Women at the Frontlines

A CASE STUDY ANALYSIS OF THE GENDER, CONFLICT AND CLIMATE NEXUS

GLOBAL ALLIANCE
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GENDER ACTION

Acknowledgements:

Research Partners include:

Brazil: Associação Grupo Orgulho, Liberdade e Dignidade (GOLD)
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Philippines: Sabokahan Tomo Kamalitanan (Unity of Lumad Women)

All photo credits belong to our research partners. We excluded credits and image descriptions to avoid labeling individuals as victims or survivors of sexual violence.

Contents

Trigger Warning:

This report includes references to violence, displacement, gendered violence, militarization, and threats against human rights defenders. Some readers may find these topics distressing. Please take care while reading, and consider accessing support if needed.

ACRONYMS

ALMACVA	Agdao Laray Muslim and Christian Vendors Association
BARMM	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
CBOs	Community-based Organizations
CRSGBV	Conflict-related Sexual and Gender Based Violence
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
DUAT	Direito de Uso e Aproveitamento da Terra (Portuguese for "Land Use and Benefit Right" in Mozambique)
FCDO	United Kingdom Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FPAR	Feminist Participatory Action Research
GAGGA	Global Alliance for Green and Gender Action
HDP	Nexus Humanitarian, Development, Peace Nexus
LBTIA+	Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Asexual and other identities (used by GAGGA)
LGBTIQAPN+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, Asexual, Pansexual, Nonbinary, other identities (used by Associação GOLD)
M23	March 23 Movement (a rebel military group in the Democratic Republic of the Congo)
NAPs	National Action Plans
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
SEAH	Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
WEHRD	Women Environmental and Human Rights Defenders

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The intersection of gender, conflict, and climate change is reshaping communities, economies, and ecosystems worldwide. Women, including cis-, trans-gender and travesti[1] from structurally excluded communities across Brazil, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mozambique, Nigeria, and the Philippines formed the core of the study. It provides a comprehensive analysis based on Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) of how extractive industries, forced displacement, and militarization exacerbate gendered injustices and how gendered inequalities fuel the nexus further. It highlights the agency and leadership of women from Indigenous, Afro-descendant, rural, and LBTIA+ (Lesbian, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Asexual and other identities) communities in resisting these forces and advancing gender-just climate solutions.

Key Findings:
1. **Extractive Industries and Militarization as Drivers of Conflict, Climate Change and Gendered Violence:** Extractive industries and agribusinesses, backed by corporate and state interests, fuel environmental destruction, land dispossession, and militarization. Women, particularly those from structurally excluded communities, face increased risks of economic precarity, sexual violence, and exclusion from decision-making.
2. **Structural Violence Perpetuating Injustice:** Cisheteronormative[2] patriarchal and colonial systems embedded in legal, economic, and governance structures systematically exclude women and structurally excluded communities, amplifying the impacts of climate change and conflict.
3. **Climate Change as a Multiplier of Inequality and Conflict:** Climate stressors exacerbate food insecurity, displacement, and economic instability, disproportionately affecting women and structurally excluded populations while intensifying resource-related conflicts.
4. **Gendered Violence as a Consequence and Amplifier of the Nexus:** Gendered violence and systemic oppression are weaponized to maintain control over land, resources and women, particularly from Indigenous, Afro-descendant, rural and LBTIA+ communities.
5. **Forced Displacement and Resource Conflicts:** Land grabbing, armed conflicts, and climate disasters, such as floods, landslides or droughts, systematically dispossess communities, with women facing heightened economic insecurity and barriers to land rights.

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[1] See footnote no. 5 for an explanation on "travesty". While non-binary, queer, or intersex persons may also have participated, legal and cultural contexts—such as criminalization, stigma, and systemic barriers—likely contributed to the underreporting of identities that exist beyond the gender binary.

[2] Cisheteronormativity refers to the societal expectation and assumption that everyone is both cisgender (identifying with the gender assigned at birth) and heterosexual, often privileging those identities over others.

Women's Strategies for Resistance, Peacebuilding and Climate Adaptation: Despite these challenges, women are at the forefront of grassroots resistance and transformative change. Key strategies include:

- **Community Based Land Defense:** Women in Mozambique are training as paralegals and leading land councils, negotiating tenure agreements, and reclaiming unlawfully seized land through legal processes, while women in the Philippines organize public protests, human chains, and other forms of collective action to resist the encroachment and dispossession of their ancestral lands by extractive industries and agribusinesses.
- **Sustainable, Women-Led Land Management and Economic Cooperatives:** Women in the case studies of Burkina Faso, the DRC, Mozambique and Nigeria organizes themselves through economic cooperatives and farming associations, advance gender-just agroecology, reforestation, and water conservation while strengthening their bargaining power and financial resources to secure land, access information, and invest in climate change adaptation and mitigation.
- **Networks of Resistance and Protection:** Women Environmental Human Rights Defenders in Brazil and the Philippines build intersectional solidarity networks with Indigenous, land rights, labor, and racial justice movements while investing in legal literacy, advocacy, and safe spaces to resist extractive industries, militarization, dispossession and persecution.
- **Women as Peacebuilders:** Through their role as community paralegals, women in Mozambique gain trust and legitimacy within their communities to take on leadership roles in conflict resolution, mediation, and community governance. In Burkina Faso, women from host and internally displaced communities jointly participate in training on agroecology, advocacy, and leadership, which they implement for example through collective farming and advocacy efforts. These spaces also foster opportunities to build trust, relationships, and challenge prevailing stereotypes, which contributes significantly to enhanced social cohesion.

Actionable Recommendations for Bilateral and Philanthropic Donors:
To effectively address the interconnected challenges of gender, conflict, and climate change, donors have a critical role beyond financial support as they can bridge gaps, strengthen frontline agency, and drive not only inclusive, but also transformative policy reforms.

- **Strengthen locally-led, conflict-transformative solutions for gender and climate justice** by expanding accessible funding for women-led community-based organizations (CBOs), supporting locally-rooted initiatives that address gender, climate and conflict together, and investing in community-driven, gender-just and conflict transformative transitions away from extractive industries.
- **Protect human rights and assure accountability** by enhancing crisis response mechanisms for Women Environmental Human Rights Defenders (WEHRDs), safeguarding civic spaces, supporting legal action against rights violations, and reforming risk and funding approaches to prioritize protection, justice and dignity.
- **Transform governance and policy for gender-just and conflict-transformative**

climate action by leveraging flexible and coordinated funding, strengthening governments and civil societies to implement gender-just and conflict-transformative climate policies, and supporting legal and policy reforms that center equity, accountability, and peace.

This report underscores that peace, gender and climate justice are inseparable. Women-led CBOs, women and gender-diverse environmental human rights defenders are reclaiming power, resisting exploitation, and building sustainable alternatives to extractivist economies. To achieve a just and equitable future, international actors, donors and policymakers are called to amplify and support the leadership of those most affected by the crisis of gender, conflict and climate change.

2. INTRODUCTION

Across the world, the interconnected crises of climate change, conflict, and gender inequality are reshaping communities, economies, and ecosystems. Women and girls, particularly those from Indigenous, Afro-descendant, rural, and LBTIA+ (Lesbian, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Asexual and other identities) communities, are among those most impacted. At the same time they are also leading efforts of resistance against injustices, adapting to shifting environmental and conflict realities, and driving transformative change in their communities.

This research, led by cis-, trans- and travesti-women, as well as organizations working on women's rights, environmental justice, and peacebuilding in Brazil, Burkina Faso, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Mozambique, Nigeria, and the Philippines, examines how extractive industries, forced displacement, and militarization shape gendered injustices. It also highlights the agency and leadership of those resisting these forces to secure justice, peace, and safety in their communities.

The findings reveal an urgent reality: extractive industries drive environmental destruction, land dispossession, and militarization, disproportionately harming women and structurally excluded communities. Climate change amplifies gendered violence, displacement, and economic precarity. Structural violence embedded in legal systems, economic policies, and governance frameworks continues to exclude women and other structurally excluded groups from decision-making processes.

Building on these findings, this report highlights both the necessity of transformation and the agency of those driving change. Women across these six countries are advancing solutions that challenge extractive economies, promote sustainable resource management, and demand gender-just climate policies and action. Through community-based advocacy, agroecological farming cooperatives, paralegal networks, and resistance to corporate and state-led violence, they are shaping a future rooted in justice, sustainability, and peace.

This research underscores the urgency of dismantling the gender, conflict, and climate nexus. It calls for structural reforms centered on gender justice, demilitarization, and climate action while demanding accountability from corporations, governments, and international actors. This report calls for amplifying and supporting the leadership of women at the frontlines, investing in community-driven gender-just climate solutions, and building transnational alliances between climate justice movements with a particular focus on movements based on Indigenous, racial, labor rights and gender justice to dismantle the systems of oppression sustaining the gender, climate, and conflict crises.

> **At its core, this research is about power: who holds it, who is excluded from it, and how those who have been pushed to the margins are reclaiming it to build a more peaceful, just and sustainable world for all of us.**

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Approach

This research follows a Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR) approach. It was led by Women Environmental Human Rights Defenders (WEHRDs), Indigenous, Afro-descendant, LBTIA+, rural, and displaced women, guided by a lead researcher and coordinated by GAGGA.

Centering the experiences of women from Indigenous and LBTIA+ communities, as well as Afro-descendent, Black, Brown, rural, semi-urban, and urban communities across generations, it analyzes structural injustices while also exploring the strategies they use to navigate, mitigate, adapt to, and transform these intersecting challenges. By grounding the analysis in the voices of those most affected, the research highlights frontline perspectives that drive a deeper understanding of systemic inequities, resistance strategies, and pathways toward gender and climate justice.

3.2.   Data Collection Methods and Analysis

A mixed-methods approach was used, including:

- **67 semi-structured interviews** with thematic experts, activists, organizers and affected community members, mostly women.
- **10 focus group discussions (FGDs)** to explore collective experiences and strategies.
- **7 participatory research workshops** to map out impacts and resistance strategies against the gender, conflict and climate nexus.
- **174 surveys** capturing quantitative insights on extractive industries, displacement, violence, and adaptation strategies.
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Women comprised nearly 95% of the co-researchers[3], while approximately 4% openly identified as members of the LBTIA+ community.

Burkina Faso
Ougadougou
Zinaire
Zorgho
Koudougou

Philippines
Mindanao

Nigeria
Niger-Delta

DRC
Copperbelt

Brazil
Brasilia

Mozambique
Tete
Mocuba
Zambézia
Nampula
Ribaue
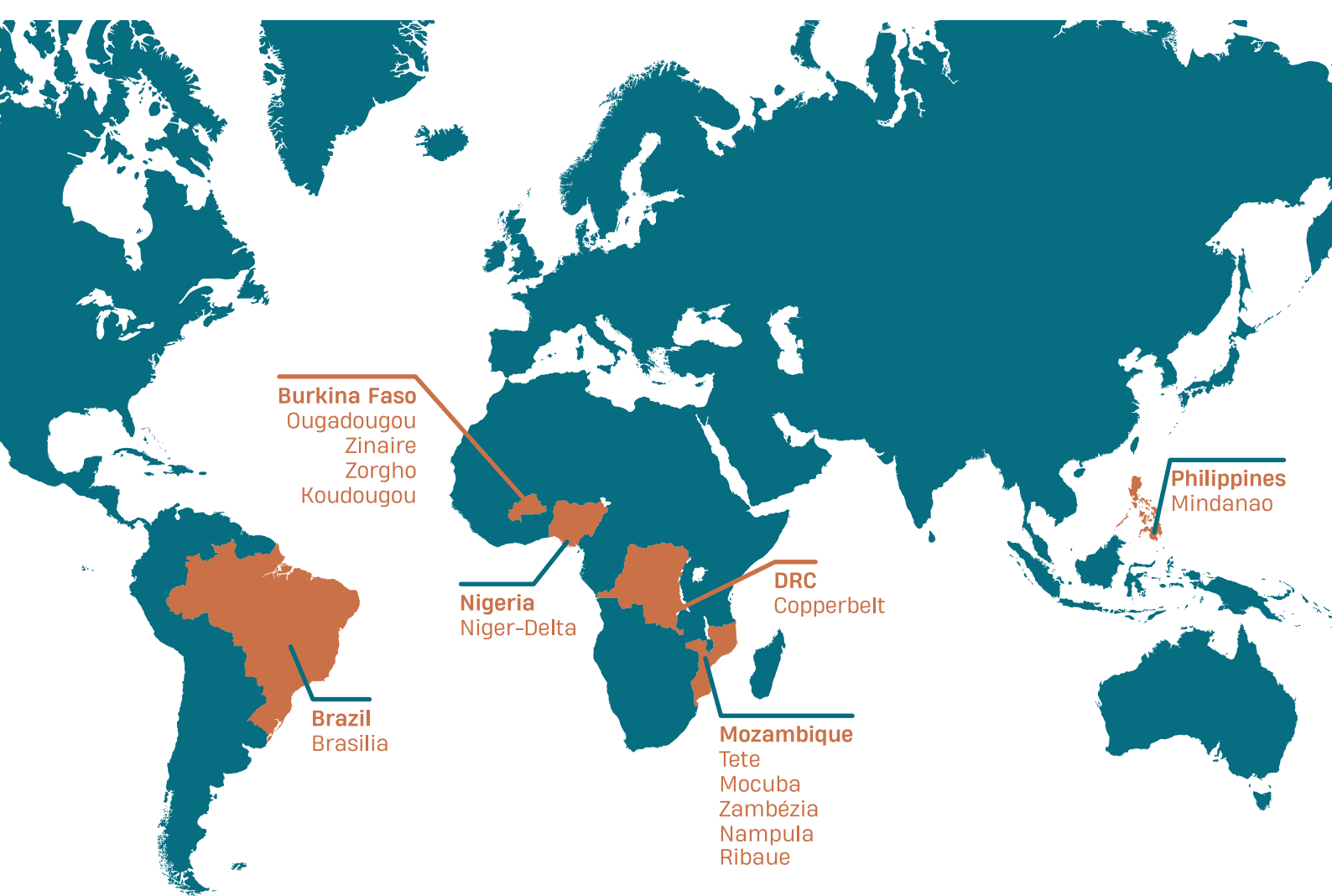
[3] In FPAR co-researchers are individuals from affected communities who actively contribute to the research process, by shaping its direction, analysis, and outcomes based on their lived experiences and expertise.

3.3.   Limitations

Diverse legal and cultural contexts shaped discussions on gender identity and sexual orientation, with stigma and systemic barriers likely contributing to underreporting of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) as well as identities diverging from cisheteronormative assumptions. To preserve linguistic and cultural nuances, translation and iterative reviews were incorporated.

Given the ethnic diversity across all study countries, gender norms and conflict dynamics manifest differently in each context. Thus, this research is not a comprehensive assessment of the dynamics of the gender, conflict, and climate nexus in each country. Rather, it provides a limited yet context-specific glimpse into these dynamics within selected areas, acknowledging the broader diversity of national and cultural contexts that could not be fully captured in this analysis.

This research required ethical and logistical adaptations to ensure data accuracy and participant safety. In the DRC, the 2025 Goma offensive by the March 23 Movement (M23) disrupted data collection, leading to the cancellation of a participatory workshop. In Mozambique, movement restrictions due to instability caused by recent elections necessitated phone interviews, limiting access for those without reliable telecommunications.

3.4.   Ethical Considerations and Inclusivity

The study ensured **informed consent, safety of researchers and co-researchers, and a trauma-informed approach.** Confidentiality measures were implemented across all six countries with additional considerations for those at heightened risk, particularly LBTIA+ women and Indigenous land defenders. Gendered violence considerations were integrated into research design, and support mechanisms were available for researchers and co-researchers.

Given the sensitive legal and social contexts in Burkina Faso and Nigeria, where LGBTIQAPN+ identities (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer, Asexual, Pansexual, Nonbinary and other identities) are criminalized, no individuals or organizations representing LGBTIQAPN+ communities were explicitly included as research partners or participants. This decision was made to ensure the safety of all involved and in alignment with ethical and context-sensitive safeguarding principles.

4. UNPACKING THE GENDER, CONFLICT, CLIMATE NEXUS

4.1.   Extractive Industries as a Driver of Climate Collapse, Conflict and Gendered Violence

> **Data from all six case studies shows extractive industries and agribusinesses are central driver of land dispossession, militarization, and state repression while deepening gendered inequalities and violence.**

Women across these contexts describe how extractive industries, backed by corporate and state interests, threaten their security, land rights, and access to natural resources. Mining, a highly masculinized industry, reinforces gender subordination while exploiting both ecosystems and the communities that depend on them (see Großmann et al., 2017). As the crisis in Goma, DRC unfolds during the development of this analysis, we witness firsthand how armed groups such as M23 finance their operations through mining, using sexual violence and forced displacement to maintain control over resource-rich areas[4]. Similarly, in DRC's Copperbelt, where research for this study was conducted, women reported widespread sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (SEAH) in mining camps, emphasizing how economic gains privilege men while fostering violent masculinities. These patterns demonstrate how extractive industries devastate ecosystems, drive armed conflict and entrench gendered violence, which is also congruent with other research (see Großmann et al., 2017).

Extractive industries are central to violent conflict dynamics, as control over land and natural resources fuels militarization and state repression. The economic interests of state-backed corporations, including former colonial powers, justify heavy-handed security interventions, often under the guise of "national security" or "development." In the Philippines, Indigenous Women Environmental Human Rights Defenders (WEHRDs) resisting dispossession on their ancestral land are labeled as insurgents and subjected to violent repression and criminalization. Once, mining, agribusinesses and mega dams built for those agribusinesses have dispossessed them, the same Indigenous Communities are forced to work on those plantations.

One WEHRD[5] from the indigenous Lumad community reported that the Armed Forces of the Philippines issued a "shoot-to-kill" order against her because of her activism

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[4] See i.e. https://theconversation.com/rwandan-backed-m23-rebel-group-seeks-local-power-in-drc-not-just-control-over-mining-operations-231318 or UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Ms. Pramila Patten, condemns the renewed offensive by the M23 with the support of the Rwandan Defence Force and expresses grave concern about the heightened risk and emerging reports of conflict-related sexual violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo – United Nations Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict

for Indigenous land rights. Similarly, in Brazil, Déborah Sabará aka Sabará, a travesti[6] environmental and gender justice activist shared that she faces intimidation, threats, and criminalization from state forces due to her gender and environmental advocacy[7]. These cases highlight how extractive industries intersects with militarization and state violence, reinforcing gendered oppression while silencing environmental defenders and broader public dissent.

In Mozambique, extractive land grabs by agribusinesses, mining, forest plantations, and oil exploration projects are enabled by weak enforcement of legal protections and corruption. The absence of any gender lens in the implementation of environmental licensing further reinforces these dynamics, benefiting male community authorities while failing to adequately consult or consider other community members. Patriarchal gender norms, roles, and power dynamics further entrench women's exclusion from land negotiations, leaving them without recourse when their land is taken. The loss of agricultural land strips women of their ability to engage in subsistence farming and income-generating activities which exacerbates food insecurity and reinforces economic dependence. This is congruent with research that shows how economic land concessions negatively impact communities' livelihoods, food security and gender equality (see Appelt et. al., 2022).

Beyond economic dispossession, extractive industries erode cultural and intergenerational knowledge systems. Indigenous and rural women play critical roles in land stewardship, traditional medicine, and sustainable agriculture, yet extractive projects sever these relationships, leading to the loss of ancestral knowledge, weakening community cohesion and potentials for mitigating and adapting to climate change. This cultural loss further entrenches women's structural exclusion, reinforcing economic and social dependencies that make it even harder to resist displacement and exploitation.

Despite these barriers, women's resistance takes many forms, from legal battles and policy advocacy to community organizing, public protests or community-led monitoring of human rights violations and environmental degradation. However, the increasing militarization of extractive industries, combined with legal repression, surveillance, and violence against activists, underscores the urgency of dismantling these intersecting systems of exploitation. Ensuring gender justice, climate justice, and lasting peace requires confronting extractive industries and mindsets as a fundamental driver of conflict, rather than merely a symptom of economic inequality.

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[5] Explore the stories of four Lumad women (names omitted for security reasons) and Sabará in the accompanying brochure.

[6] The term travesti in Latin America refers to a distinct gender identity of feminine-presenting individuals assigned male at birth, structurally excluded and stigmatized. Associação GOLD is reclaiming *travesti* as a political identity, challenging cisnormative and colonial frameworks while advocating for dignity, rights, and visibility within feminist and LGBTIQAPN+ movements.

[7] Explore the stories of WEHRDs from the Philippines and Brazil in the accompanying brochure.

Case Study: Extractive Industries, Conflict, and Gendered Violence in Nigeria

The Niger-Delta exemplifies how extractive industries fuel climate collapse, conflict, and gender inequality. While both men and women suffer from resource loss, women face additional burdens due to their roles as primary caregivers, food providers, and economic contributors. The loss of farmland and fishing waters forces women into informal and often exploitative labor markets, increasing their vulnerability to economic instability and gendered violence. Additionally, displacement and environmental hazards place a greater strain on women's caregiving responsibilities, as they must navigate food insecurity, health crises, and the protection of their families with fewer resources and limited decision-making power.

Decades of oil extraction have contaminated water sources, degraded farmland, and displaced communities, depriving women of their primary means of livelihood, which arefishing and farming. Many women fishmongers and traders report that the once thriving fishing industry has collapsed due to oil spills, leaving them without income and deepening food insecurity. One woman from Ibeno described how women once gathered oysters, lobsters, and clams but lost this practice to pollution. "The water we collect is as dark as charcoal and cannot be used for anything," another woman shared. Farmers face similar challenges as soil infertility resulting from oil spills and unpredictable climate conditions make cultivation increasingly difficult.

Extractive industries have intensified gendered violence and social tensions, as land disputes, environmental degradation, and economic instability drive displacement and resource conflicts. Over 80% of women in Ibeno reported losing access to essential resources with 50% experiencing physical harm linked to conflicts and 37% losing their livelihoods. In Nsit Ibom 40% of women reported disputes over water sources, 37% over land ownership with 10% of them being displaced as a result. "The people who took my land gave me a little money and then told me to forget about it", shared one of the women. In Ikono, 25% of women report being exposed to violence and harassment within their families, as well as their communities. In fact, women across the three research locations expressed concerns about domestic violence and sexual exploitation, disproportionately affecting young women.

In response, women in Ikono have formed farmers' and market groups, as well as political women's associations, to strengthen their economic and political influence. In Ibeno, women's groups focus on savings programs, financial support networks, and diversifying livelihoods through petty trade and relocation. In Nsit Ibom, women are implementing strategies such as reforestation, replanting, and artificial irrigation to counteract environmental degradation and sustain their communities.

Despite these efforts, women continue to bear the burden of unpaid care work, economic instability, and exposure to violence. Mutual aid and sporadic governmental relief provide temporary support, but they fail to address systemic issues such as weak environmental regulations, the exclusion of women from land ownership and decision-making, and the lack of sustainable economic opportunities. Structural reforms, including corporate accountability to human rights, gender- and environmental justice and expanded employment for women are crucial to improving conditions in the Niger Delta. Without urgent action, extractiveist industries and gendered inequalities will continue to deepen the hardships faced by women in the Niger-Delta.

4.2. Structural Violence as a Driver and Amplifier of Conflict, Climate and Gender Inequlity

Structural violence[8] refers to the systemic and entrenched inequalities that limit access to resources, rights, and opportunities based on factors such as gender, ethnicity, class, or disability. Unlike direct physical violence, structural violence is embedded within institutions, policies, and cultural norms, shaping the lived experiences of structurally excluded populations in ways that often remain invisible, particularly to those in power. It is both a cause and consequence of the interconnected crises of conflict, climate change, and gender inequalities.

> **Structural violence is a fundamental driver of the nexus, as it shapes the conditions that lead to conflict, so-called climate vulnerability, and gender-based discrimination.**

Historical legacies of colonialism and patriarchal governance continue to dictate legal, economic, and political structures, often prioritizing the interests of dominant groups while excluding or oppressing others. This systemic exclusion is evident in discriminatory land ownership laws and practices, limited access to education and healthcare for marginalizedstructurally excluded groups, and the denial of political representation. These conditions create a fertile ground for conflict by fueling grievances, deepening economic inequalities, and exacerbating social divisions.

In Mozambique, for example, the DUAT (Direito de Uso e Aproveitamento da Terra) land tenure system, while designed to provide land use rights to communities, has been manipulated to benefit extractive industries and political elites. Interviewed land rights experts explained how this has disproportionately affected rural women, as many of them lack the legal literacy and financial means to enforce their user rights. While the law reduces bureaucratic barriers by allowing oral testimony to establish land rights, it does not challenge patriarchal norms and customary governance structures which privilege male as landowners and heirs. Since land allocation relies on community validation, women's claims are frequently dismissed when they conflict with traditional norms. As a result, women face heightened economic insecurity, loss of livelihoods, and social tensions that contribute to cycles of conflict and displacement.

In the context of climate change, structural violence manifests in the unequal distribution of adaptation resources, the forced displacement of structurally excluded communities, and the systematic neglect of women, LBTIA+, indigenous and rural populations in environmental policymaking. In the Philippines, for instance, Indigenous communities in Mindanao have been systematically pushed out of their ancestral lands by government-backed extractive industries, exacerbating their exposure to climate change-induced disasters such as typhoons and flooding, while also dismantling traditional coping

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[8] In 2021, GAGGA consulted women and girl environmental human rights defenders across the world about their understandings and experiences of structural violence: gaggaalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/GAGGA-structural-violence-booklet_FINAL.pdf

mechanisms and access to collective resilience strategies. Beyond driving the nexus, structural violence reinforces inequalities and further marginalizes structurally excluded populations. Systemic barriers to justice, protection, and political participation hinder women and structurally excluded groups from recovering after conflict and crises. Despite evidence that peace agreements are more effective when women participate, they are often excluded from formal processes (see Krause et al., 2018). But even when present, they face structural limitations on their influence, as seen in the Sun-City negotiations in the DRC, where women were restricted to discussing 'women's issues' rather than military affairs. This shows, that representation alone is insufficient. Without mechanisms to ensure substantive participation and at least gender-responsive implementation, inclusion remains largely symbolic.

LBTIA+ women experience compounded exclusion in peace processes, as their visibility challenges both patriarchal and cisheteronormative structures. They face unique risks, including targeted sexual violence, forced marriage, and corrective rape, as seen in various conflict-affected regions. Additionally, their exclusion from political settlements and transitional justice mechanisms further marginalizes them, as peace processes fail to account for the intersecting oppressions they face (see Daigle, Myrttinen, 2018).

Similarly, climate change exacerbates structural inequalities by increasing food and water scarcity, intensifying displacement, and further restricting access to essential services. In many cases, climate adaptation and mitigation policies fail to account for the needs of women, Indigenous communities, and persons with disabilities, leaving them disproportionately exposed to environmental hazards. In Brazil, travesti face systemic exclusion from legal protections, economic opportunities, and safe housing, making them especially vulnerable during crises. Their exclusion from disaster relief and social protection programs deepens the impacts of climate change and conflict, reinforcing cycles of marginalization. Similarly, LBTIA+ women in various contexts adopt discreet behaviors to avoid exposure and discrimination, which limits their access to relief services and legal support. The fear of being outed often prevents them from seeking humanitarian assistance, increasing their risk of exploitation and violence. In crisis settings, service providers frequently overlook or stigmatize LBTIA+ women's needs, further entrenching systemic barriers to protection,

What Do We Mean by...

Gender-Sensitivity means recognizing that gender norms and inequalities exist and influence people's lives in different ways. It involves avoiding the reinforcement of harmful stereotypes.

Gender-Responsiveness goes a step further by actively addressing the different needs, experiences, and barriers faced by people of all genders in programs, policies, and interventions.

Gender-Transformation seeks to challenge and change unequal gender norms, roles, and power dynamics. It aims to create more inclusive and equitable systems and relationships.

Gender Justice is the broader goal of achieving not only gender equality but also fairness, accountability, and the redistribution of power and resources. It ensures that the rights and dignity of all genders are upheld.

healthcare, and economic recovery (Seppey, et.al., 2024).

Additionally, structural violence erodes traditional social protection mechanisms by dismantling community-based support systems that have historically provided resilience in times of crisis. Policies that prioritize large-scale economic interests over local livelihoods, such as land grabs for development projects or extractive industries disrupt traditional coping mechanisms and social cohesion, leaving affected populations more susceptible to the cascading effects of the nexus. As a result, the impacts of conflict and climate change are magnified, perpetuating cycles of exclusion and disenfranchisement.

Structural violence is both a root cause and an accelerator of the interconnected crises of conflict, climate change, and gender inequality. Simultaneously, it amplifies the effects of these crises by restricting access to resources, limiting opportunities for recovery, and reinforcing power imbalances. Addressing structural violence, therefore, is essential to breaking the nexus and advancing sustainable, inclusive, and gender-just solutions that empower structurally excluded communities to build resilience and reclaim agency over their futures.

4.3.   Climate Change as Multiplier of Gender Inequality and Amplifier of Conflicts

Environmental stressors, such as droughts, floods, and desertification, worsen existing inequalities and disproportionately affect women and structurally excluded groups. These pressures heighten resource-related tensions within and between communities, weakening social cohesion and economic stability. Armed conflicts contribute to environmental degradation through deforestation, soil depletion, and water contamination. This destruction exacerbates climate stressors, accelerates climate change by increasing greenhouse gas emissions, and disrupts critical ecosystems.

Across the six case studies, women consistently voiced concerns about food security linked to climate change. As primary caregivers and subsistence farmers, they are at the forefront of climate impacts. Women typically manage daily agricultural tasks, such as planting and watering crops, which are highly affected by erratic weather patterns. Droughts and unpredictable rainfall increase their workload and gendered risks, while men often migrate to diversify livelihoods, leaving women to shoulder additional responsibilities without adequate support. When governments' subsidies after disasters are tied to land titles, challenges and disparities deepen as women face increased difficulties to access these subsidies, for example in the face of their absent husbands who are the sole holders of formal land ownership titles or women being forced on informal or insecure land (see Scharinger et al., 2025).

This is also the case in Burkina Faso, which is one of the most climate-vulnerable countries in the region, where desertification and erratic rainfall severely deplete farmland and water sources. While gender dynamics vary across ethnic groups, women generally face significant disadvantages in land access. Community mobilizers, farmers, and land rights experts reported that women seeking arable land often lack the financial means

to secure long-term leases and are rarely landowners. As a result, they can often only afford short-term leases on low-fertility land. They spend considerable time and effort restoring soil quality, but just as the land becomes productive, landowners refuse to renew leases, instead transferring the land to male heirs. This cycle traps women in precarious agricultural conditions, limiting their economic stability and capacity to adapt to climate shocks[9].

Similarly, in Mozambique, climate-induced displacement and land dispossession push women into areas with even weaker land rights and limited access to natural resources. These regions often have poor soil fertility, which not only worsens agricultural prospects and food security but also creates tensions among women. As noted by land rights experts in this research, women are forced to compete for arable land, undermining opportunities for mutual support and collective action. These examples highlight the critical role of secure land tenure in achieving gender-just climate solutions and fostering social cohesion. However, climate change does not only impact women engaged in agriculture and rural environments. Increasingly, evidence highlights the experiences of individuals with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities, expressions, and sex characteristics. While access to land and tenure security remains crucial, studies indicate that environmental transphobia severely limits their access to safety and support (see Seppey, et. al., 2024 & Dominey-Howes, et.al., 2014). For example, travesti communities in Brazil face significant barriers in forming alliances with environmental human rights defenders due to widespread evangelical trans- and homophobic rhetoric. This exclusion extends to emergency shelters, often operated by religious institutions, further restricting their access to safety during crises. They also report experiencing discrimination and being disregarded by officials when advocating for inclusive disaster preparedness measures.

Moreover, WEHRDs in the Philippines highlight that climate adaptation and mitigation initiatives are often used to justify large-scale aggressive development projects that claim to promote sustainability but, in reality, displace structurally excluded communities, stripping them of land and livelihoods.

> **Advancing gender-just climate solutions require transformative policies that ensure equitable land rights, community-led climate adaptation, and social protection systems designed to address intersectional inequalities.**

This includes prioritizing local knowledge, redistributive measures on land, wealth and income, and participatory governance to enable women and structurally excluded groups to shape and lead climate responses. Without these structural changes, climate change will continue to exacerbate social and economic disparities, deepening existing conflicts and disproportionately affecting those with the least access to decision-making and resources.

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[9] Explore the story of Rabo Foutouna, who was internally displaced in Burkina Faso and successfully rebuilt her live and small-scale agricultural business in the accompanying brochure.

Case Study: Climate Change, Conflict, and Women's Leadership in the Philippines

The Moro people, particularly the Kagan community in Davao City, Mindanao, have long faced displacement, economic marginalization, and state violence due to land dispossession and ongoing political exclusion. While the 2014 Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro and the establishment of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) brought progress for some Moro communities, many – including the Kagan in Davao – remain outside the BARMM framework, limiting their access to governance and resources. Consequently, limited access to formal education, employment, discrimination and financial constraints push Moro women into informal street vending. In fact, in the context of displacement, this becomes a vital survival strategy that correlates with cultural norms and gender roles that favor self-employment for women, over formal employment, as it allows them flexibility to balance work and household responsibilities, amongst others.

However, in recent years their street vending has come under increasing pressure due to the aggressive commercialization of the Bankerohan Public Market – the oldest and largest market in Davao city. Climate disasters further intensify their struggles. In 2024, a series of floods and landslides displaced thousands. These disasters were not only natural but also a consequence of deforestation, weak environmental governance, and unregulated development projects. The destruction of homes and livelihoods coupled with the absence of government aid and systematic neglect worsened pre-existing socio-economic injustices, leaving the Kagan people with limited avenues for recovery.

For Kagan women, climate-induced displacement worsens existing burdens. Many work as informal street vendors, and supplement income with domestic work, but earnings remain precarious. They also help each other before, during, and after floods by supporting each other during evacuations, trying to rescue or carry belongings, and ensuring that displaced relatives have a place to stay with one another.

Fatima Asiri has long been a pillar of support within the Kagan community. Having inherited land from her relatives, she has used her position to create alliances with advocates and support struggling and/or displaced Kagan families. Recognizing the lack of formal support systems, Fatima has taken the initiative to coordinate grassroots mutual aid efforts. Most recently, she mobilized women vendors to donate unsold vegetables to the San Roque community[10], where women are at the forefront of resisting attempted encroachment on their homes. Through these efforts, Fatima has built a network of resilience and solidarity, proving that despite state neglect, Moro women can create systems of support to uplift their community.

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[10] See page 17.

One of the women Fatima has consistently supported is her sister-in-law, Rosa Dela Cruz. After marrying into the Kagan community, Rosa found herself navigating the precarious economic realities faced by many Kagan women. Like many in her community, she works as an informal street vendor, selling food and small goods wherever she can find space. Without a fixed location, she is constantly at risk of being displaced by authorities enforcing market regulations. Rosa works tirelessly, often going without sleep to earn just enough for a day's worth of rice.

Her struggles worsened after her husband suffered a stroke, leaving him unable to work as a construction laborer. With no savings or financial assistance, the family quickly fell into deeper hardship. The cost of medical treatment, including medication and physical therapy, became an unbearable burden. As the sole provider, Rosa stretches her meagre earnings to cover food, rent, and the occasional medical checkup for her husband. During Ramadan, the government provides five kilos of rice per family, but outside of this, no formal assistance is available. Fatima and other women in the community have stepped in, pooling portions of their modest earnings to help Rosa afford food and medicine.

> **However, these acts of mutual support cannot replace systemic change. Without a just recovery framework that includes informal workers, Indigenous land claimants, and displaced women without formal land titles, climate-induced disasters will continue to deepen inequalities.**

Addressing these challenges requires structural reforms in land rights, economic policies, and climate adaptation strategies that center the needs of structurally excluded communities.

4.4. Gendered Violence as an Amplifier and Outcome of the Gender, Conflict, Climate Nexus

Gendered violence is both a consequence and an amplifier within the interlinked crises of gender, conflict and climate injustice. Conflict-Related Sexual and Gender Based Violence (CRSGBV) and SEAH are not isolated incidents but are deeply embedded in systemic structures within armed conflicts, security economies, and extractive industries, reinforced by militarized masculinities that normalize sexual violence as a tool of control and repression (see Kezie-Nwoha et.al., 2021& Smith, et.al., 2021)

In the Philippines, particularly in Mindanao, the intersection of militarization, climate instability, and aggressive resource extraction labelled as development projects exacerbate gendered violence for women who seek to defend their homeland and ways of life. Indigenous Lumad women, who lead grassroots resistance against corporate mining, logging, and agribusiness encroachment on ancestral territories, face targeted defamation, harassment, sexual violence, and murder. Their intimidation and repression extends beyond individuals, but aims to actively silence broader community resistance, while deepening power imbalances, and intensifying conflict dynamics. In this context, gendered violence aims to undermine their legitimacy due to social stigma and discourage further activism.

In Brazil, travesti environmental human rights defenders face heightened risks due to transphobia, structural violence, militarization, and extractive industries. Sabará, a leading travesti activist, challenges these intersecting oppressions through her advocacy for environmental sustainability and LGBTIQAPN+ rights (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer, Asexual, Pansexual, Nonbinary and other identities). She reclaims "travesti" as an identity of pride and political resistance, positioning gender-diverse individuals at the forefront of social and environmental justice. As a leader in the Associação GOLD, Sabará has endured surveillance, intimidation, and judicial persecution, including wrongful conviction for criticizing transphobia in the administration of Vitória municipality.

As Sabará's case shows, environmental transphobia operates at the intersection of gendered violence, climate crises and state repression. In many regions, extractivist economies and militarized environmental governance reinforce cisnormative and patriarchal power structures, leading to the systematic exclusion, harassment, and violence against trans and travesti environmental defenders. Their gender identities are weaponized to delegitimize their activism. This form of transphobia is exacerbated by climate change impacts, where individuals encounter structural barriers to accessing relief, land rights, and sustainable livelihoods, further entrenching economic precarity and exposure to violence.

Reports from women engaged in this research and desktop review (see Helbert, 2021), highlight how Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta exemplifies the ways extractive economies perpetuate gendered violence, including SEAH.

> **In resource-rich regions, militarized security forces create conditions where sexual coercion, trafficking, and exploitation function as economic strategies of forced dependency.**

As examples from Nigeria and DRC show, displaced women and individuals facing economic precarity are often pushed into sexual exploitation and abuse, and informal, exploitative labor. This is reinforced by corporate interests and state inaction. Institutional weaknesses, widespread legal impunity, and the normalization of violence sustain these harmful cycles, discouraging survivors from seeking justice and entrenching systemic gendered violence.

Addressing gendered violence within this nexus requires holistic and intersectional approaches that challenge patriarchal, colonial, and cisheteronormative structures. Strengthening justice mechanisms, dismantling the normalization of gendered violence, exploitation and abuse, and centering community-led protection and response models are critical steps. Institutional reforms must prioritize survivor-centered support while recognizing and amplifying women's leadership in confronting the interconnected crises of gender injustice, environmental degradation, and resource-driven conflict.

Case Study: Women Recovering from Sexual Violence, Exploitation and Abuse in DRC's Copperbelt

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), gendered violence is deeply intertwined with conflict, resource extraction, and economic struggles, reinforcing cycles of instability, impoverishment, and social fragmentation. Armed conflicts have devastated communities, with women and girls often bearing extreme brutality. One woman recounted being raped by armed groups at the age of five, an act of violence that forced her family to flee their home. Another mother shared the harrowing experience of her five daughters being raped in retribution for her husband's unpaid debts. All of them contracted HIV, underscoring how such violence fuels both economic and health crises.

Economic hardship and resource exploitation further exacerbate injustice and violence. In mining towns, men endure grueling labor, and some spend their earnings on alcohol and agrleaving their families in financial precarity. One woman shared that her husband routinely abused and forced her to bear the full responsibility of providing for their child alone. Another woman, employed as a domestic worker in a mining camp, was coerced into sex to afford medical care for her mother. When she became pregnant, she was expelled from the town, left to navigate survival on her own.

Climate change further intensifies gendered violence by deepening resource scarcity, driving forced migration, and compounding economic hardship—challenges that disproportionately impact women. Many women shared how in times of heightened environmental stress, families resort to harmful coping mechanisms, such as forced marriage. For example, one woman was married off when her father lost his property due to climate-related economic pressures. Another, abandoned just weeks after marriage, was treated as a servant by her in-laws until she managed to save enough to start her own business. Widows shared how they face additional risks due to discriminatory land and property practices, which frequently strip women of their assets and expel them from their homes after their husband's death.

Yet, despite these hardships, women are leading community-driven efforts to reclaim their agency and rebuild their lives. Organizations like the Solidarite des Femmes sur le Fleuve Congo ("Solidarity of Women in the Congo Basin", SOFFLECO) connect women who are determined to preserve biodiversity and raise awareness for environmental issues while fighting against deforestation and other harmful practices in the Congo Basin. Supported by SOFFLECO, women who are affected by extractivism are forming village committees, agricultural cooperatives and launching small businesses. Through training in sustainable agriculture, women gain access to land, leadership opportunities, and financial independence. As a result, women's committees have successfully secured land for collective farming. In Kyowelo, Marie-Marthe Kabuya[11], a widow who had lost everything to her in-laws, now serves as the coordinator of her local farming committee. She organizes farming schedules, ensures equitable participation, and is rebuilding her financial stability.

Gendered violence in the DRC is both an outcome of systemic crises, including conflict, economic exploitation, climate change, and land dispossession, and a challenge that women continue to navigate with great defiance. Even in the face of immense adversity, women are finding ways to rebuild, support each other, and carve out new futures for themselves and their families. Through collective action, skills development, and economic initiatives, they are reclaiming agency and creating networks of solidarity. While the path to lasting change requires targeted interventions in economic empowerment, legal protection, and social support, the stories of these women highlight their unwavering strength and determination to shape a future free from violence and injustice.

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[11] Name changed for security reasons.

4.5. Forced Displacement and Resource Conflicts as Amplifiers and Outcomes of the Nexus

Forced displacement is both an amplifier and an outcome of the gender, conflict, and climate nexus. Across the six case studies, women shared how land grabbing, resource and armed conflicts, and climate disasters systematically triggered dispossession and displacement, disproportionately impacting structurally excluded groups, including rural and LBTIA+ women, and Indigenous communities.

In Mozambique, displacement is primarily driven by extractive industries and large-scale investment projects. Communities are systematically removed from resource-rich areas to facilitate corporate mining, oil exploration, and agribusiness, often with inadequate compensation and exclusionary resettlement policies. Women, who traditionally access land through male relatives, face heightened economic insecurity when land is expropriated. Thus, forced displacement deepens pre-existing vulnerabilities and structural inequalities.

Displacement not only results from conflict but also perpetuates cycles of instability. As communities lose access to livelihoods, land, and social networks, they are forced to rebuild their lives in unfamiliar environments that are often already strained by an influx of people fleeing violence. Initially, displaced populations may be met with compassion and solidarity, but over time, protracted displacement and insufficient support can strain relations between host and displaced communities. Scarce natural resources, such as water and arable land, become even more limited. As agricultural land is repurposed or overburdened, food insecurity deepens, and host communities increasingly fear that they may never reclaim their land. These dynamics foster grievances and escalate social conflicts. Recognizing the importance of strengthening social cohesion between host and internally displaced women, the Women Environmental Programme in Burkina Faso (WEP or WEP BF) facilitates joint initiatives that encourage relationship-building, collaboration, and mutual support. Through agroecology training, inclusive farming cooperatives, and financial literacy programs, women gain access to shared agricultural resources and sustainable income opportunities, improving economic stability while bridging social divides.

> **Bringing women from host and displaced communities together in initiatives that promote gender and climate justice is key to reducing tensions and fostering long-term community integration.**

The experiences of Rabo Foutouna in Burkina Faso further illustrate this point. Forced to flee her home in the Sahel region due to escalating violence, she arrived in Ouagadougou with her children, seeking to rebuild her livelihood. However, securing land was an uphill battle. Even her own relatives discouraged her from continuing agricultural work. Yet, she persisted, successfully negotiating a small plot near an integrated farm where she received agricultural training from WEP. Despite poor soil conditions and unpredictable weather patterns exacerbated by climate change, she cultivated maize, beans, and okra, ensuring food security for her family while also expanding her skills in composting and

eco-charcoal production. Her determination and perseverance not only allowed her to regain financial independence but also positioned her as a role model for other displaced women, demonstrating that securing land and rebuilding livelihoods is possible despite systemic barriers.
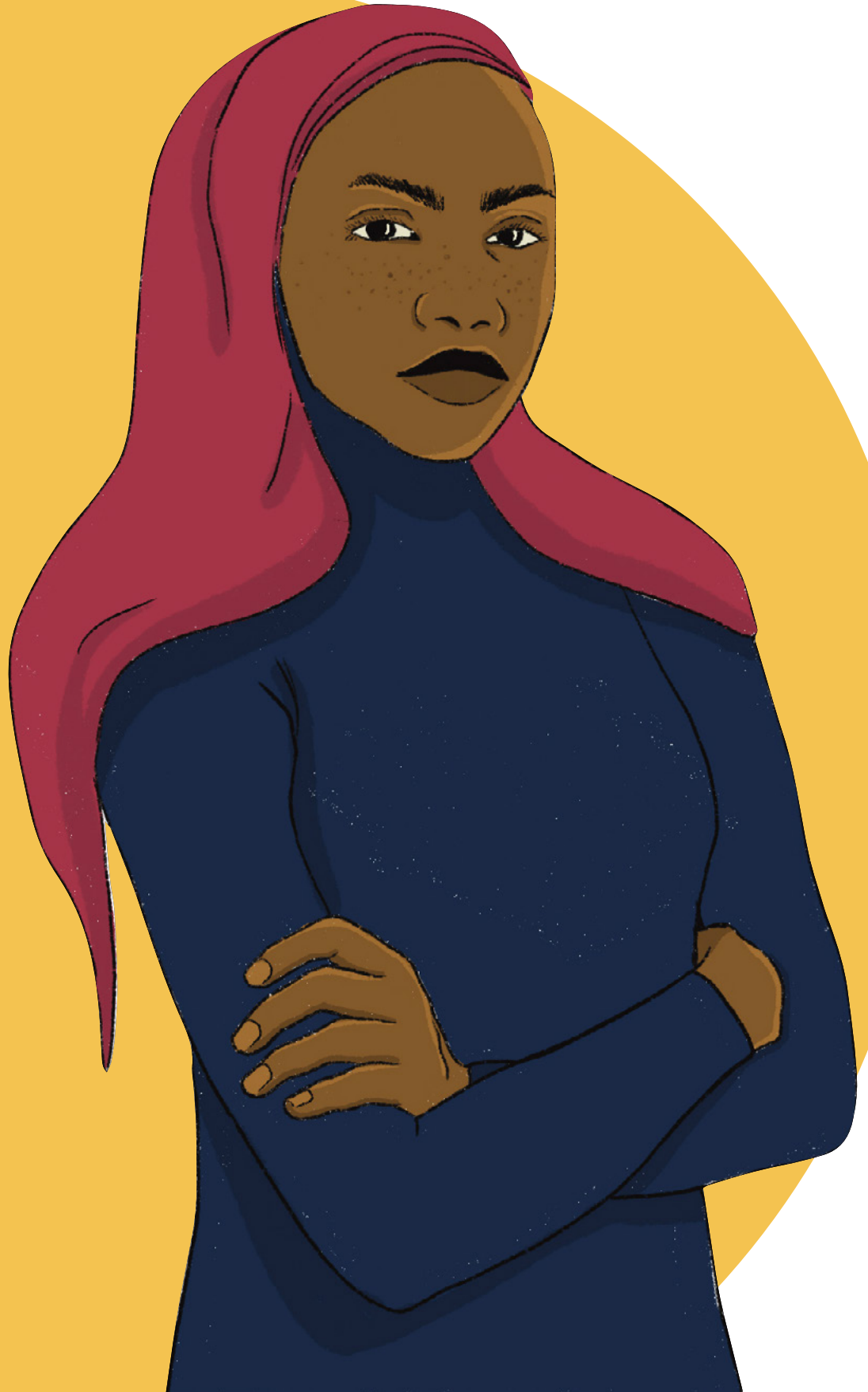
5. WOMEN'S STRATEGIES FOR NAVIGATING THE GENDER, CONFLICT, CLIMATE NEXUS

5.1. Community Protection and Defense Mechanisms to Resist Extractive Industries and Militarization

Across the world, women are at the forefront of resistance against extractive industries and mindsets, defending land, livelihoods, and environmental sovereignty in the face of corporate and state-backed exploitation. Their activism is not solely about opposing destruction but about asserting alternative ways of living and governing land based on sustainability, collective rights, and gender justice. Their struggles are deeply intertwined with broader historical patterns of colonial dispossession, gendered labor, and the systemic violence of extractive economies.

In Brazil, travesti environmental and gender justice advocates are building alliances with Indigenous and rural communities, as well as the Quilombola movement, which is a socio-political cultural movement led by Afro-Brazilian communities to reclaim ancestral land rights, preserve their cultural heritage, and resist racial and economic marginalization. By centering these diverse perspectives in climate justice, these activists reframe environmental struggles as deeply interconnected with gender, race, and colonial histories. Their work highlights how extractive industries do not simply destroy ecosystems but also reinforces exclusionary land governance structures that erase diverse gender, Indigenous, and Afro-descendant identities. Rather, than merely opposing extractive projects, these activists expose corporate "development" as a continuation of colonial resource plundering while asserting community-led, sustainable land management models.

Shifting focus from Latin America to Southeast Asia, the case of San Roque in Mindanao illustrates how systemic violence prioritizes land and profit over the rights and well-being of structurally excluded communities. Despite a legal victory in 2013, the community is still under attack by individuals who wish to seize and sell the land to private investors. They threaten, demolish, harass and don't even shy away from gun violence and nightly raids. The militarization of eviction efforts has devastated livelihoods with home stores and small businesses being forcibly closed, leaving families without stable income.

Women have become the frontline defenders of their community, not necessarily by choice, but due to gendered labor patterns that keep them within the home or community while men are employed in nearby factories and construction sites. Their presence in the community has placed them in direct confrontation with land-grabbers and armed enforcers. Women document violations, track the movements of hired aggressors, and organize immediate defense strategies, such as dismantling illegal fencing. As this case shows, many WEHRDs emerge "accidentally", forced into activism not necessarily or

solely by ideology, but by necessity. Their leadership challenges dominant narratives that frame women as passive victims of displacement and violence. Instead, their organizing demonstrates how gendered labor, environmental exploitation, and land struggles are inherently linked.

Across these cases, these women are not merely resisting displacement and violence, but building alliances and intersectional movements to reimagine governance, sustainability, and justice. Their organizing underscores the power of intergenerational knowledge, legal advocacy, and cross-movement solidarity in resisting corporate and state-driven exploitation. More than localized struggles, these movements expose extractive industries and mindsets as a global system of dispossession that sustains inequality through militarized land grabs, racialized environmental violence, and the erasure of Indigenous and women's leadership.

> **Ensuring women's safety and the longevity of their movements requires more than so-called community resilience. Stronger legal protections, intersectional and transnational advocacy, and alternative economic models are crucial in challenging extractive paradigms that prioritize the extraction of natural resources for export and profit, often with little regard for environmental sustainability, social impacts, or long-term consequences at their root.**

Militarization must be recognized as a deliberate strategy to uphold extractivism, and global climate movements must integrate anti-militarist strategies into their work while placing power and security of WEHRDs at the core of their engagement.

Case Study: Community Paralegals Defending Land Rights from Extractive Industries and Land Grabs in Mozambique

Across Mozambique, land represents more than just territory. It is the cornerstone of livelihoods, culture, and autonomy for many communities. When companies arrive, claiming large portions for mining, oil exploration or agribusiness, residents face significant challenges in asserting their rights. Mozambique's Land Law (1997) grants communities user rights, ensuring they can occupy and use land for subsistence and cultural purposes. However, these protections are often disregarded, as extractive industries bypass community engagement, negotiate exclusively with male leaders, and reinforce gender-based exclusions.

Recognizing the persistent threats to community land rights, Centro Terra Viva ("Living Earth Centre", CTV), a women-led organization dedicated to natural resource management and community protection, took action by training women as paralegals to bridge the gap between legal protections and realities on the ground.

For years, women were pushed aside in land negotiations, often unaware of their legal rights. With support from CTV, however, change is underway. "The communities I have worked with are now better equipped to defend their rights," says Isabel Dos Santos, a community paralegal from Mocuba. "In one instance, a community was at risk of losing its land, but they successfully protested using the knowledge they had gained from the awareness sessions I conducted."

Women like Isabel challenge corporate encroachment, advocate for fair negotiations, and empower their communities with legal knowledge. Jubeda Ismael, a trained paralegal from Ribaue district, explains her motivation:

> *"I committed to this work because I saw the value in what I learned—most people in my community lacked this knowledge, and I wanted to share it. There were many land conflicts, but through awareness sessions with community leaders, we have seen improvement. I educate people on their rights, particularly in resettlement cases, and guide them on resolving disputes. I also warn about the risks of lending land for food production, advising communities to set clear terms to prevent future conflicts."*

Through becoming community paralegals, women have not only defended their land but have also taken on leadership roles in community governance. By securing seats in natural resource management committees, they ensure that decisions over land use reflect the needs of the broader community. Their involvement strengthens accountability, challenges gender-based exclusion, and fosters more sustainable land management policies. For many, this work has also transformed their role in the community, earning them respect

and trust. Didiça João Ali Jalima, a paralegal based in in Ile District, Zambezia Province, describes her experience:

> *"I have been involved in various programs, particularly as an influential figure familiar with all the communities and their leaders. During the land delimitation process, I was the person contacted by the community to verify the accuracy and legitimacy of the process carried out."*

Legal processes designed to safeguard community land rights are often complex, expensive, and slow-moving. Without adequate legal representation, many communities struggle to assert their claims, leaving them vulnerable to corporate overreach. As Didiça shows, women paralegals have stepped in to fill this gap, ensuring that communities not only defend their land but also have a voice in decision-making. Rather than waiting for authorities to act, paralegals take a proactive approach and they educate residents about legal claims, organize resistance against forced evictions, write petitions and demand accountability from companies and government officials.

For these women, being a paralegal is more than a role, but a mission: "My motivation came from knowing that my work would involve raising awareness among other women to fight for their rights, given the inequalities we see in my community." Djetai Roby Maki, a paralegal from Moatize explains. Together with her colleagues, Djetai demonstrates that grassroots legal advocacy is a powerful force in resisting land grabs, strengthening governance, and creating sustainable alternatives to exploitative industries. However, for this movement to grow and remain sustainable, it requires long-term funding, policy reforms, and increased institutional support. Investing in women paralegals means investing in fairer land governance, stronger communities, and a future where land rights are upheld for all.

5.2. Women as Community- and Peacebuilders

Women play a fundamental role in building peace and strengthening social cohesion. Through mediation, advocacy, dialogue and grassroots organizing, they resolve disputes, build solidarity, and foster sustainable solutions to communities' grievances. Whether addressing land conflicts, defending natural resources, or supporting survivors of violence, women are leading efforts to ensure peace is not just the absence of conflict or armed violence, but the presence of equitable social structures, nonviolent conflict resolution mechanisms and skills, and cultural attitudes that promote justice, inclusion and long-term stability. These efforts reflect the principles of conflict transformation—not merely ending violence, but transforming the relationships, structures, and cultural narratives that underpin it. This approach values mutual recognition, participatory dialogue, and the co-creation of inclusive futures. Women's leadership in these contexts opens relational and political spaces where power is renegotiated, collective identities are reframed, and systemic injustices are addressed at their roots. From Brazil to the Philippines, and from Burkina Faso to Mozambique, women's leadership is transforming conflicts as we know them and shaping more just and peaceful futures.

In Mozambique, community paralegals have been instrumental in resolving land disputes exacerbated by extractive industries and weak governance structures. In Nigeria's Niger Delta, women have formed political associations and farmer cooperatives to navigate conflicts over land and water access, which are two of the most contentious issues in the region.

What Do We Mean by...

Conflict Sensitivity acknowledges that any intervention happens within a specific social and political context that includes existing tensions and power imbalances. Being conflict-sensitive means understanding this context, analysing how your work might influence it, and striving to Do No Harm—by avoiding actions that could fuel divisions or worsen conflict, and by minimizing unintended negative impacts.

Conflict-Responsiveness takes this a step further by actively including peacebuilding specialists and adapting strategies to respond to emerging tensions or conflict dynamics. It involves identifying and addressing the underlying drivers of conflict, while recognizing and strengthening local capacities for peace which is the relationships, institutions, knowledge systems, and practices that communities already use to manage disputes, promote healing, and maintain social cohesion.

Conflict Transformation goes beyond managing conflict to addressing the root causes of violence and injustice. It focuses on transforming the structures, relationships, and narratives that sustain conflict, while also building people's competencies to resolve their conflicts proactively, constructively, proactively and nonviolently. Conflict transformation promotes inclusive dialogue, shifts unequal power relations, and supports long-term, participatory change that fosters justice, recognition, and dignity for all.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, women-led organizations such as SOFFLECO have supported survivors of sexual violence, providing economic and social reintegration pathways. A similar pattern is seen in Burkina Faso, where WEP's work is instrumental in building bridges across host and displaced communities.

In Brazil, GOLD is building intersectional alliances between Indigenous, Black, and LGBTIQAPN+ activists to challenge environmental degradation and exclusionary climate policies while at the same time countering hateful narratives that perpetuate racism, trans- and homophobia. Similarly, in the Philippines, women resisting dispossession and displacement have faced militarized repression and criminalization, yet they continue to use legal petitions, media advocacy, and mutual aid to protect their ancestral lands. These efforts not only resist environmental destruction but also serve as mechanisms for conflict prevention and peacebuilding, ensuring that communities maintain control over their resources and governance.

The experiences of women across these diverse contexts underscore that with the right institutional support women gain competency and legitimacy in their communities to act as effective mediators in local conflicts, especially in disputes over land, water, and resources. Their involvement in legal advocacy, community negotiations, and paralegal training strengthens not only peace, but also gender justice and women's leadership at the grassroots level. Here, women's networks are essential for social cohesion. By forming cooperatives, advocacy groups, and mutual aid networks, women create inclusive governance structures that help sustain peace and improve livelihoods even in politically unstable environments.

> **By investing in women's leadership in peacebuilding, policymakers, donors, and civil society organizations can support more just and sustainable, community-led solutions to conflict.**

Women are not just victims of war and environmental destruction, but agents of change who lead the way towards inclusive, just and sustainable peace in the face of global crises.

5.3.   Gender-Just Climate Solutions in Practice

Women across diverse countries and cultures lead gender-just climate solutions by integrating sustainability with social and economic justice. They use agroecology to improve soil health, reduce chemical reliance, and enhance crop resilience. Reforestation efforts help restore degraded lands, prevent erosion, and secure communal access to vital resources. Through natural resource management, they advocate sustainable water use, defend land rights, and resist land grabs. These actions demonstrate that climate resilience is not just about survival but about shaping sustainable, equitable systems.

Research highlights how the ability to adopt these practices is supported by education, access to farming cooperatives, mobile technology, and extension services, as well as financial capital (see Connors, et.al., 2023 & Landicho, et.al., 2023). Coupled with the power

to take decisions for their households and communities, women embrace innovative techniques, diversify their livelihoods, and drive gender-just climate action. Investing in labor-saving technologies, financial access, and rural infrastructure not only eases domestic burdens but also enables women to fully engage in adaptation efforts.

Yet, while these grassroots efforts are vital, they cannot, on their own, counteract the structural forces of dispossession, resource exploitation, entrenched gendered violence, and a failing economic system. Without long-term support for these initiatives coupled with structural reforms, these efforts risk stagnation and being overwhelmed by a system designed against them.

> **Thus, women's leadership in community-based climate solutions must be accompanied by global economic reforms that dismantle exploitative financial structures, ensure equitable land redistribution, and prioritize community-led solutions over profit-driven extractive industries.**

This pattern is evident in multiple case studies. For example, while male community leaders in Mozambique have temporarily supported women's collectives in gaining farmland, these shifts do not necessarily alter systemic injustices. If gender norms, roles, and relations that limit individual women's rights to land, income-generation, and employment opportunities are not addressed, these gains can be easily reversed. In Burkina Faso, the shift to fast-growing crops in response to increased violence and looming displacement offers only a temporary coping mechanism. While it sustains short-term food production, it also drives down market prices, fails to address collapsing markets and infrastructure and shrinking access to land (Bene et. al., 2024 & Kafando, Sakurai, 2024). Without structural reforms that secure land rights, ensure equitable resource control, promote women's political participation and leadership, and social cohesion amongst fragmented societies, these adaptive strategies risk institutionalizing precarity rather than fostering long-term solutions.

Women's climate adaptation foster lasting environmental and social change. Their leadership in land stewardship, food production, and governance demonstrates how localized knowledge and collective organizing can strengthen communities. However, for these efforts to be truly transformative, they need to be matched with broader structural changes that address economic inequities, ensure legal protections, and challenge exclusionary decision-making processes. Supporting women's initiatives means not only investing in their leadership but also rethinking policies that perpetuate resource extraction, exclusion, and economic injustice. By aligning climate and gender justice, global efforts can move beyond short-term mitigation measures toward systemic solutions that foster long-term sustainability, equity, and justice.

Case Study: Women Advocating for Gender and Climate Justice in Burkina Faso

The Women Environmental Programme Burkina Faso (WEP BF or WEP) is leading the way in gender-just climate solutions, putting the power of advocacy directly into the hands of women farmers. "In Burkina Faso, women play a crucial role in food production and natural resource management, yet they continue to face systemic barriers to land ownership," explains a WEP team member. "Despite legal provisions, deeply ingrained customary norms remain dominant, restricting women's access to land as user rights only, which need to be mediated through male family members." Without secure access to land, they face significant obstacles in sustaining their agricultural activities, improving local food security, and fully participating in their communities.

WEP's approach is not about speaking for these women but about ensuring they have the platform, tools, mutual support and confidence to speak for themselves. Through the Food Sovereignty and Women's Leadership Project, and the Green Response Initiative dedicated to support communities to adapt to climate change, WEP works with women in Zinaire, Zorgho, and Koudougou who are engaged in agriculture and livestock rearing to define their own advocacy priorities, centering their lived experiences of land insecurity, climate change, and exclusion from decision-making. Women identified key challenges such as land grabbing, lack of legal documentation, and cultural norms that deny them land rights and are

particularly severe for widows. Instead of being passive recipients of aid, they took action to become the driving force behind change. WEP provided training on leadership, land advocacy, and sustainable natural resource management, equipping women with the knowledge and skills to push for concrete policy reforms.

"Land and women are the wealth of humanity. By facilitating women's access to land, we are preserving treasures for future generations," declared a woman farmer from Zorgho.

> *"We urge our customary and communal authorities to help us formalize long-term land agreements of 15 to 20 years, in line with Article 11 of Law 034-2009 on rural land ownership. This will enable us to fully participate in the agricultural sector, promote gender equality in land access, and increase our contributions to local economic growth."*

The women of Koudougou echoed this call. "Our participation in agriculture benefits our families and strengthens our communities," stated a representative. "Without secure access to land, our work remains uncertain. We need legal recognition of our land use rights so that we can continue to contribute to food security and local economies."

As the advocacy efforts gained momentum, women brought their demands directly to traditional chiefs, municipal representatives, and land officials. They called for clear legal rights, fair land distribution, and protection against land expropriation. Authorities acknowledged the urgency of the issue, committing to improving land access for women and strengthening governance structures to ensure their meaningful participation in decision-making. With this success at hand, the newly formed women's cooperatives are keeping the momentum alive, continuing to organize, advocate, and influence local governance. What started as a series of trainings has the potential to evolve into a grassroots movement with lasting impact.

WEP's work in Burkina Faso proves that climate solutions can go far beyond technical fixes and address structural inequalities and amplify women's leadership. The climate crisis is not just about environmental shifts, but about ensuring that those most affected have the power to shape solutions. When women define their own advocacy priorities and successfully push for policy changes, they don't just secure land for themselves. They pave the way for future generations, strengthening food sovereignty, economic and gender justice in the face of a changing climate.

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[11] Read more about Sabará's story and experience as a travesti WEHRD in the accompanying brochure:

5.4.   Addressing Environmental, Gendered and Structural Violence

When navigating the intersection of climate change, conflict, and environmental degradation, structurally excluded communities face disproportionate risks of violence, displacement, and economic marginalization. As environmental disasters, armed conflict and extractive industries expand, they amplify pre-existing inequalities. Yet, in every affected region, women and their allies have developed strategies of resistance and adaptation that challenge patriarchal, cisheteronormative, colonial, and capitalist models of environmental governance.

> **A key lesson across these cases is that women's leadership in climate justice movements is most effective when it is rooted in community-driven solutions and intersectional alliances.**

This is illustrated by another example from Mindanao, where the women of Agdao Laray Muslim and Christian Vendors Association (ALMACVA) successfully resisted displacement through collective organizing, strategic advocacy, and grassroots mobilization. After the Agdao public market had been commercialized, leases were too high for the women and they were confronted with looming eviction and harassment to leave. In response they formed an association to demand their right to sell without harassment. A friend and labor organizer connected them with others who encouraged them to register as an association and guided them in holding picket rallies, engaging local media, and lobbying the Davao City Council. Their efforts highlighted the threats and harassment they faced, shifting public opinion in their favor.

Their persistence led to a verbal commitment from the city government granting them designated vending spaces and regulated hours. While they continue pushing for formal documentation, their success underscores the power of grassroots organizing and solidarity. As one woman told the labor organizers, "This is thanks to you all," but they responded, "No, it's because of your unity that you won." She agreed, adding, "Yes, but without your advice, we wouldn't have known what steps to take."

What unites these struggles is the demand to redefine what counts as progress and who benefits from that progress. Throughout the case studies, women shared their experiences of how governments and corporations continue to measure success through economic growth, ignoring or sidelining the social and ecological destruction that comes with it.

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[12] Access the e-book publication from the 1st National Symposium through the following link.

As Brazilian Indigenous leader Cèlia Xakriabá reminds us during a powerful speech at Smith College, US:

"Many people, even those here today, think that cutting-edge technology is the answer, that the economic crisis and climate change will be resolved with it. But we always ask ourselves, what kind of new human do we want to create in order to resolve all this? What needs to be done for humans to feel responsible for slowing down climate change? What needs to be done to decarbonize politicians' minds? How do we restore people's hearts? How do we make more people take up this fight?"
(Xakriabá in McNee, Guajajara, Xakriabá, 2021, p. 14).

Women across the world are demanding a different vision of development: one based on collective well-being, rather than profit-driven destruction. They are restoring degraded lands, advocating for policies that recognize unpaid labor, and developing legal strategies that hold those who violate land, bodies and autonomy accountable. Their work offers a roadmap for confronting environmental, gendered, and structural violence not just in times of crisis, but as a permanent shift toward justice.

Case Study: Fighting Environmental Transphobia and Social Fragmentation in Brazil

In the face of environmental transphobia, a form of discrimination where trans and gender-diverse communities are disproportionately impacted by environmental degradation, excluded from climate policies, and often met with stigma and exclusion by environmental justice movements, Grupo Orgulho, Liberdade e Dignidade (GOLD) has emerged as a bold and visionary force for change in Brazil. At the heart of this movement is Débora Sabará[12], GOLD's leader, a travesti activist who has fought tirelessly to place the perspectives and needs of LGBTIQAPN+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Queer, Asexual, Pansexual, Nonbinary and other identities), Indigenous and Afro-Brazilian communities at the center of environmental justice conversations.

For Débora, identifying as a travesti is not just about gender, but a political and historical stance. In Brazil and across Latin America, the term has long been weaponized as a tool of stigma and exclusion. Yet within queer-feminist movements, many have reclaimed it as a powerful assertion of identity. Unlike the more Westernized notion of being "trans," travesti identity is deeply linked to race, class, and the specific realities of gender nonconformity in Latin America. Travestis have historically been denied rights, criminalized, and pushed to the margins of society, facing extreme violence and exclusion from housing, healthcare, and employment. Sabará embraces this identity as an act of resistance against colonial, cisnormative, and Eurocentric narratives that seek to erase the realities of Black, Brown and Indigenous gender-nonconforming people. At the same time, she is acutely aware of how these intersecting forms of oppression shape environmental injustices, particularly for those living in favelas, prison systems, and informal settlements.

It was this understanding that led GOLD to organize the 1st National Symposium on Environmental Transphobia[13]. This six-day gathering created an unprecedented space where travesti, Indigenous, Black, and Quilombola activists led the conversation, moving away from the dominant model in which environmental discussions are controlled by academics, NGOs, and policymakers. The event was designed not only as a forum for debate but as a strategic space for movement-building, where different struggles could converge, build alliances, and reinforce each other. Participants addressed the impact of climate disasters on gender-nonconforming and unhoused communities, Indigenous land struggles, the prison-industrial complex, and the role of LGBTIQAPN+ people in waste-recycling cooperatives.

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[12] Read more about Sabará's story and experience as a travesti WEHRD in the accompanying brochure.

[13] Access the e-book publication from the 1st National Symposium in Portuguese.

More than just an intellectual exchange, the symposium laid the groundwork for intersectional alliances across gender diversity, race, and indigeneity, defying the backdrop of state and evangelically promoted homo- and transphobia. Through dialogue and strategy sessions, the event helped bridge these movements, fostering a collective understanding of how racism, colonialism, and cisheteronormativity are deeply embedded in environmental policies and climate crises.

The event culminated in a profound spiritual offering to Exu, a symbolic act of opening pathways for justice that challenged the erasure of Afro-Indigenous cosmologies in environmental activism. This moment was more than ritual, but a declaration of who should be at the forefront of climate justice movements. By anchoring the symposium in the lived experiences, knowledge systems, and leadership of those most affected, GOLD and its' allies are building a movement grounded in the wisdom and resilience of the people on the frontlines.

For Sabará and GOLD, fighting environmental transphobia is more than an agenda—it is a revolutionary act of reclaiming space, knowledge, and power. Their work challenges the white, cisgender, and heteronormative frameworks that have long dictated environmental discourse, proving that climate justice is impossible without travesti, Indigenous, and Quilombola leadership. In that sense, the 1st National Symposium on Environmental Transphobia in Brazil was not only an event, but also a radical step toward building an intersectional, decolonized, and community-led movement for environmental justice.

6. ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DONORS ADDRESSING THE GENDER, CONFLICT AND CLIMATE NEXUS

The global landscape of gender and climate justice, as well as peacebuilding and conflict transformation, is shaped by a diverse array of actors and complex power dynamics. Bilateral and philanthropic donors have a critical role beyond financial support as they can bridge gaps, strengthen frontline agency, and drive not only inclusive but also transformative policy reforms.

Below are actionable recommendations drawn from this case study analysis, amplifying the voices of women, women-led CBOs, and WEHRDs who contributed to this study.

6.1. Strengthen Locally-Led Conflict-Sensitive Solutions for Gender and Climate Justice

- **Expand financial access for women-led CBOs** by ensuring funding for organizations of all sizes and legal statuses, fostering partnerships between registered women-led CBOs and activists without access to registration and financing, and removing bureaucratic barriers such as rigid reporting requirements and limited language accessibility.
- **Direct a greater proportion of funding to women-led community-based organizations,** especially those focused on the rights of women, girls, LBTIA+, rural, Indigenous, Black, and Afro-descendant communities.
- **Strengthen joint initiatives at the intersection of gender justice, climate justice, and peacebuilding** by supporting collaborations led by local and regional actors who are directly engaged in addressing specific conflicts within their regions, countries or communities. These organizations bring deep, context-specific knowledge, experience, and the necessariy relationships to be well-positioned to develop integrated solutions that reflect the realities of the interconnected challenges they face.
- **Prioritize funding for community-driven climate adaptation and mitigation efforts** that integrate Indigenous knowledge, agroecology, gender justice, and at least conflict-sensitive but ideally conflict-transformative approaches to create sustainable and transformative solutions.
- **Promote a gender-just, conflict-transformative transition from extractive industries** by investing in inclusive, sustainable livelihoods and community-led renewable energy. Support women's leadership and economic diversification for

conflict-affected and extraction-dependent populations. A conflict-transformative approach also anticipates new tensions, such as job losses or exclusion, and emphasizes inclusive dialogue, shared decision-making, and just transitions that address past harms and prevent future conflict.

- **Strengthen transnational** alliances between climate justice movements with a particular focus on movements based on Indigenous, racial, labor rights and gender justice by providing resources and opportunities to amplify voices of structurally excluded communities in global policy discussions, build transnational solidarity, and ensure effective feedback mechanisms that bring decisions back to communities.

6.2.   Protect Human Rights and Assure Accountability

- **Enhance crisis response and protection mechanisms** by establishing crisis-modifier provisions[14], expanding emergency response funds, and providing legal assistance for diverse WEHRDs and their communities facing criminalization, violence, and displacement. Additionally, invest in digital protection and safe spaces to safeguard their work.
- **Stand united as a donor community against shrinking civic spaces worldwide** by providing platforms for WEHRDs from diverse backgrounds, such as Indigenous communities, Black or Afro-descendant and LBTIA+communities, offering specialized support for structurally excluded groups facing persecution, and ensuring all interventions adhere to a rigorous Do No Harm approach.
- **Promote accountability through research and legal action** by funding the documentation of human rights violations against WEHRDs and their communities while providing legal assistance to hold repressive states and corporations accountable.
- **Dismantle border militarization, support climate refugees and WEHRDs** by reforming visa and funding structures to protect targeted WEHRDs and climate refugees and steer away from securitized migration policies.
- **Redefine risk and fund with trust** by moving away from a risk-averse approach centered on fraud and failure to one that acknowledges the personal risks faced by WEHRDs and funds from a perspective of potential and opportunity.
- **Divest from extractive industries,** and, throughout the transition, mitigate the gendered, environmental and conflict-related harm caused by extractive industries by implementing mandatory human rights and gender due diligence during the environmental licencing process and towards companies by ensuring conflict-sensitive and transparent supply chains, upholding free, prior, informed and ongoing consent for affected communities, and conditioning investment and financing on compliance with human rights, environmental sustainability, and do no harm standards to prevent land grabs, forced displacement, gendered violence, and ecological destruction.

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[14] Crisis modifiers are contingency mechanisms within development or peacebuilding programs that enable rapid humanitarian response to emerging shocks (e.g. conflict, climate disasters) without interrupting long-term goals. Aligned with the Humanitarian, Development and Peace (HDP) Nexus, they allow flexible budget use to meet urgent needs while maintaining program continuity and adapting to evolving contexts.

6.3. Transforming Governance and Policy for Conflict-Sensitive Gender-Just Climate Action

- **Strengthen gender justice and sustainability in funding mechanisms** by leveraging flexible, pooled[15], and long-term funding and climate finance for organizations and initiatives from local to global level working at the intersection of gender, conflict, and climate change.
- **Maximize the impact of bilateral and philanthropic donors and implementing partners** by closing funding gaps and promoting a more coordinated and strategic allocation of resources.
- **Enhance government's institutional capacities and accountability** by investing in state resources to move from gender-sensitive to at least gender-responsive approaches. Strengthen civil society's watchdog role by supporting efforts to monitor and hold governments accountable for implementing gender-just and conflict-sensitive National Action Plans (NAPs)[16] and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).
- **Advance legal and policy reforms for conflict-transformative gender and climate justice** by supporting research, legal, and policy initiatives that promote gender-just and conflict-transformative land tenure security, equitable climate action, and gender-just conflict transformation mechanisms, such as building spaces and competencies for gender-just and inclusive dialogue on land and related resource use, or mediation of land and other natural resource conflicts which is responsive to power inequalities.
- **Divest from militarized and securitized climate responses** by reallocating resources from military-industrial activities to gender-just and conflict-transformative climate finance, for example by investing in gender- and conflict-transformative natural resource management or community-led climate change adaptation and mitigation which are sensitive towards conflict- and power dynamics within communities themselves.

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[15] Pooled funding refers to a shared financing mechanism where multiple donors contribute to a common fund to support integrated humanitarian, development, and peace interventions. Within the HDP Nexus, it promotes coordinated planning, flexible resource allocation, and more coherent, conflict-sensitive responses in crisis-affected contexts. A similar model could be utilised for the Gender, Conflict, Climate Nexus.

[16] NAPs are country-led strategies that identify and address long-term climate adaptation needs, focusing on building resilience to climate impacts. NDCs are commitments submitted under the Paris Agreement outlining national plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (mitigation) and, in many cases, to enhance climate adaptation.

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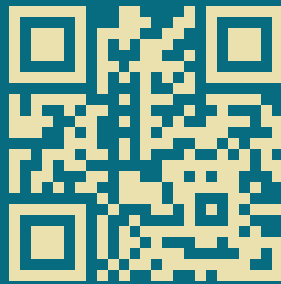
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