



## **Global Side event at the Sixty-Sixth Session of the Commission on the Status of Women**

### **‘Enhance Climate-Smart Agriculture to Empower Women, Build Women’s Resilience to Migration for Survival and Displacement: Good Practice from the Frontlines’.**

*Co-sponsored by the League of Arab States, the Arab Water Council and UN Women, Regional Office for the Arab States*

## **Background**

The planet is in a quagmire of multiple, related crises, with climate change and extreme weather events being among the biggest threats to development globally. With an average temperature increase of 1.5°C over pre-industrial levels in the Arab region,<sup>1</sup> and with projected increases by 5°C in some parts by the end of the century,<sup>2</sup> climate change presents a significant development threat to this region. While the number of disasters has almost doubled since the 1980s globally, their average number in the MENA region has about tripled in the same period.<sup>3</sup> Depending on the nature of the hazard and intensity of the disaster migration and displacement are observed trends in the Arab region, both as an impact triggered by climate change and disasters and where direct links are less obvious.

The Paris Declaration 2015, the SENDAI Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction 2015, the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, 2018, Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals make a robust pitch for conceptual and operational links and coherence across these issues to achieve sustainable development. Moreover, these instruments aver that the systemic drivers of vulnerability and impacts of these phenomena differ across heterogeneous population segments, sectors, occupations and geographies, and clearly identify women as a priority group whose structurally-determined vulnerabilities to these issues and capacities need to be addressed .

Women constitute almost half the population in the Arab region.<sup>4</sup> In their gendered roles and significant presence and role in the agricultural sector which is most sensitive to climate change, extreme weather events and disasters, women make a critical contribution to agriculture and development, including as migrants or ‘stay behind’ members of migrant households. Women

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the Regional Initiative for the Assessment of Climate Change Impacts on Water Resources and Socio-Economic Vulnerability in the Arab Region (RICCAR). See ESCWA and others, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / World Bank; 2014; Natural Disasters in the Middle East and North Africa: A Regional Overview

<sup>4</sup> Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. 2019. *World Population Prospects*. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://population.un.org/wpp/>

also contribute less than men to ecosystem depletion, greenhouse gas emissions, human-created disasters, in their domestic roles, as small-scale low-emission subsistence farmers, small livestock raisers, gatherers of forest products for subsistence, producers, providers and managers of food, water and natural resources, and as consumers of less-emissions intensive goods and services. Moreover they are front lines responders in disasters, and reliable transmitters financial and social remittances in crisis as migrants. Yet, their location at the lower ends of value chains in agriculture, manufacturing and other sectors and their disproportionate marginalization from ownership and control over material and non-material resources diminishes resilience to climate risk and migration for survival relative to men.<sup>5</sup> For example, Yemeni women do 60 percent of farm labor, 90 percent of livestock rearing and 10 percent of wage labour, but own less than 1 percent of agricultural land, and earn 50 percent less than men for comparable jobs. They were disproportionately impacted in the 2008 tropical storm affecting Yemen.<sup>6</sup> However, women, especially rural and indigenous women through their specialized local knowledge of ecosystems, have effectively reduce sensitivity to climate and related hazards by contributing to biodiversity protection, community resilience and effective adaptation.

### *Recognizing and Addressing the Region's Climate-related Vulnerabilities and Opportunities*

The Arab states have for more than a decade recognized the critical effects of climate change on the region, and have increased collective efforts to find common platforms to address the issue. 2022 presents added opportunities for action. Most recently and in the context of the 66th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, *Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction*, the Arab Regional Preparatory Meeting under the chairmanship of the Republic of Sudan, Chair of the Arab Women Committee (41st Session), and the leadership of the League of Arab States, and supported by UN Women ROAS issued its CSW Arab Declaration on January 30, 2022.

The Declaration recommended (a) enhancing women's economic empowerment and resilience in the context of climate change response, including strengthening regional cooperation through examining the possibility of the Arab League's adoption of a joint regional initiative with UN Women on enhancing women's participation in green and blue economies<sup>7</sup> and climate-resilient agriculture within the framework of "the Arab Network for Economic Empowerment on Women (Khadija);"<sup>8</sup> (b) Ensuring social protection for women and girls and food security in the context of climate change and disasters, with particular attention to economically underserved women, women in remote and rural areas, refugee, migrant and displaced women; (c) Achieving Peace and

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5 D'Cunha Jean; 2018; Presentation on behalf of UN Women on "Gender Inclusive Disaster Risk Reduction" at Working session 5 on Gender Inclusive DRR: Gender-sensitive DRR policies, plans and programs and their link to target e of the Sendai Framework in Africa and Arab regions: national and subnational/regional perspectives 12 October 2018 at Africa-Arab Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction: Towards Disaster Risk Informed and Inclusive Sustainable Development, organized by UNISDR, African Union, League of Arab States and hosted by the Govt. of Tunisia; 9-13 October 2018

6 FAO; 2018-2020; Strengthening Resilient Livelihoods; Plan of Action, Yemen

<sup>7</sup> The UN Environment Programme defines Green Economy as "one (economy) that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. and "blue economy" refers to "the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and jobs and ocean ecosystem health" as per the World Bank.

<sup>8</sup> launched by the General Secretariat in 2015, the "Khadija Network for Women's Economic Empowerment in the Arab Region" is the first regional network for economic empowerment in the Arab region. Work is underway to develop a regional strategy for the network.

Security and protecting women and girls from violence in the context of climate change; (d) Undertake research, studies and data provision on climate change and women's empowerment.

A ground-breaking initiative in the Arab States is the SDG Climate Nexus Facility under the aegis of the League of Arab States. The Facility adopts a nexus approach to addressing the structural drivers and impacts of climate change, disaster risk reduction and migration, within the sustainable development paradigm, including from a gender equality and women's rights perspective. With the Arab Water Council serving as the Technical Secretariat to the Facility and UN Women engaged as a key technical and operational partner on gender (among other UN partners on varied issues), there have been a set of initiatives undertaken to advance the nexus approach to these agendas from a gender equality and women's rights perspective

Among these are research findings by UN Women and AWC in the Arab region under the auspices of the SDG Climate Nexus Facility of the League of Arab States and the UN Women-authored Chapter 4<sup>9</sup> of UNDRR's flagship publication, "Regional Assessment Report (RAR) on Disaster Risk Reduction in the Arab Region," suggest a growing awareness of the need to link climate change, disasters and migration as linked agendas from a gender perspective, but serious 'know-how' gaps on the operationalization in policy and practice. This is manifested in continuing challenges in the generation of data and analysis on the gender dimensions of the fore-mentioned issues independently and as linked agendas; few policies and programs that are really gender-responsive and demonstrate linkages; need for greater multistakeholder and sectoral collaboration, and decision-making engagement of women across these agendas – to name a few. Consequently women's priorities remain largely under addressed in policies and practice on climate change, disasters and migration in a linked manner, compromising sustainable development.

Moreover the Arab Republic of Egypt will host the 27<sup>th</sup> session of the Conference of the Parties (COP27) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in November 2022, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) the 28<sup>th</sup> session in 2023. The first-ever Middle East and North Africa Climate Week (MENACW) between 28 February to 3 March 2022, will be hosted by UAE with support from UN and other multilateral and national agencies.

## **The Event**

It is against this background that the League of Arab States represented by the Arab Women Committee, Arab Water Council and UN Women will co-sponsor this side event in partnership with UN Women ROAS. The event is entitled, ***'Enhance Climate-Smart Agriculture to Empower Women, Build Women's Resilience to Migration for Survival and Displacement: Good Practice from the Frontlines'***.

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<sup>9</sup> Chapter 4 of RAR on DRR: "Vulnerabilities to and Capacities in Disaster Risk Reduction: Addressing Structural Drivers, Impacts on and Empowerment of Affected Populations"

## **Objectives**

- To demonstrate conceptual and operational links between climate change, migration/displacement, from an intersectional gender equality and women's rights perspective (focusing on the most vulnerable women)
- To showcase good policy and programmatic practice on these linkages in relation to climate-resilient agriculture for women, migration for survival and displacement
- To highlight areas and good practice enhancing women's leadership and decision-making on these issues as linked agendas

## **Participants**

The target audience includes representatives of Governments, including National Women's Machineries, NGOs, CBOs, research institutions, academia, think tanks working on climate change, DRR, migration/displacement and gender, the diplomatic community and donors, UN Agencies, members of international community, regional actors, and media.

## **Format**

The Arab State side event at the global CSW will be organized virtually. Simultaneous translation will be provided in both Arabic, English, French and Spanish.

The event will be in interactive question-answer format to panelists with conceptual, policy and community level experience in the region on the thematic focus of the event. Panel members will be drawn from multiple sectors and stakeholder groupings – government, civil society, private sector, and the UN.

Within the allotted time frame, the event will commence with Opening remarks by Senior Representatives of the sponsoring organizations, that contextualize the conversation. This will be followed by a co-moderated interactive question-answer panel session. An open discussion between panelists and audience will follow. A sum up of key messages/action points, and final acknowledgements to all will bring the event to a close.

**Agenda:**

**Date: 23 March 2022**

**Time: 9:00-10:30 AM EST time/4:00-5:30 PM (GMT +2)**

**Format: Global Virtual Event with Pre-registration required**

**Language: English with Arabic, French**

<p>9:00-9:15 AM (EST)/4:00-4:15 PM (GMT+2)</p>	<p><b>Opening Remarks Moderated by Dr. Dina Douay, Minister Plenipotentiary, Director, Women, Family and Childhood Directorate, Social Affairs Sector, League of Arab States</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• H.E. Amb. Haifa Abu-Gazaleh, Assistant Secretary General for Social Affairs, League of Arab States</li><li>• H. E. Dr. Hussein Al Atfy, Secretary General, AWC</li><li>• H.E. Dr. Maya Morsy. President of the National Council for Women in Egypt (TBC)</li><li>• Ms. Susanne Mikhail, Regional Director UN Women Regional Office for the Arab States</li></ul>
<p>9:15 – 9:55 AM (EST)/4:15-4:55 PM (GMT+2)</p>	<p><b>Interactive Panel Moderated by Dr. Amel Azab, SDG Climate Facility Project Coordinator, Arab Water Council (4 panelists)</b></p> <p>Questions will be aligned with objectives with an emphasis on operationalization, good practice and lessons learned</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dr. Salma Nims, Secretary General of the Jordanian National Commission for Women (engaged on climate-related policy issues from a gender perspective, and Phd on water management in Jordan Valley)</li><li>• Dr. Everisto Mapedza, Senior Researcher, and practitioner International Water Management Institute (IWMI), Ghana (working on gender sensitive community-based water security projects in countries of Arab region via private-public partnerships)</li><li>• Dr. Jean D’Cunha UN Women Senior Global Advisor, Informal Economy, including Labor Migration, based in ROAS (with research, policy/program work in Arab States on women’s climate-smart agriculture/green infrastructure (energy/water) &amp; mobility)</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Elisabeth Villagomez Expert on Gender and Climate Change developing a program on women in the green and blue economy in Arab region</li> </ul>
9:55 - 10:20 AM (EST)/4:55 – 5:20 PM (GMT+2)	<b>Open Plenary</b>
10:20 – 10:30 AM (EST)/ 5:20-5:30 PM (GMT+2)	<b>Summary and Closing Moderated by Dr. Dina Douay, Minister Plenipotentiary, Director, Women, Family and Childhood Directorate, Social Affairs Sector, League of Arab States</b>