

## **Shouldering the Burden: Rural Women and Climate-Induced Displacement**

### **Concept Note**

According to the 2017 Global Report on Internal Displacement (GRID) produced by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), there were 24.2 million new displacements (about 66,000 per day) because of sudden, weather-related disasters in 2016. The United Nations Environment Program reported in late October 2017 that current Nationally Determined Commitments under the Paris Climate Agreements would reduce global carbon emissions by only one third of the amount needed to avoid the worst future effects of climate change. Climate change and environmental disasters are therefore, likely to continue to impact vulnerable populations in devastating ways.

As with so many challenges faced by the international community, the burdens associated with climate-induced displacement fall disproportionately on rural population, particularly from developing countries. Usually, they are more vulnerable to environmental degradation than their urban counterparts. They face the greatest exposure to extreme weather events, have less representation in national governance bodies, and are the most isolated from social services and infrastructure. The health of the natural environment is therefore, a significant factor in securing rural populations' access to basic needs and services for a dignified life. Again, within rural communities, environmental stress and displacement have a particularly devastating impact on women and girls. If food shortages arise, women are often the first to reduce their consumption of food. In the event of income shortages, girl children are often the first to be pulled out of school and subjected to various familial and societal discriminations. When climate stress drives male family members to other regions to find work, remittances to women and children left behind are typically infrequent and unpredictable, further exacerbating food, financial, and labor strains on the family.

In addition to driving significant rural to urban, internal displacement (rural to urban), adverse effects of climatic change often drive people from one country to another. In such cases, insufficient international guidelines on protection of cross-border, climate-displaced persons often pose a grave threat to migrants' human rights and a challenge to the global promotion of safe, orderly and regular migration. They render those fleeing uninhabitable climates vulnerable to assaults, abuse, and other crimes at the hands of unscrupulous smugglers and criminals during their journeys. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to violence or exploitation along the migratory route. Even after reaching their country of destination, women often face gender-specific barriers to entering formal, regulated labor markets, to collecting just wages, and to accessing financial services. These complex and inherently trans-national issues require creative, long-term solutions anchored by international cooperation and responsibility sharing.

As the international community enters into the third year of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the current and projected impacts of climate-induced displacement on rural women and girls must not be ignored. Few nations are feeling the adverse effects of climate stress and displacement as strongly as Bangladesh. This South Asian nation shares a 710-kilometer coastline with the Bay of Bengal exposing it to natural calamities like cyclones, floods and salinization of soil and fresh water. Bangladesh's coastal area was hit by cyclone Sidr in 2007 followed by another cyclone, Aila in 2009. In the wake of these disasters, widespread deaths and large-scale destruction of livelihoods and property forced people to migrate, despite their resilience, from rural to urban areas. These large population movements, placed significant pressure on the communities, resources, and infrastructure both in their rural areas of origin and their urban destinations. Repeated exposure to such disasters has depleted the asset-base of households making future recovery very hard. As detailed above, these strenuous circumstances disproportionately endanger the human rights of women and children.

In response to these challenges, the Government of Bangladesh formulated the National Women Development Policy 2011 which has emphasizes measures ensuring the prioritization of women's security and extension of psychosocial support services during disaster and post disaster rehabilitation. It also focuses on material assistance for strengthening women's capacity to overcome disaster emergencies. As part of their work toward SDG 13, (climate action), Bangladesh is also implementing social protection projects, awareness raising and training programme designed to equip their people to cope with and adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change.

In addition to discussing the climate challenges and response in Bangladesh, this side event will examine climate realities in the South Pacific and Sub-Saharan Africa; their impact on rural women and girls; how to address them at various stages of displacement. Finally, it will highlight opportunities for advocacy on the issue of climate-induced displacement, seek collaboration among different stakeholders and offer some recommendations toward durable solutions.

### **Objectives:**

- Highlight effects of climate change, natural disasters and weather events on the displacement of rural women and girls especially in Bangladesh, the South Pacific, and Sub-Saharan Africa;
- Review human rights challenges faced by rural women and girls displaced by climate change and significant weather events;
- Discuss various efforts to protect the rights of rural women and girls in the context of environmental distress and displacement and to address their vulnerabilities through action-oriented strategies for risk reduction, adaptation, and building resilience;
- Discuss possibilities for enhancement of government' and other relevant stakeholders' involvement in addressing climate-induced displacement;
- Explore means of advocating for the rights of rural women and girls within the Global Compact on Migration and 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

### **Program Structure:**

**Event is scheduled in Ex-Press Bar-GA Building, 1:15 pm -2:30 pm, 20 March 2018**

Moderator: Teresa Blumenstein, UNANIMA International and NGO Committee on Migration

Panel Discussion:

1. Meher Afroze, MP- Hon'ble State Minister for Women and Children Affairs of Bangladesh
2. Presentation followed by statement of Nasima Begum, ndc, Secretary, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs of Bangladesh
3. Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka-Executive Director, UN Women
4. Carla Mucavi-Director, Liaison Office in NY for the Food & Agriculture Organization of the UN
5. Molly Gerke- International Presentation Association and Co-founder, Open the Door Foundation
6. Mariam Traore Chazalnoel- Thematic Specialist in Migration, Environment and Climate Change (MECC) Specialist at the International Organization for Migration (IOM)

Floor discussion and Closing Remarks