from torture, the right to health, the right to privacy, the right to education, and the prohibition of discrimination.

2.3. WHY DO WE NEED GENDER-RESPONSIVE CLIMATE ACTION?

The impacts of climate change have a detrimental direct and indirect effect on an individual’s SRHR. Climate change directly impacts sexual and reproductive health (SRH) among girls and women. SRH, according to the Guttmacher-Lancet Commission, refers to “the state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality and reproduction”.

National Learning Sessions 1 and 2, by SNBD reports, highlighted specific findings and make relevant recommendations to decision-makers and advocates to generate effective, rights-based policies and programs across sectors, including:

1. Enhancing partnerships among various actors working on climate change, health, and women's rights.
2. Financing in capacity building to fill evidence gaps and integrate the analysis of SRHR and climate data.
3. Advocating a gender-transformative climate action plan that addresses the linkages between climate change and SRHR.
4. Supporting health systems especially on SRHR to address the underlying causes of vulnerability to climate change.
5. Understanding how intensifying emergencies and intersecting identities influence vulnerability and resilience to climate change and SRHR to make sure climate actions do not impair inequalities.

2.4. WHY DO WE NEED INFORMATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE (CC) AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS (SRHR) EDUCATION?

Inadequate access to SRHR services increases women's risk of physical, mental, and psychological harm; it also impacts their ability to build capacity and resilience to climate change. Providing people with knowledge about climate change and how it relates to their health is part of empowering and equipping them to be active in the response that climate change requires. This policy brief helps the policymakers explain climate change and how it links to gender and sexual and reproductive health and rights.

This knowledge product provides an overview of how SRHR can be integrated into national plans to adapt to climate change and its goal is to achieve gender equality. It also aims to promote an integrated and inclusive approach that moves countries forward on the mutually supportive objectives of

resilience to climate change and the realization of SRHR. Evidence shows that climate funders and policymakers have not integrated sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) within their strategies.

The main objectives of this policy brief are to support more SRHR organizations and advocates to engage in climate change advocacy to develop stronger partnerships with those already working on the connections between climate change and SRHR.

This policy brief will help:

1. To ensure climate policies at the national and international levels, will better support and promote SRHR.
2. To ensure funding for SRHR is expressly eligible under climate funding mechanisms.
3. To mobilize new allies and alliances between organizations and specific sectors.

The fact is international and national climate policies do not effectively mainstream gender-specific requirements into their frameworks. SRHR services are, therefore, excluded from all level frameworks and it is a continuation of reproductive injustice.

2.5. KEY OBJECTIVES

1. Understanding SRHR from a Climate Change perspective and the scope of policy and legislation
2. Framework for National Action Plan linking for climate change and SRHR for policymakers

2.6. KEY FUNCTIONS

- Establishing connections with key local, national, and global partners, and stakeholders to build a network of, those who are working on SRHR and CC.

- Generating knowledge to address priority research and intervention gaps on SRHR and CC.
- Disseminating knowledge and ideas through effective communication tools.
- Finding solutions by creating space and supporting advocacy.
- Enabling the gap between all involved in SRHR policy, services related, and CC related.
- Using and sharing existing SRHR and CC knowledge

2.7. INCORPORATE SRHR INTO CC DISCOURSE

If we are to effectively integrate SRHR into the climate discourse, we need each of us in our community to consider how we can best support a collective approach.

These are merely a handful of potential ways to do so:

- Seek changes to national plans and elevate reproductive choice as relevant to climate change adaptation and resilience within the national discourse. Some civil society organizations, specializing in climate and environment, provide technical advice to governments and climate negotiators.
- Seek changes in UNFCCC policies and processes, as well as at other international fora.
- Persuade donors to make such work expressly eligible under climate funding mechanisms.
- Use (or generate) programmatic data to further the evidence base of the connections between sexual and reproductive health and climate change

2.8. SRHR: SOME FACTS

Women’s sexual and reproductive health is related to multiple human rights, including the right to life, the right to be free from torture, the right to health, the right to privacy, the right to education, and the prohibition of discrimination. The Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (CESCR) and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) have both indicated that women’s right to health includes their sexual and reproductive health.

This means that States have obligations to respect, protect and fulfill rights related to women’s sexual and reproductive health, therefore, women are entitled to reproductive health care services, and goods and facilities that are:

CEDAW (article 16) guarantees women equal rights in deciding “freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights.”

CEDAW (article 10) also specifies that women’s right to education includes “access to specific educational information to help to ensure the health and well-being of families, including information and advice on family planning.”

The Beijing Platform for Action states that “the human rights of women include their right to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free of coercion, discrimination, and violence.”

The CESCR General Comment 22 recommends States “repeal or eliminate laws, policies, and practices that criminalize, obstruct or undermine access by individuals or a particular group to sexual and reproductive health facilities, services, goods, and information.”

Human rights standards in this area are summarized in the OHCHR information series on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

2.9. GOVERNMENT CLIMATE POLICY IN BANGLADESH

Bangladesh has ratified several international frameworks including the UNFCCC, Kyoto Protocol, and the 2015 Paris agreement (Climate Centre, 2021). Bangladesh has also developed a national biodiversity strategy and a National Adaptation Programme for Action (NAPA) in addition to these ratifications. In 2008, many of the strategies of the NAPA were adopted into the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan (BCCSAP)—a cross-sectoral 10-year program (2009-2019) to build resilience to climate change impacts.

Climate change is a centrepiece of the recently adopted Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 lays out a 100-year roadmap for achieving sustainable growth through an adaptive delta management process. The Mujib Climate Prosperity Plan, under finalization, leverages the Eighth Five Year Plan 2021-2025 of Bangladesh, Vision 2041, and Bangladesh Delta Plan 2100 to unlock a pathway for the fast-tracked delivery of Bangladesh's Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. It also builds on synergies with the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, National Adaptation Plan, and Nationally Determined Contributions submitted in 2020. Meaningful citizen engagement and locally led climate actions are a cornerstone of this Plan and are envisioned as a transformative pathway to addressing the country's critical climate challenges.

National Action Plan (NAP) for climate policies plays a key role in determining responses to climate change, including plans to build adaptive capacity and resilience. An evaluation of

NAP and its climate policies with a specific focus on health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) issues, can provide important information on gaps and areas of potential improvement to ensure healthy and resilient communities.

In the two last decades, there has been a growing interest in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights. SRHR has been prioritized in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 3, 4, and 5) which are committed to “leaving no one behind”. The importance of leaving no one behind is the key to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, people who lack reproductive choice are already being left behind.

2.10. GOVERNMENT POLICY/SERVICE PLAN FOR SRHR

Bangladesh government had formulated the National Strategy for Adolescent Health 2017- 2030 and is currently finalizing the Plan of Action. The government has also developed some communication tools targeting adolescents, and these can benefit non-government initiatives as well. The government also developed a website (adoinfo.bd.com), where adolescents will gain information about SRHR issues. On the other hand, the government has also developed an adolescent SRHR networking forum to connect all relevant stakeholders. MOWCA is establishing 4883 adolescent clubs all over the country which will cover almost 4,39,470 adolescents, with each club consisting of 20 girls and 10 boys. Apart from providing them with training on various skills, the department is also making them aware of SRHR and gender-based violence. The government is also planning to appoint one psychologist per secondary school to address this challenge. The government is proactive and positive about achieving SRHR-related goals, as it is directly linked to the SDGs.

2.11. ACCESS TO SRHR IN BANGLADESH

Bangladesh is ranked 162 out of 181 nations in the Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative, which measures a country's vulnerability to climate change and other global challenges combined with its potential to enhance resilience. For Bangladeshi women, availability, and access to SRHR and services are often limited, and during climate disasters, these services almost become inadequate. In the absence of national frameworks and policies addressing SRHR services, it is necessary to understand whether key actors are responding and addressing the vulnerabilities women face during and post-disaster or in any emergency. It is important to identify that discussions around SRHR are private, stressful, and uncomfortable in our society.

2.11.1. INFRASTRUCTURE & ACCESS TO RECOURSE

Infrastructure and access to resources have a big role to play in how women are impacted by climate change. Women suffer more during disasters and are displaced. The socio-cultural norms mostly limit women's accessibility during times of disaster or post-disaster situations.

Older women and pregnant women are at risk of death and injury during disasters. Our cyclone shelters are not gender-neutral. Most of the shelter centers are not usually women-friendly. However, the stairs are reportedly steep and unfriendly for elderly women, children, disabled women, and pregnant women. Almost no cyclone shelter has a ramp to safely carry disabled persons and pregnant women or a sufficient support system. Necessary SRH services, hygiene products, and supplies are not just constrained but unavailable during disasters. There are data gaps on post disaster situation of the women who experienced the situation as mentioned here.

2.11.2. GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE OR ABUSE

Women are more likely to become victims of GBV right after any disaster occurs. Eco anxiety and stress is likely to be heightened after disasters, particularly when families are displaced and have to live in emergency settings or transitional shelter place. Overcapacity, the collapse of regular routines and livelihood patterns, unusual living, and privacy issues can contribute to temper loss, frustration, and violence, with children and women most vulnerable. It is crucial to understand the local cultures and the social contexts that exist in Bangladesh. Many people could not understand the exact terms, SRH and SRHR (in Bengali also). An understanding of gender sensitivities as well as SRHR issues need to be ensured as a willingness to talk about these issues although they are sensitive subjects.

Evidence on the SRH beliefs, practices, needs, service-seeking behavior, and service utilization-related barriers experienced by young males in Bangladesh is also extremely limited. There is a culture of silence around discussion on SRHR in Bangladesh which largely stems from shame, stigma, and taboo associated with SRH. This is a trend in South Asia, where knowledge of SRHR is highly reported, but details of SRH processes are limited. These challenges highlight the deeply gendered cultural norms and beliefs associated with sex and sexuality in our societies.

There is a gap identified in different areas,

- 1. Gap Identified Corrective actions.**
- 2. Gaps in the assessment phase**
- 3. Gaps in the design**
- 4. Gaps in implementation**
- 5. Gaps in response monitoring**

3. RECOMMENDATION

To step up improvement and lower the impact of climate-related disasters on women and girls, this brief offers the following recommendations:

- Eradicate all forms of social, political, and economic barriers which is the cause or increase in women's vulnerability to the impact of climate change on women's SRH.
- Incorporate gender assessments, evaluation, analysis, and gender equality indicators into mitigation and adaptation strategy to identify where specific existing vulnerabilities to climate change, are and where opportunities for mitigating and adapting to climate change can be found.
- Need to offer multiple roles and responsibilities to be given to women to organize separate disaster risk management consultations and planning especially in the SRH framework.
- Ensure existing policy coherence between government policies and commitments to SRHR, equal opportunity for men and women, and climate change plans and budgets.
- Ensure the participation of women in disaster risk reduction management, including in the planning, implementation and monitoring, and evaluation processes.
- Develop a gender-specific strategy plan for SRHR, including resource needs and monitoring tools.
- Review and strengthen NAPs to include SRHR, including integration into adaptation and disaster responses.

- Build the capacity of government bodies leading on climate change to integrate gender analysis, tools for mainstreaming, indicators, and best practices into their work.
- Loss and damage assessments must go beyond using an economic lens and include a broader social perspective that considers and responds to gender inequalities that exist in SRH and to the different roles played by men and women.
- Conduct comprehensive assessments on the effect of climate change on women’s health, including their sexual and reproductive health.
- Create mechanisms that guarantee women’s equal access to negotiating, developing, managing, and implementing adaptation and mitigation financing.

Various steps should be taken to mitigate the harms of disrupted access to sexual and reproductive healthcare and services because of emergency settings and prolonged crises and to proactively prepare and respond to future issues.

1. There is a need to integrate and provide coherence among the various policies that have incorporated gender mainstreaming exist in insolation.
2. Existing policies and programs, need to be implemented through the proper allocation of human and financial resources.
3. To establish the SRHR within the context of climate change, it is also important for governments to recognize, implement and deliver on the commitments already made.

4. Government should improve the overall data collection and management system.
5. Responding to the sexual and reproductive health needs of persons with a mental or physical disability.
6. Donors of SRHR initiatives could also support an electronic library where civil society organizations could present their work and publish their reports to make them more accessible for researchers as well as the public and policymakers.
7. Individuals disproportionately impacted by the effects of natural disasters and crises should be represented and centered in policy spaces.
8. We need to prepare a national SRHR Index to analyze health policies, programming, and funding streams and generate grades that compare what is being done with what can and should be done to promote SRHR within government health assistance.

4. CONCLUSION

Bangladesh's government can play a catalytic role in effective climate mitigation and adaptation. However, a lack of prioritization has resulted in minimal SRHR service availability in Bangladesh. This has rendered in a lack of climate policy addressing SRHR. Although recommendations to include women in disaster risk reduction management planning were made, there is no element of how the government intends to do this. Many of the reports and available data analyzed were economic development, recovery, or relief-based responses to climate-related catastrophes.

This Policy brief confirmed that climate change negatively impacts almost all SRHR outcomes and leaves vulnerable women and girls at higher risk of being left behind. More collaboration between the IPCC, government bodies, Go, NGOs, and local women's groups is crucial.

Women in Bangladesh are most likely to be affected by climate change-related emergencies and already experience high levels of gender inequality. There is an urgent need for national frameworks concerning climate change to take up the issue of SRHR to facilitate discussion and inclusion of the reproductive justice framework at the national level.

Those who work in SRHR are already working on climate change. This policy brief aims to suggest some further meaningful actions which build on education and information on SRHR and CC. It was designed to be used by decision-makers and climate change, humanitarian, and gender equality advocates to better understand the linkages between sectors and align efforts to generate effective policies and programs.

ANNEX: RESOURCES

[Climate-Change-and-SRHR-Scoping-Study Working-Paper 2014.pdf](#)

[Damavandi, S., \(2022\). The Critical Importance of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare During Emergency Settings: Recommendations for the U.S. Government and Global Humanitarian Organizations. Washington D.C.: International Center for Research on Women.](#)

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[Women Deliver. \(January 2021\). The Link Between Climate Change and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: An Evidence Review.](#)

<https://seors.unfccc.int>

Related Resources

Toolkit for a Gender-Responsive Process to Formulate and Implement National Adaptation Plans (NAPs)

Advancing Gender-Responsive Climate Action Through National Adaptation Plan (NAP) Processes | NAP Global Network Synthesis Report, 2019–2020

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