

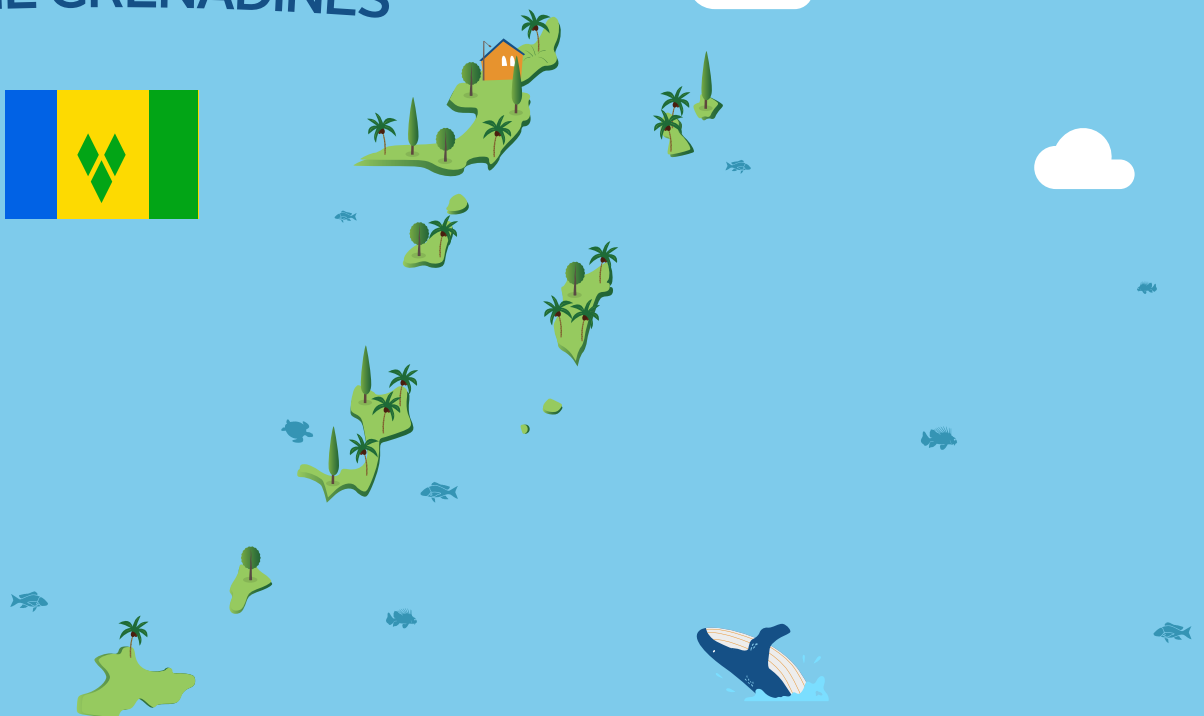


EnGenDER

Enabling Gender-Responsive Disaster Recovery,
Climate and Environmental Resilience in the Caribbean



SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES



Policy Brief

Gender Inequality of Climate Change and Disaster Risk in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

November 2021



Staff from the Ministry of National Mobilization (MoNM) through a partnership with the MCO deliver protection kits following the volcano eruption.

Source: MoNM Photos and UN Women Photo/Renella Thomas



BACKGROUND

The Enabling Gender-Responsive Disaster Recovery, Climate and Environmental Resilience in the Caribbean (EnGenDER) Project is funded by Global Affairs Canada and the United Kingdom Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, which is led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and jointly implemented by UN Women, World Food Programme (WFP) and the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA). The aim of the project is to identify and address any gaps to ensure equal access to disaster risk resilience, climate change and environment solutions for women, men, boys and girls in nine beneficiary Caribbean countries including Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG). The **two priority sectors** selected by the National Decision-Making Mechanism for SVG under EnGenDER are **agriculture** (including crops livestock, fisheries and forestry) and **water**.

In December 2020, the UN Women Multi-Country Office (MCO) Caribbean completed a review of the Gender Inequality and Differential Impact of Climate Change and Disaster Risk and Cost of Inaction for SVG. This study focused on the gender-responsiveness of climate change policies and strategies and incorporated a mapping of the coping adaptive capacities for key vulnerable groups through stakeholder consultation.

The MCO, in collaboration with the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) also completed a gender-responsive, resilience-building Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices and Behaviours (KAPB) Study in July 2021. This KAPB Study provided a better understanding of any institutional gender biases that are not captured in policy documents, which can influence the ways in which gender is mainstreamed in their work.

Results from both studies confirm that natural hazards and climate change impact men and women differently for a host of factors, which include their different roles and individual and family responsibilities, and policy development and service delivery by mandating bodies.

VULNERABILITY: A GENDER LENS

In SVG, over **60%** of the population live along the coast where coastal erosion threatens small businesses and beach communities (Government of SVG, 2014a). Of the total population, **48.7%** is female, and **51.3%** is male (Statistics Office, 2020). While agriculture is mainly practised on St. Vincent, fishing is a more common source of livelihoods in the Grenadines.



Currently, agriculture is responsible for **13.5%** of total employment in the country (UNDP, 2020). In 2012, the fisheries sector contributed to approximately **0.4%** of the gross domestic product (GDP). The World Bank (2020) reports that in 2019, women working in the agriculture sector in the country accounted for **4.7%** of total female employment, while men in the agriculture sector accounted for **15%** of total male employment, including the forestry, livestock and fisheries subsectors.

The main hazard risks for SVG are:

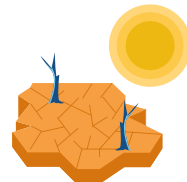
1. Increasing frequency and intensity of storms



2. Flooding/flash flooding



3. Drought/ water scarcity (worsened by climate change in the Grenadines where there is no/very limited surface and/or groundwater)



4. Volcanoes



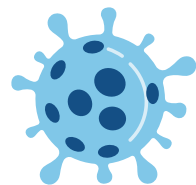
5. Coastal erosion



6. Landslides

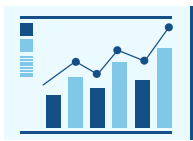


7. Health risks, such as COVID-19 and dengue



In recent years, multiple natural hazards have impacted both men and women who earn viable livelihoods in the agricultural sector. The Gender Inequality of Climate and Disaster Risk (GICDR) Study revealed that:

1. Sex-disaggregated data are often not captured; they may exist, but not in documented form



2. There are no specific data capturing in detail the gender or age inequality of risk or impacts from disasters



3. Government reports are often generic and do not always explore deeper structural issues resulting in gender inequality



4. Over 80% of farmers and many fishers do not participate in national insurance schemes



These observations indicate that risks do not exclusively concern hazards and environmental impacts, but also include the enabling environment or the lack thereof.

GENDER INEQUALITY ISSUES – CLIMATE AND DISASTER RISK

The agriculture sector

The structure of farming in SVG is highly gendered but also mixed, more so than fishing. Land tends to be owned by both men and women, but leased land seems to be dominated by men based on farmer reports. **Women farmers also significantly rely on men** for some aspects of the physical labour for agriculture production (use of equipment such as tractors, weed whackers, etc.).

Processing in farming, as in fisheries, tends to be largely female-dominated. However, men and women share **the market**, in contrast. This reliance on men for aspects of land preparation and harvest constrains women's capacity to innovate and use flexible solutions, although they have found alternatives such as swapping labour as a means of coping.



In the fisheries sector, wind and storm surges can affect activities and cause damage to assets and infrastructure (e.g. boats, cleaning sheds, traps and nets) and loss of or access to stock. Given the division of labour in the fishing industry in SVG, **these surges would more directly affect men than female fishers**. For fishers, this usually implies direct effects on income and the resources needed for a partial and a full recovery, and the speed at which this occurs. Although there is an increase in the number of women who are fishers, there is still a higher proportion engaged in the onshore activities related to fisheries, such as cleaning, marketing and sales, and managing the finances of the business.

Hence, **women are affected by knock-on effects**: low or no fish-catch restricts or interrupts the on-shore activities that women rely on for income and tend to dominate.



The water sector












Water and sanitation indicators for SVG in 2017 indicate that **95.1%** of the population have basic access to water, and **82%**, to basic sanitation. Outside of periods of emergency and disaster response, **women lead household activities related to storing and using water** (Mendoza, 2019). Where access is challenged due to service interruptions, the identification of alternative sources is often led by women.

Another gap identified by Mendoza (2019) is the limited gender mainstreaming in environmental management beyond basic notions of women's security (rights and participation) and, in only a few cases of leadership/decision-making. Little attention is paid to other elements of the gender framework (ecosystems, livelihoods, etc.) and the interdependencies between them. Table 1 presents the likely hazard impacts in the agriculture and water sectors.



















Table 1:
Likely hazard impacts in the agriculture and water sectors

 Hazards	 AGRICULTURE				 WATER	
	Crops	Livestock	Fisheries	Forestry	Infrastructure (supply)	Water demand
 Storms (increasing frequency and intensity)	X		X	X	X	X
 Flooding/ flash flooding	X	X	X (limited)		X	
 Drought/ water scarcity	X	X	X	X	X	X
 Landslides	X		X	X	X	X
 COVID-19/ Biological hazards	X		X			X
 Volcanic eruption	X	X	X (if flows reach coastal areas or ashfall pollutes marine areas)	X	X	X

Given the socio-economic dynamics of SVG, the gendered inequality of risk arising from the impacts of the hazards identified in Table 2 can be described as acute and persistent (X – acute, x – persistent).

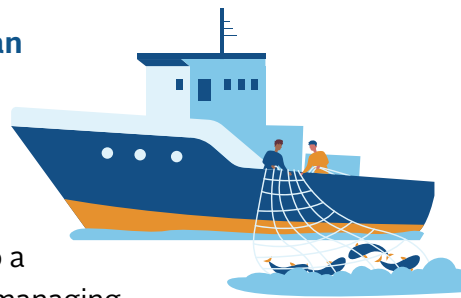
Table 2:
Potential risk from hazard impact by vulnerable group

 Risks	VULNERABLE GROUPS LIKELY TO BE IMPACTED						
	 Women	 Men	 Children	 Young Men Young Women	 Older Men	 Older Women	 Persons with disabilities
Physical risks from long-term shelter stays (e.g. sexual and gender-based violence)	X		x	x		x	X
Psychosocial risks from long-term shelter stays – depression, lack of privacy	X	X	x	x	x	x	X
Risks from school not being open			x	x			X
Risks arising from damages to water infrastructure and having to rely on external water sources – time use, physical stress and physical security issues	X		x	x		x	
Risks from the lack of a permanent shelter	X		x				X
Delays in social security payments and income support	X				x	x	X
Delays in programmes that provide critical support			x	x			
Risk of permanent job or income loss; risk of needing additional resources to retool	X	X			x	x	
Risk of human trafficking particularly due to temporary migration	X		x	x			
Discrimination in access to opportunities	X			x			X
Risk of increased care work	X			x		x	
Risk of erosion of adaptive capacity	X	X	x	x	x	x	X
Risk of physical injury	X	X	x	x	x	x	X
Risk of the loss of assets	X	X		x	x	x	X
Risk of the inability to repay loans	X	X			x	x	

 Risks	VULNERABLE GROUPS LIKELY TO BE IMPACTED						
	 Women	 Men	 Children	 Young Men Young Women	 Older Men	 Older Women	 Persons with disabilities
Risk of loss of insurance	X	X			X	X	X
Risk of lack of insurability (particularly fishers)		X					
Exposure to acute and multiple forms of risk	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

As a result of gender roles and responsibilities, recovery can mean different things for men and women in SVG.

In a fisher household, for example, for men, recovery means repairs to boats, nets and equipment, and efforts to get back out to sea to earn an income. For women, it means managing care in the household such as any injuries or health-related concerns of the children and the elderly, returning to a



sense of normalcy, including access to services, carefully managing household finances, and then anticipating the potential for processing once fishing resumes.



Children, also a key group in the age-differentiated inequality of risks, experience potential knock-on effects such as delayed academic advancement and lack of access to reproductive health services depending on age, and delayed matriculation. The regularity of impacts on schools also raises concerns about the adequacy of planning and adherence to quality standards.

Therefore, responsive and inclusive action on disaster, climate and environmental risk requires consideration of:

1. Vulnerable households and persons, and differences shaped by gender (e.g. single and older men with no social capital)



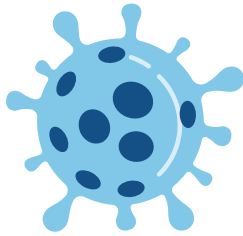
2. What it means to go to a shelter and how long people stay



3. The role of social organization and organizations



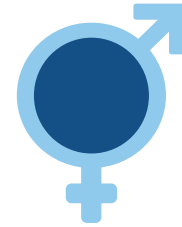
4. Forms of fragility and precariousness that COVID-19 may have exposed



5. Perceptions of risk and gender



6. The gender inequality of well-documented and repeated risks



Women attempt to cross a damaged pedestrian bridge post-2013 floods in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Source: GoSVG, 2014a



ADAPTIVE COPING MECHANISMS

The GICDR Study was also flexible and participatory, engaging 79 stakeholders in focus group discussions (FGDs). The FGDs were a mix of virtual/online and in-person sessions, organized according to stakeholder preferences, the limitations imposed by COVID-19, the availability of mobile phones, and internet connectivity.

In the fisheries sector, for example, the coping mechanisms included:





Persons with disabilities (visually impaired) attending the SVG EnGenDER Review Focus Group Discussion on 4 November 2020.

Credit: R. Murray

1. Support from family and friends (also an important source of coping for female farmers who highlight the value of their social capital, networks and organization) and from the Government;

2. Reliance on savings, which is different for men and women, and may explain why women assume a money management role in the fisheries sector and organizations.



Important nuances emerged in separate FGDs, some held with mostly male fishers some and exclusively with female fishers. Women fishers described having to negotiate with fishers for compensation after selling the fish at market. **Key coping mechanisms for fishers included insurance schemes and rainwater harvesting.**

The main concerns of the participants in the youth FGDs, some of whom were involved in agriculture and others in the electrical, food preparation and soft furnishing sectors, were: the effects of flooding and other natural hazards; the loss of electricity and internet connectivity; disruption in access to potable water; lack of financial resources to stock food in advance; and loss of mobility. The three main coping mechanisms identified by youth are:



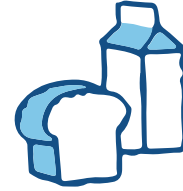
1. Practising lessons learned from family or at home, such as values and norms instilled while growing up (e.g. preparing in advance of storms)



2. Securing Wi-Fi or phone data to stay connected



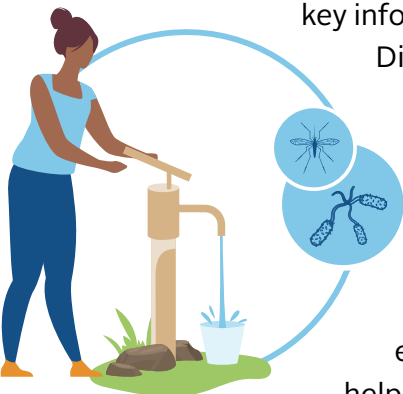
3. Securing food, rum and marijuana



With respect to differential exposure and vulnerabilities, it is not that climate hazards and external shocks always impact men and women differently, but that the smaller challenges along the value chain will affect men and/or women in diverse ways due to their participation and power in the dimensions of the value chain. For example, farmers who rely on value-addition may experience strong vulnerability in the processing chain during difficult times, such as during droughts and extreme temperatures (heat). However, processing fruits and vegetables by drying and producing juices also presents opportunities for coping and adapting, because it enables farmers to use fruits and vegetables that may not have been sellable and helps them avoid losses from smaller crop size. It also expands the shelf life of produce, including through cold storage.



Overall, the findings of the FGDs suggest that adaptive capacity is variable and that PWDs are being left behind, followed by youth, farmers and then, to a lesser extent, fishers. For example, a group interview with two male fishers and a key informant interview (KII) with two representatives of the Fisheries Division revealed a critical structural issue facing fishers – the inability to obtain insurance for their boats, a key asset to their operations.



The FGDs also revealed increasing concerns relating to water wastage, water storage capacity and incorrect water storage, which contributes to vector-borne diseases such as dengue fever. Some communities may experience a delay in receiving support and/or accessing specific types of help, depending on their location.



The feedback provided also suggests subtle gender differentiation in coping with climate and disaster risks. **Women seemed more prepared** because, as they stated, they would take immediate action upon hearing storm alerts (strong socio-cognitive ability) and stock food based on available funding. In comparison, **one young man stated that he would likely go the rum shop and drink**. In some ways, these responses were stereotypical and highlighted embedded norms, habits and traditions that shape how individuals cope with external shocks. Table 3 provides an overview of the gendered impacts.



Table 3:
Gendered impacts by frequency of hazard








 Coping mechanism	GENDER PROFILES				HAZARDS	FREQUENCY
	 Fisher (F) or male farmer (MF)	 Female fishers (FF) or female farmers (FFs)	 Youth (male/female, or combined) Youth (male/female, or combined)	 PWDs (male/female or combined)	 Storms (S), floods (F), landslides(L), drought(D), COVID-19 (C)	 Always (A) sometimes (S) rarely (R)
Vegetable gardens	F	FF	M		D, S	S
Changes to techniques (fishing or farming)		FF			D	
Insurance schemes	F, MF	FF, FFs			S, F	
Nature-based enterprises (e.g. handicrafts)			B	B	D	A
Labour swaps		FFs				S
Other jobs/income sources (temporary/long-term)			B	B	C	A
Migration internal, regional and international	F					
Rainwater harvesting	MF	FF			D	A
Remittances/support from family or friends	MF, F	FF	B	B	D, C, F	A
Savings		FFs, FF			C, D	

Figure 1.
Coping mechanisms identified by female farmers



Coping mechanisms for persons with disabilities

Although PWDs participate in both fisheries and farming to a limited extent, they face challenges that differ significantly from other groups. Their biggest challenge during disasters is the loss of electricity and phone communication, given that texting each other is a big part of their broader coping strategy, as is access to support provided by social organizations such as Voice of the Disabled and the National Society of Persons with Disabilities. Generally, PWDs tend to receive a range of support from the Government that covers basic living expenses, critical services as well as for accessing medical care. PWDs stakeholders participating in the first of two meetings described key coping mechanisms in the context of climate, disaster and environmental risk as follows:



1. Selling products made at their NGO-run centre, but limited access to markets;
2. Relying heavily on relatives or good friends.

THE COST OF INACTION

The cost of inaction analysis revealed varying levels of costs at the national, sector, household and individual levels across SVG. These issues are complex and interdependent, and can also be considered pathways to vulnerability, similar to the impact of COVID-19.

Estimates suggests that, over the last decade, losses and damages from climate-related disasters in SVG can be estimated at over US\$1 billion, and an increase in extreme weather events is expected to result in significant expenditures, which will further constrain SVG's social and economic growth. Table 4 below provides the estimated climate impact for the period 2025 – 2100.

Table 4:
Estimated climate impact and percentage of GDP, 2025–2100

Year	2025	2050	2075	2100
Estimated impact as a percentage of GDP	11.8	23.6	35.4	47.2

Source: ECLAC, 2011.

This scenario implies significant economic haemorrhaging in the economy, with even greater effects on certain sectors, particularly those reliant on recurrent financing for continued operations. Indeed, in some cases, climate change policies, plans and frameworks are neither fully implemented nor financed. The reality is that SVG cannot afford to pay for or replace damaged structures or systems, which further increases the country's vulnerability.



It has been noted that current national adaptation plans, both the main national instrument and sectoral ones, fail to connect gender, ecosystems, livelihoods, rights and governance in strategic or practical ways. Hence, the climate response, recovery and disaster response systems have significant gaps, and groups facing intersecting vulnerabilities experience challenges in accessing or receiving benefits from these systems. The fishing and farming sectors (and for the latter, women farmers specifically) are a case in point: climate variability and change potentially threaten food security, household income and livelihoods because they cause agricultural damage, increased food prices and disruptions to food supplies, and can lead to negative psychosocial impacts among farmers and fishers (Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA, 2014).

The GICDR Study also highlighted a number of inconsistencies among global and national commitments, education sector plans, and disaster management plans and frameworks, including operational gaps. This observation is visible in the disconnect between several programmes that aim to mitigate disaster risk, in the low uptake of available agricultural insurance, and in the barriers and challenges that women farmers face in pursuing agriculturally based livelihoods and income streams.



THE KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES, PRACTICES AND BEHAVIOUR STUDY

There is an assumption that individual knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours can influence institutional practices (and vice versa) and policies create the environment in which individual and institutions operate.

In addition to a policy institutional mapping, which identified the key policies and institutions (in the priority sectors) related to gender, climate change and disaster risk reduction, a survey including stakeholder consultation was carried out for SVG. Findings revealed that while women and men have equal rights in the workplace, there were a few areas for strengthening gender resilience.

Respondents to the survey indicated the following:



At the individual level



Although individuals perceive themselves as “gender champions”, there are knowledge gaps with respect to understanding gender and its concepts. For example, there seems to be a poor understanding of equality vs. equity.



Women are more vulnerable than men to climate change and disasters; therefore, opportunities for strengthening resilience must take the varying risks into consideration.



There are aspects of bias in gender attitudes. For example, some respondents believe that women should prioritize their family, regardless of the impact on their career. Respondents also believe that women are better at planning and multi-tasking than men. Survey results also revealed that there was high consensus that it is more important for a man than a woman to obtain a university degree and work outside of the home.

At the institutional level



There is evidence of limited awareness of the importance of gender considerations in institutions. Gender strategies and action plans are rarely in place.



The lack of disaggregated data remains the main barrier to gender being incorporated at the institutional level.



First responders receive protection kits following the La Soufriere Volcano eruption through a partnership with the MCO.

Source: MoNM, 2021

THE COST OF INACTION

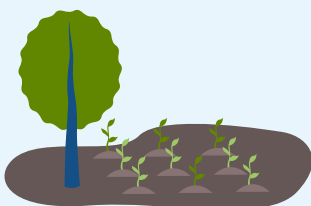
Several factors can be linked to this driver of gender-differentiated actions and experiences:



Women are more conscious of the realities of climate change than men. They are more involved in discussions and take more definitive action to respond; consequently, they are more resilient.



In the fishing industry, women are the ones who use their savings as coping mechanisms. They are less likely to own boats and do deep sea fishing, but they have multiple income streams – selling fish, food, fruits and vegetables, and gardening – while most men may just fish.



In agriculture, women are more organized: they have cooperatives and networks, and are involved in the entire value chain. Most men tend to focus on only planting and harvesting; during dry spells and drought, they “shoot the breeze” and wait for rain. Women work in the entire value chain. They are also more strategic in gauging the market and consumer needs.



Among PWDs, it is the women who organize the groups, look for support and lead product development; men tend to sit in the back both in the discussion groups and in the production lines



Among youth, young men are driven by money, which pushes them to engage in multiple jobs in various fields. Young women tend to be more selective of their activities and manage their finances with more prudence. Women tend to get involved in long-term activities, while men are more attracted to short-term, high risk, big money activities. These choices ultimately result in more abandoned old men with no social capital and little or no economic worth or networks

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- Greater stakeholder engagement, participation and leadership in addressing climate, disaster and environmental risk should also be taken into account, and gender and age equality of risk should be promoted.
- Bridging adaptation and mitigation can also be a positive for adaptation, particularly when it can reduce disruptions to key services that support and enable adaptive capacity and resilience such as energy and water.
- More detailed data are needed as well as more gender-specific studies to properly analyse and disaggregate the experiences, effects and impacts by gender.
- The commonality of impacts between some hazard events and the dengue outbreaks in Buccament Bay, Calliaqua and Kingstown is a red flag that should also receive further attention and suggests intersecting and multiple vulnerabilities for some communities in SVG that require a more location-specific response.
- Adaptive capacity is variable across key groups, and some common key areas are socio-cognitive learning (particularly for PWDs), assets and flexibility. Improved investments in these areas by the Government of SVG and its development partners would go far in strengthening disaster resilience.

REFERENCES

Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) (2011). An Assessment of the Economic Impact of Climate Change on the Water Sector in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. https://repositorio.cepal.org/bitstream/handle/11362/38579/1/LCCARL330_en.pdf

Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines (2014a). Comprehensive Disaster Management Policy. <http://nemo.gov.vc/nemo/images/PoliciesActsAndBills/FINAL-SVG-National-CDM-Policy-April-2014-MF-update-1.pdf>

(2014b). Rapid Damage and Loss Assessment (DaLA). https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/SVG_Rapid_DaLA_Report.pdf

(2020). Statistics Office – Online Statistical Database. http://stats.gov.vc/stats/?page_id=235.

Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) (2017). Country Profile: St Vincent and the Grenadines – Climate Change and Agriculture Policies, strategies and actions. Caribbean Climate Smart Agriculture. <https://bit.ly/2Jxqcmv>

Mendoza, P. (2019). Draft Background Paper – Toward Improving Caribbean SIDS policy, legislative and regulatory frameworks, implementation and monitoring and reporting approaches to gender mainstreaming into selected sectors of water resources management and climate-related events and disaster risk reduction. <https://bit.ly/3lsxwwAMendoza>.

UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) (2020). Human Development Report – online data portal. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/VCT>

World Bank (2020). Gender Data Portal, St Vincent and the Grenadines. <http://datatopics.worldbank.org/gender/country/st.-vincent-and-the-grenadines>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This Policy Brief was based on The Gender Inequality of Climate Change, Disaster Risk, and the Cost of Inaction Study for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, prepared by Leisa Perch.

The Brief was also based on the Knowledge, Attitudes, Practices and Behaviour Study that was done in collaboration with the IISD.

The Brief was prepared by Kyana Bowen, UN Women Programme Officer – Humanitarian, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Resilience; Barbara Hall, Content Editor; Sharon Carter-Burke, UN Women Proofreader and Publications Coordinator; and Shadé Richardson, UN Women Programme Associate; and Vilmar Luiz, Graphic Designer.



EnGenDER

Enabling Gender-Responsive Disaster Recovery,
Climate and Environmental Resilience in the Caribbean

