

A global call to action:

Empower women and girls for more effective action on climate change

EngenderHealth, FHI360, Guttmacher Institute, Ipas, the International Planned Parenthood Federation, the Margaret Pyke Trust, Marie Stopes International, PAI, Plan International UK, Population Council, PSI and Women Deliver call on signatories to the Paris Climate Change Agreement to acknowledge the key role that the fulfilment of women and girls' sexual and reproductive rights and ensuring women and girls' access to sexual and reproductive health services must play in national climate change strategies.

Links between sexual and reproductive health and rights and climate change

When women and girls have children by choice rather than chance and can plan their family size as a matter of autonomy and dignity, they have improved health outcomesⁱ and are more engaged in social and economic activities in their communities. This contributes to sustainable developmentⁱⁱ, and we believe, helps communities become resilient and more capable of adapting to the inevitable changes brought by climate changeⁱⁱⁱ.

While the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all women and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights is our ultimate goal, the realisation of these rights is also a means to achieve sustainable development. Meeting sexual and reproductive health needs has the positive effect of reducing the number of unplanned pregnancies (currently at 99.1 million annually^{iv} in large part due to the 214 million women and girls in developing countries with an unmet need for modern contraceptives)^v. This also slows population growth^{vi}, which is considered a climate change challenge by many countries^{vii}. Indeed, many countries with a high unmet need for modern contraception also have a high vulnerability to climate change. Moreover, voluntary and rights-based family planning has been listed as #7 on Project Drawdown's list of 100 diverse and cost-effective strategies to address climate change with a measurable impact^{viii}.

Meeting this unmet need for family planning could significantly reduce climate change vulnerability.

Global Commitments - the framework

According to the international climate change agreement from 2015 - **the Paris Agreement** - "*Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, the right to health, the rights of indigenous peoples, local communities, migrants, children, persons with disabilities and people in vulnerable situations and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity*"^{ix}.

The agreement also indicates that, "*each Party shall prepare, communicate and maintain successive nationally determined contributions that it intends to achieve*"^x. All parties to the Paris Agreement have committed to resubmit new Nationally Determined Contributions every five years^{xi} (with the next round due by 2020) and to raise their ambition to the highest possible mitigation and adaptation efforts^{xii}.

The recently adopted **COP24 decision emphasises that**, "*Contextual matters (...) such as national circumstances*" should be considered in the planning process for these plans^{xiii}. As such, human rights, in particular the right to health and sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality, women and girls' empowerment and their role as agents of change, and context-specific barriers to sustainable development, including population dynamics, must be considered when preparing these documents.

Call to action

The fulfilment of sexual and reproductive rights can play an important role in contributing to adaptation and mitigation of climate change and many States have identified population dynamics as a climate change challenge. We now call on States to take concrete action to integrate services that fulfil these rights into their climate change planning processes.

We call on signatories to the Paris Agreement to:

- 1) Take into consideration poverty, gender equality, age and human rights, including the right to health and to sexual and reproductive rights – as well as population dynamics – in their new Nationally Determined Contribution planning processes and contextual problem analyses; and – if relevant;**

- 2) Integrate sexual and reproductive health services and the realisation of girls' and women's human rights in their new Nationally Determined Contributions as a strategy to deliver on their commitments to the Paris Agreement
- 3) Integrate sexual and reproductive health services and the realisation of girls' and women's human rights in all other climate change and sustainable development plans

We the signatories fully acknowledge the injustice of anthropogenic climate change largely being a result of overconsumption and production in some countries, whereas the effects of climate change are felt hardest in others. Further, in the areas hardest hit by the impacts of climate change, it is the already marginalised groups, including women and girls and those living in poverty, which suffer the greatest consequences. What we can offer, is a strategy to limit the negative impacts on the people who are already affected the most from the effects of climate change.

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ⁱ Family planning is listed in the IPCC 5th report as a means to reduce climate change vulnerability through its positive effect on health outcomes, and has the co-benefit of reducing emissions. Source: Smith, K.R., A.Woodward, D. Campbell-Lendrum, D.D. Chadee, Y. Honda, Q. Liu, J.M. Olwoch, B. Revich, and R. Sauerborn, 2014: Human health: impacts, adaptation, and co-benefits. In: Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, United Kingdom and New York, NY, USA, pp. 709-754.

ⁱⁱ Cleland et al. (2006) 'Family Planning: the Unfinished Agenda', *The Lancet*, 368(9549), pp. 1810-27. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(06\)69480-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(06)69480-4)

ⁱⁱⁱ Population Reference Bureau, Building Resilience Through Family Planning: A Transformative Approach for Women, Families and Communities, August 2015: <https://www.prb.org/sahel-resilience/>

^{iv} Bearak et al. (2018) 'Global, regional, and subregional trends in unintended pregnancy and its outcomes from 1990 to 2014: estimates from a Bayesian hierarchical model', *The Lancet Global Health*, 6(4), pp.380-389. doi: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X\(18\)30029-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2214-109X(18)30029-9)

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- ^v Guttmacher Institute, 'Adding it up', 2017. Accessed at: <https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/adding-it-up-contraception-mnh-2017>
- ^{vi} https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/publications/files/wpp2017_keyfindings.pdf
- ^{vii} 32% of the current 164 NDCs link population growth to climate change across contexts of mitigation and adaptation. In many other NDCs, population perspectives are not mentioned, even though the countries' growth projections are high (http://psda.international/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/NDC-analysis_DFPA.pdf)
- ^{viii} Project Drawdown, 2017 (<https://www.drawdown.org/solutions/women-and-girls/family-planning>)
- ^{ix} <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/l09r01.pdf> article 7.5
- ^x <https://unfccc.int/resource/docs/2015/cop21/eng/l09r01.pdf> article 4.2
- ^{xi} Paris Agreement article 4.9
- ^{xii} COP24 Decision 'Preparations for the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the first session of the Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Paris Agreement' article 3.14
- ^{xiii} https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/l22_0.pdf Annex 1, article 4.a