

Making the Case: Key Gender Considerations for Addressing Development Challenges in Caribbean SIDS

Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are disproportionately susceptible to global and regional crises that hinder sustainable development progress and exacerbate the magnitude and scope of new and emerging developmental challenges. Loss and damage due to climate change impacts such as sea level rise, increase in disaster risk due to more frequent and intense natural hazards, water availability and other climatic impacts, as well as vulnerability to economic shocks, rising debt, scarce, and fragile resources and emigration all pose a significant risk to SIDS and their efforts to achieve sustainable development.

In the context of the Caribbean, stakeholders have identified these issues – coupled with loss of biodiversity, challenges accessing financing for the Sustainable Development Goals, poverty and hunger, education and access to opportunities – as primary challenges to the pursuit of sustainable development priorities.¹

Gender inequality is a pertinent factor at the core of these developmental challenges that can be overlooked in analysis and the crafting of legislative and policy solutions. Whether consciously or not, gender and other identity characteristics shape nearly all aspects of our lives, including how we experience social and economic issues, generating disproportionate impacts for marginalized and vulnerable groups that can be assessed through the lens of intersectionality.

Furthermore, many SIDS are signatories to human rights instruments that grant the responsibility of guaranteeing that responses to different issues take into account inequalities and strive to generate equal access between individuals of all genders to resources, opportunities, and rights in order to build sustainable, inclusive, equitable and resilient societies.

Intersectionality is an analytical tool which recognizes that the experience of systemic inequalities is shaped by overlapping social factors such as gender, race, and class. An individual's disadvantages and privileges in a given time and place therefore cannot be understood by examining elements of their identity in isolation. Rather, attention must be paid to the full set of power relations that impact them, including macro forces such as histories of colonization and poverty, and micro forces such as an individual's health status and the structure of their family or community.



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¹ [Regional Snapshot: Caribbean Region](#), United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Parliamentarians are key actors in the shaping of national agendas and can play an integral role in implementing and addressing the gender dimensions of critical developmental issues in the region. This document has been prepared to support parliamentarians in this work by providing introductory information, supporting data and resources on the gender dimensions of key issues affecting SIDS – namely climate change, crime and violence, debt, education, food security, oceans, sustainable energy use and consumption, water and sanitation - with a specific focus on the Caribbean. The information has been framed to provide concrete arguments that can be used to advocate on the need to apply a gender lens in examining these issues, and also highlights realities that must be considered in decision making to develop inclusive, effective responses.

On October 31-November 1, 2023, parliamentarians, representatives of national gender machineries, civil society representatives, and experts from 17 Caribbean countries and territories, gathered in Gros Islet, Saint Lucia, for a **multi-stakeholder dialogue** to consider opportunities to collaboratively advance the intrinsically interconnected objectives of inclusive and sustainable development, gender equality, and an end to violence against women and girls resulting in a joint statement titled, **‘Stronger Together: Propelling Sustainable Development, Gender Equality, and an End to Violence Against Women and Girls in the Caribbean’** issued at the meeting.

KEY SIDS-FOCUSED INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORKS AND AGREEMENTS

- [Barbados Programme of Action](#)
- [Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States](#)
- [SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action \(SAMOA\) Pathway](#)
- [The Bridgetown Initiative](#)

Parliamentarians have access to unique platforms and can promote inclusive, equality-focused actions on the topics in this tool through their legislative, representative and oversight work.

Among other avenues, they can:

- create and review legislation on topics with a gender lens;
- raise the gender dimensions of issues in parliamentary sittings, committee spaces and public engagements;
- follow up with ministers and other government officials on the implementation of international agreements; and
- engage directly with their constituents, women’s organizations, and other civil society actors on these themes.

The ParlAmericas tools below and other documents highlighted throughout this resource can provide further helpful guidance for taking such action in complement to this information in this primer.

- [Gender Sensitivity in Legislation](#): provides questions and other guidance to draw upon to incorporate gender considerations when researching, developing, implementing, reviewing and debating legislation.
- [Intersectionality](#): includes a checklist for reference when reviewing legislation, assessing budgets, providing government oversight and constituency representation to ensure your analysis is intersectional.
- [Navigating Online Information](#): contains guidelines and practical tips that parliamentarians can apply when conducting online research, highlighting sources for disaggregated data and information on gender equality themes.

*Recognizing that **all issues are gender issues**, these can also support in assessing the gender dimensions of any topics you encounter in your legislative work that are not covered in this tool.*



In the Caribbean SIDS region, crime and violence takes many forms, ranging from traditional armed conflict to gang activity, gender-based violence, transnational crime and piracy, illicit trafficking, and unlawful exploitation of natural resources.² These challenges have deep-rooted causes, including a lack of economic opportunities, longstanding social biases, urban exclusion, and the effects of corruption, among others.³ They also adversely affect lawful economic prospects and social outcomes, inciting trauma, fear, and insecurity across communities and leading to increased expenditures on crime prevention and resolution.⁴ To address these challenges, it is important to recognize that intersecting factors such as location, socioeconomic status, ethnicity and gender shape how people are impacted by crime and violence in the region.

Why is crime and violence a gender issue?

- **Crime has a disproportionate impact on and cost for women and girls.**
 - ⊆ Crime and violence have significant monetary and non-monetary costs, including lower levels of life satisfaction, the erosion of social capital, intergenerational transmission of violence, higher mortality and morbidity rates, and greater costs for medical and legal services, policing, prisons, foster care, private security and other response interventions (which also deviate funds from other development objectives).⁵⁻⁶ These costs have a disproportionate impact on women and girls as evidenced by the personal income loss, as well as the inability to carry out or increase in paid work and unpaid domestic/care work caused by crime and violence.⁷
- **In addition to crime and violence generally having greater cost for women and girls, a significant number of women and girls experience violence directly as a result of their gender.**
 - ⊆ Alarmingly, at least 46% of women in the Caribbean have experienced at least one form of violence in their lifetime.⁸ Globally, 10 to 52% of women experience physical violence at some point in their lives at the hands of an intimate partner. 10 to 30% of women report having experienced sexual assault from an intimate partner; intimate partners are the perpetrators of approximately half of all homicides of women worldwide.⁹
 - ⊆ Research indicates that violence against women and girls is causally related to beliefs that women occupy a subordinate role in society. Violence can be used to keep girls and women in their position of having less economic, political, and social power than men overall.¹⁰
- **Studies reveal that men and boys are predominantly the perpetrators of crime and violence in the Caribbean region, amounting to an estimated 80% of crime.**¹¹ This is further evidenced by the consistency in gang demography across the region: poor young men overwhelmingly make up gang membership.¹²

² [Concept Note: Peace and Security Challenges Facing Small Island Developing States](#), UN Security Council

³ [Security Challenges in the Caribbean: Threats, Migration, and International Cooperation](#), Evan Ellis

⁴ [Violence in the Caribbean: Cost and Impact](#), Heather Sutton, Laura Jaitman, and Jeetendra Khadan

⁵ [Exploring Policy Linkages Between Poverty, Crime and Violence: A Look at Three Caribbean States](#), ECLAC

⁶ [The Welfare Costs of Crime and Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean](#), IDB

⁷ [National Study on the Economic Cost of Violence Against Women and Girls in Jamaica](#), UN Women

⁸ [Caribbean Women Count: Ending Violence against Women and Girls Data Hub](#), UN Women, Caribbean Development Bank, and CARICOM

⁹ [Domestic Violence: Its Prevalence and Profile](#), C A Sewell, J S Martin, W D Ab

¹⁰ [Understanding Masculinities and Violence Against Women and Girls](#), UN Women

¹¹ [Exploring policy linkages between poverty, crime and violence: A Look at Three Caribbean States](#), ECLAC

¹² [The Masculinities of Gang Violence in Latin America and Caribbean](#), Adam Baird

- ⊖ Reducing crime and violence therefore requires a gender lens, not just to address the impacts on women and girls but also for young men, with consideration of factors of economic/social exclusion and the pressures of harmful forms of masculinity as drivers for participation in gangs or other criminal groups.
- **The existence of gender inequality and human rights abuses and violations provide a fertile ground for other crimes and organized crime to flourish.**¹³
 - ⊖ Criminality often emerges in a complex landscape of inequality and lack of economic, cultural, social, civil and political rights, with factors such as conflict, instability and depletion of livelihoods creating opportunities for - and potentially necessitating - illicit activities.¹⁴ Inequalities and marginalization are therefore closely linked to crime.

LEARN MORE ABOUT CRIME AND VIOLENCE AND GENDER:

- [Situation Analysis of Citizen Security in The Caribbean: A Spotlight on Gender Based Violence and Family Violence](#), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- [Violence and Discrimination against Women and Girls: Best Practices and Challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean](#), Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
- [Gender-based Violence in the Americas and the Caribbean: A National Perspective](#), Christine Brendel and Catherine Wolf
- [Latin American Model Protocol for the Investigation of Gender-related Killings of Women \(Femicide/Feminicide\)](#), UN Women
- [Crime, Gender and Sexuality in the Anglophone Caribbean](#), Lucy Evans and Dylan Kerrigan
- [Toolkit on Mainstreaming Gender and Human Rights](#), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
- [Caribbean Women Count: Ending Violence against Women and Girls Data Hub](#), UN Women, Caribbean Development Bank, and CARICOM

INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS AND FRAMEWORKS

- [A Framework to Underpin Action to Prevent Violence against Women](#)
- [United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols Thereto](#)
- [United Nations Convention against Corruption](#)
- [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women \(CEDAW\)](#)
- [Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women \(Convention of Belém do Pará\)](#)
- [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Section D: Violence Against Women](#)
- [Sustainable Development Goal 5: Gender Equality](#)
- [Generation Equality Action Coalition Blueprint on Gender-Based Violence](#)

¹³ [Toolkit on Mainstreaming Gender and Human Rights](#), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

¹⁴ *Ibid.*



Debt and access to financing in the Caribbean SIDS are important issues across national economies, households, and individual livelihoods. At the national level, due to a variety of historical factors,¹⁵ Caribbean countries carry some of the highest debt burdens in the world, with the debt-to-GDP ratio amounting to 82.3% in 2021.¹⁶ As a result, governments often adopt austerity policies, namely tax increases and cuts in government spending to pay for their debt commitments. Government expenditure as a percentage of GDP was predicted to decrease in 31 out of 37 SIDS between 2022 and 2025, which will not only exacerbate poverty and inequality, but also hinder economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁷ At the individual and household level, without access to finance, families and businesses are limited in their ability to thrive long-term and their day-to-day livelihoods can be severely hindered.¹⁸

Why is debt and access to financing a gender issue?

- **Austerity-oriented economic policies impact women and men differently because of their different positions and roles in the economy, both market (paid) and non-market (unpaid).**
 - ⊆ In the Caribbean SIDS, statistically, women are overrepresented in the public sector – an area which is more likely to experience budgetary cuts when government spending is decreased. Women are also the majority of workers in the informal economy and in non-standard forms of employment¹⁹ where they face disadvantages because of the limited coverage of existing social security systems.²⁰ Studies further report that single women in the Caribbean SIDS have lower financial resilience to withstand economic shocks.²¹ Consequently, austerity measures to address debt can result in a loss of income, employment, access to social services, and welfare benefits for women.
- **Women have disproportionately less access, control and ownership to productive assets such as financial credit, land and property.**
 - ⊆ Research reveals that there are positive linkages between access to property and economic and social opportunities. Data reveals that women farmers are at a disadvantage as they have little to no control over land and other productive assets.²² This hinders women’s ability to experience the financial security benefits of land ownership, which result from the appreciation of land value over time, the ability to increase access to credit by using land as collateral, and the opportunities land presents to generate income from productive activities like agriculture.²³

¹⁵ More information on factors that have driven debt accumulation in the Caribbean, as well as policies for more sustainable fiscal management, is available through the Inter-American Development Bank’s [Economic Institutions for a Resilient Caribbean](#).

¹⁶ [Regional Macro-Economic & Debt Statistics](#), Caribbean Policy Development Centre, 2021

¹⁷ [Riders on the storm - How debt and climate change are threatening the future of small island developing states](#), European Network on Debt and Development

¹⁸ [Financial Inclusion](#), World Bank

¹⁹ “[A]n umbrella term for different employment arrangements that deviate from standard employment. They include temporary employment; part-time and on-call work; temporary agency work and other multiparty employment relationships; as well as disguised employment and dependent self-employment” ([ILO](#))

²⁰ [Social Protection](#), ILO

²¹ [Are women worse off after 2020?](#), IDB

²² [The gender gap in land right](#), FAO

²³ [Increasing Women’s Ownership and Control of Productive Assets](#), World Bank

- **Women entrepreneurs have long faced barriers in accessing finance for business creation and growth and are less likely to successfully access debt and equity financing than men.²⁴**
 - ⊖ The International Finance Corporation estimates that approximately 65% of women-led small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in developing economies are either unserved or underserved financially. This is despite women-owned businesses accounting for approximately 40% of the world's 340 million informal micro, small and medium enterprises and one-third of the 40 million formal SMEs. A projected 112 million women business owners also employ at least one other person in their business. As a major force in the global economy, allowing these businesses to thrive and grow by ensuring access to credit will further strengthen their impact and support sustainable development.²⁵
 - ⊖ In data from six Caribbean SIDS, approximately half to two-thirds of all women-owned and/or -operated firms reported that a major constraint to business operations was credit access such as high collateral requirements.²⁶
- **Women more generally face barriers with respect to financial institutions and are 20% less likely to have a bank account.²⁷**
 - ⊖ According to UN Women, this may be attributed to factors such as a lack of sufficient income or long distance from the physical location of a financial service provider. Reports reveal that a person may opt out of creating a saving account because the amount the person wants to save is lower than the cost of transportation (measured in terms of time and money).²⁸
- **Public sector spending is known to generate progress in social, economic and productive infrastructure and other development gains,²⁹ however reports reveal that financing in Small Island Developing States (SIDS) remains below the levels needed to advance the Sustainable Development Goals.³⁰**

²⁴ [Women entrepreneurs face greater barriers than male entrepreneurs in accessing funding](#), OECD

²⁵ [How We All Benefit When Women Have Access to Finance](#), OECD

²⁶ [Improving access to finance for women entrepreneurs and smaller enterprises crucial for the Caribbean](#), IDB

²⁷ [Finance For All Women](#), UN Women

²⁸ [Ibid.](#)

²⁹ [Primer on Development Finance in Latin America and the Caribbean](#), ParlAmericas

³⁰ [Finance for development for Small Island Developing States Report](#), UN OHRLLS

LEARN MORE ABOUT DEBT, ACCESS TO FINANCE, AND GENDER:

- [Financing for Development and Small Island Developing States: A Snapshot and Ways Forward](#), UNDP
- [Rethinking Fiscal](#), IMF
- [Financing the Blue Economy](#), Caribbean Development Bank
- [Finance for all Women](#), UN Women
- [Women's Financial Inclusion: Keys to a Transformative Post-COVID-19 Economic Recovery in Latin America and the Caribbean](#), UN Women
- [Primer on Development Finance in Latin America and the Caribbean](#), ParIAmericas

INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS RELATED TO DEBT, ACCESS TO FINANCE, AND GENDER:

- [Article 13 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#)
- [Montreal Principles on Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)



Across Caribbean SIDS, education is a strong pillar for the growth of community well-being and socio-economic resiliency. In addition to the economic benefit of increased human capital, it also helps produce an informed citizenry, which in turn enhances their ability to exercise their human and political rights and adapt to changing environments.³¹ However, there are still major deficits to guaranteeing inclusive, equitable and quality education in the region across both urban and rural areas – challenges which have been compounded by the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.³² The achievement of gender equality and sustainable development can be facilitated by ensuring that all students have equal opportunities and access to education, are supported in fulfilling their potential in any subject area of their choosing, and have critical thinking skills for recognising and taking action in the face of inequalities.

Why is education a gender issue?

- **Educational institutions are agents of socialization that have the ability to reinforce or transform gender norms and roles.**
 - ⊆ The reinforcement of traditional gender norms and roles through students' experiences in school, the subjects they focus on, and specifically what they learn about gender equality can either counteract or perpetuate social, economic and political inequalities that result in women and men having different degrees of access to power and decision-making in both private spaces (households) and public spaces (public institutions).³³
 - ⊆ In addition to addressing the ways that gender biases manifest in educational systems, incorporating learning specifically on gender equality and the harms of gender stereotypes and biases - such as through Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) - can be a practical way for schools to contribute to changing norms.
- **In Caribbean SIDS, statistics demonstrate boys' comparative under-participation in school through lower net school enrolment and higher dropout rates.³⁴**
 - ⊆ Many Caribbean countries have reached gender parity in enrollment at the primary and lower secondary levels, but a divergence appears at the upper secondary and tertiary levels, with boys having higher dropout rates than girls and girls performing better on the Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate examinations.³⁵
 - ⊆ Research suggests that this is, in part, due to socialization processes of young men in particular whereby formal education is not seen as the best means for securing a career and livelihood.³⁶ Opportunities presented by criminal activity or other fields to earn revenue more quickly may be more appealing to boys,³⁷⁻³⁸ who are also socialized to have higher levels of risk tolerance.
- **The subjects students choose or are encouraged to study, as well as classroom materials, can reflect gender biases and stereotypes.**

³¹ [Education Inequalities in Latin America and the Caribbean](#), Fernández, Pagés, Szekely, and Acevedo

³² [Inclusion and Education in the Caribbean: A Factsheet based on Findings from the 2020 Global Education Monitoring Report Latin America and the Caribbean](#), UNESCO

³³ [Gender, Development and Education in Caribbean SIDS](#), Commonwealth Education Partnerships 2014/15

³⁴ [Integrating Gender Equality into Education and Training Sector Operations](#), Caribbean Development Bank

³⁵ [Educational Underachievement Among Boys and Men](#), The World Bank

³⁶ [Caribbean and Pacific Islands: A Survey of Gender Budgeting Efforts](#), Christie, T. and Thakur, D.

³⁷ [Educational Underachievement Among Boys and Men](#), The World Bank

³⁸ [Integrating Gender Equality into Education and Training Sector Operations](#), Caribbean Development Bank

- ⊖ School environments may perpetuate traditional gender roles through the examples and materials provided in textbooks, methodological approaches, and discussions. Gender stereotypes can also be present in the performance and attitudes of the students, teaching approaches, and teacher-student interaction.³⁹
- ⊖ In the majority of countries in the Latin America and Caribbean region, the proportion of women graduates of STEM studies does not exceed 40%. The fields with the most critical gaps are engineering, industry, and construction (with women’s participation at 30.8% in higher education enrollment in 2019) and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs; with women’s participation at 18% in 2019).⁴⁰
- **Young women continue to face higher levels of unemployment and are underpaid as compared to young men, despite women and girls’ greater participation and performance in education spaces (including at tertiary levels).**
 - ⊖ Data from six Caribbean SIDS countries found that women are more educated than men but are employed at lower rates. This suggests that women’s educational participation and attainment have not fully translated to economic opportunities and that the labour market still favours men.⁴¹
 - ⊖ Research finds that, although girls and women in the Caribbean have higher levels of educational participation, they still receive less pay due to occupational segregation in the labour market and unequal pay for equal work.⁴²

INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS RELATED TO EDUCATION:

- [Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education](#)
- [SDG 4: Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Promote Lifelong Learning Opportunities for All](#)
- [Article 26 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights](#)
- [Article 28 of the UN Convention of the Rights of a Child](#)
- [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Section B: Education and Training of Women](#)

LEARN MORE ABOUT EDUCATION AND GENDER:

- [Gender Gaps in the English-speaking Caribbean: Education, Skills, and Wages](#), IDB
- [Gender Differentials in Caribbean Education Systems](#), Commonwealth Education Partnership
- [Report: “I Learn Best When...” Women and Girls in the Caribbean Share on Int. Day of Education](#), CIWiL
- [Has Learning Become Taboo and is Risk-taking Compulsory for Caribbean Boys?](#) David Plummer
- [Beijing +25 Online Course: Women and Poverty, Education and Training, and the Economy](#), Barbara Bailey

³⁹ [Integrating Gender Equality into Education and Training Sector Operations](#), Caribbean Development Bank

⁴⁰ [Bridging the Gender Digital Divide is Critical to Achieve Women’s Autonomy and Substantive Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean](#), ECLAC

⁴¹ [Addressing Gender Disparities in Education and Employment](#), ECLAC Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean

⁴² [Integrating Gender Equality into Education and Training Sector Operations](#), Caribbean Development Bank



The proliferation of digital technology advancements is simultaneously creating new opportunities and challenges for Caribbean SIDS. These advancements can stimulate economic diversification, bridge information gaps, strengthen the resiliency of states to climate vulnerabilities, and improve overall living standards in the region.⁴³ However, the access, ownership, and use of these digital tools is affected by – and can also exacerbate – existing inequalities within society, a phenomenon which scholars refer to as the digital divide.⁴⁴

Why is digital transformation a gender issue?

- **Women have more precarious access to the internet, which is attributed to factors such as the quality and regularity of their connections and access to appropriate devices:** four out of ten women in the Latin America and the Caribbean region are not connected to the internet and/or cannot afford connectivity.⁴⁵
 - ⊆ The digital gender divide in access is further influenced by location and other characteristics. For example, rural women encounter lower levels of connectivity than urban women,⁴⁶ and low-income households are less likely to have access to the internet.⁴⁷
 - ⊆ Further, 46% of the region's children aged 5-12 live in households that are not connected to the internet.⁴⁸
- **Women have less training on digital technologies and are less confident in their digital technology skills,⁴⁹ which can leave them less equipped to leverage the digital and technical innovations for personal and professional development.⁵⁰**
 - ⊆ This trend is noted across various levels of ICT skills: women are 25% less likely to use ICTs for basic purposes and are four times less likely than men to have advanced ICT skills.⁵¹
 - ⊆ Inequalities in the access to and use of ICTs can also hinder access to essential services that require use of a web-based platform to register or make use of services or that are advertised to the public through these platforms. This can further exacerbate already-existing social and economic issues.⁵²
- **Globally, women are gravely under-represented in ICT jobs, top management, and academic careers, with men being four times more likely than women to be ICT specialists.⁵³**
 - ⊆ Research has further found that, on average, only 0.5% of girls aged 15 wish to become ICT professionals, compared to 5% of boys. This is attributed to students' attitudes and confidence in their own capabilities,

⁴³ Small Island Developing States (SIDS), ITU

⁴⁴ Gender Equality in Digitalization, UNDP

⁴⁵ Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Autonomy in the Digital Era: Contributions of Education and Digital Transformation in Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC

⁴⁶ Digital Rural Gender Divide in Latin America and the Caribbean, Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA)

⁴⁷ Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Autonomy in the Digital Era, ECLAC

⁴⁸ How Can We Ensure the Inclusion of Women and Girls in Digital Development in Latin America and the Caribbean?, Equal Measures 2030 and CLADEM

⁴⁹ Latin America and Caribbean Need to Reduce Gender Gap in Digital Transformation, IDB

⁵⁰ Enhancing Gender Equality in Technology in SIDS, Green Policy Platform

⁵¹ Gender Equality in Digitalization, UNDP

⁵² Digital for Caribbean Development: A Discussion Paper, Caribbean Development Bank

⁵³ Bridging the Digital Gender Divide, OECD

caused or fueled societal and parental biases and expectations about the youths' futures, rather than innate differences in aptitudes.⁵⁴

- **Women and girls are more vulnerable to the harms of digital technologies, as digital tools can also facilitate abuses such as technology-facilitated gender-based violence.**
 - ⊖ Studies have found that women in the Caribbean are increasingly victims of cyber-attacks, particularly via online shopping and other social media activities, stalking and trafficking resulting from cyber activities, sexual harassment, and the emergence of new forms of violence against women and girls, such as non-consensual image sharing and harassment of women in virtual spaces.⁵⁵
- **The rapid expansion of artificial intelligence technologies and tools can pose specific challenges for women's work and efforts to achieve equality if the issue is not approached with a gender perspective.**
 - ⊖ Research shows that current AI tools often perpetuate (and even scale and amplify) pre-existing inequalities, biases, and stereotypes based on gender, ethnicity, race, social class, and place of origin, among other factors. For example, these tools may associate names that are seen as gendered with traditional roles and to generate sexist or homophobic content in response to prompts to complete sentences about a person's gender or sexual identity (e.g. "The woman...", "The gay man...").⁵⁶ As tools that are created by humans, the content they generate can reflect the same biases humans carry – even unknowingly – if this is not consciously prevented. Ethical processes must be applied to AI development to avoid replicating these harms and perpetuating unfair decision-making, systematic exclusions or restrictive gender norms.⁵⁷
 - ⊖ Women represent only 29% of science research and development positions globally, meaning they are unlikely to be the individuals currently benefitting less from the expansion of this sector.⁵⁸ Further, the share of women globally whose jobs will potentially be affected by automation through AI is more than double that of men, and it is policy and regulatory choices that will determine if this technology augments and supports these women workers, or if it replaces them in their roles.⁵⁹

INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS AND FRAMEWORKS

- [SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action \(SAMOA\) Pathway](#)

LEARN MORE ABOUT GENDER AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

- [Closing the Digital Divide: Supporting Vulnerable Countries](#), UN OHRLLS
- [Gender, Digital Transformation and Artificial Intelligence](#), UNIDO
- [Small Island Developing States \(SIDS\) and ICTs, Mid-term review of the Samoa Pathway](#), ITU

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ [Protecting Caribbean Women in Digital Spaces](#), UN

⁵⁶ [Challenging Systematic Prejudices: An Investigation into Bias Against Women and Girls in Large Language Models](#), UNESCO and IRCAI

⁵⁷ [Artificial Intelligence and Gender Equity: A Reflection of Our Societies](#), IDB

⁵⁸ [The Effects of AI on the Working Lives of Women](#), UNESCO, OECD, IDB

⁵⁹ [Generative AI and Jobs: A Global Analysis of Potential Effects on Job Quantity and Quality](#), ILO



Caribbean SIDS face unique challenges in the prevention and management of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), which are considered the world's leading cause of death.⁶⁰ According to a report by the World Health Organization, persons between ages 30 and 70 residing in Caribbean SIDS have more than a 15% risk of premature death from NCDs such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, or chronic respiratory disease.⁶¹ This is due in part to the region's dependence on imported foods, commercial influences, and the climate crisis.⁶² Mental health is also an increasingly important and yet still often neglected issue across the region's diverse communities.⁶³ During the COVID-19 pandemic, healthcare inadequacies were exacerbated, as further pressure was placed on already strained systems.⁶⁴

Why is health a gender issue?

- **Gender has varying implications on one's health over a lifetime, influencing an individual's experiences, exposure and vulnerability to sickness and/or diseases and access to health care and health services.**
 - ⊖ Harmful gender norms affect the health of men and boys by encouraging risk-taking and limiting health-seeking behaviors.⁶⁵ This is evident from 2019 data showing that Caribbean men's risk of dying from exposure to mechanical forces was 6.9 times higher, road injuries were 4.8 times greater, 4.6 times greater for interpersonal violence, and 1.8 times greater for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and for trachea, bronchus, and lung cancers.⁶⁶
 - ⊖ Statistics show that women of the Caribbean are 60% more likely to have diabetes than men and twice as likely to be obese.⁶⁷ Despite this, men have statistically higher mortality rates from NCDs at every age due to lower health service user rates in comparison to women and worse control of chronic conditions.⁶⁸
 - ⊖ Studies reveal that gender-related power imbalances in Caribbean SIDS contribute to health issues for women resulting from experiences of gender-based and sexual violence which include risks of pain, suicide attempts, and difficulty performing daily activities.⁶⁹
 - ⊖ In the Caribbean subregion, the 2019 life expectancy at birth was 69.6 for males and 74.1 for females. In the same year, the risk of death for Caribbean men between the ages of 15 and 34 was significantly greater than for women: 4.5 times larger for violent altercations, 3.6 times greater for traffic injuries, and 6.9 times greater for exposure and impact of inanimate objects.⁷⁰

⁶⁰ [Small Islands Agree Bold Plan of Action on Health and Climate Crises](#), PAHO

⁶¹ [Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health in Small Island Developing States](#), WHO

⁶² [Small Islands Agree Bold Plan of Action on Health and Climate Crises](#), PAHO

⁶³ [Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health in Small Island Developing States](#), WHO

⁶⁴ [Small Island Developing States Accelerate Action to Tackle Biggest Killers](#), WHO

⁶⁵ [Promoting Gender Equality through Health](#), US AID

⁶⁶ [Masculinities and Men's Health in the Caribbean](#), PAHO

⁶⁷ [NCDs in the Caribbean Fact Sheet](#), One Caribbean Health

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ [Caribbean Women Count: Ending Violence against Women and Girls Data Hub](#), CARICOM, CDB, and UN Women

⁷⁰ [Masculinities and Men's Health in the Caribbean](#), PAHO

- **Though rates vary within the Caribbean SIDS, reports reveal that men and boys are more likely to die by suicide.**^{71,72,73}
 - ⊆ Research posits that harmful gender norms associated with certain traditional forms of masculinity put men at increased risk for self-harm.⁷⁴ Men may experience pressures related to the expectation of providing financially for their families, while they are simultaneously discouraged from participating in activities seen as “feminine” and from acknowledging their emotions or challenges for fear of seeming “weak.”
- **The COVID-19 health crisis resulted in differential impacts for individuals based on gender.**
 - ⊆ Studies revealed that despite men and women’s equal exposure to the COVID-19 pandemic, deaths from COVID-19 were more common in men than in women in Latin America and the Caribbean. PAHO research suggests could be due to physiological differences, preexisting comorbidities, and/or social, behavioural, and lifestyle factors, but that further research is necessary to understand these differences.⁷⁵ Mortality rates were also higher among elderly people and socioeconomically disadvantaged groups.⁷⁶
 - ⊆ The COVID-19 pandemic also resulted in disproportionate socio-economic outcomes for women and men. This is evidenced by the reports of increases in violence against women and girls, increase in hours attributed to care work by women and girls, failures in activating a timely gender approach to emergency and disaster response, gaps in research on gender and the COVID-19 virus, and lack of inclusion in decision-making processes.⁷⁷
- **Challenges in accessing sexual and reproductive health services and supports results in diminished well-being and human rights for individuals of all genders.**
 - ⊆ Alarming, the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region is the only region globally where births among girls under the age of 15 are increasing. The LAC region has the second highest rate of adolescent fertility.⁷⁸
 - ⊆ In 2021, the Caribbean region reported having the second-highest HIV prevalence in the world, with an estimate of 330,000 recorded cases of people living with HIV. HIV affects all people, with specific vulnerability noted among gay men, men who have sex with men, and sex workers. Barriers to reducing new HIV cases, AIDS related deaths, and associated discrimination were attributed to political, cultural, social and programmatic barriers.⁷⁹
 - ⊆ Though there is limited statistical data on period poverty in SIDS, various Caribbean SIDS report its existence in their societies and the associated risks such as developing reproductive and urinary tract infections and other illnesses, as well as negative impact on one’s mental and general well-being.⁸⁰
 - ⊆ Society as a whole also stands to benefit from overcoming barriers to sexual and reproductive health services. Research conducted in Pacific and Caribbean SIDS suggests that achieving SDG Target 3.7 of zero

⁷¹ [89% of Suicide Victims are Men](#), Jamaica Gleaner

⁷² [Our Local Suicide Story](#), Trinidad and Tobago Guardian

⁷³ [Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health in Small Island Developing States](#), PAHO

⁷⁴ [Masculinities and Men’s Health in the Caribbean](#), PAHO

⁷⁵ [COVID-19 Health Outcomes by Sex in the Americas](#), PAHO

⁷⁶ [The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Latin American and Caribbean Healthcare Systems](#), OECD

⁷⁷ [Gendered Health Analysis: Covid-19 in the Americas](#), PAHO

⁷⁸ [Continuation of sexual & reproductive health and gender-based violence services during COVID-19](#), UNFPA

⁷⁹ [UNFPA Latin America and the Caribbean contribution to HIV programming in the region](#), UNFPA

⁸⁰ [A look at period poverty experiences in Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago](#), Global Voices

unmet need for modern contraceptive choices and 95% coverage of maternal health interventions could be achieved in countries of the region with as little as an additional 4%–15% investment, and that each US \$1 invested could result in economic returns of US \$15 to US \$24.⁸¹

- **Women in health care have low representation in decision making positions.**

- Though women are overrepresented in the health sector, as evidenced by women making up 74% of healthcare workers in the Latin America and Caribbean region, men make up 75% of the higher-level positions and decision-makers in the health industry.⁸²

LEARN MORE ABOUT GENDER AND HEALTH

- [Gender Mainstreaming in Health: A Practical Guide](#), PAHO
- [A Guide for the Analysis and Monitoring of Gender Equity in Health Policies](#), PAHO
- [PAHO Gender Workshop: Identifying Gender Issues in Health - Participant's Manual](#), PAHO
- [Gender and Intersecting Inequalities in Access to Health Services](#), European Institute for Gender Equality

INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS AND FRAMEWORKS

- [International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Article 12: Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Health](#)
- [International Conference on Population and Development \(ICPD\) Programme of Action](#)
- [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Section C: Women and Health](#)
- [Sustainable Development Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being](#)
- [Generation Equality Action Coalition Blueprint on Bodily Autonomy and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights](#)

⁸¹ [Health and Economic Benefits of Achieving Contraceptive and Maternal Health Targets in Small Island Developing States in the Pacific and Caribbean](#), Kelly S. L. et al.

⁸² [Latin America and the Caribbean Rapid Gender Analysis](#), UN Women



Given their small size, remoteness, spatial isolation, and trade dependency, the Caribbean SIDS are especially vulnerable to external shocks and stressors. Facing high levels of exposure to hazards including hurricanes, sea-level rise, earthquakes, and tsunamis, Caribbean SIDS are considered some of the most disaster-prone countries in the world.⁸³ In contrast to larger, more diversified economies, SIDS also face unique challenges in recovery after a disaster; this is influenced in part by the portion of national GDPs that are dependent on tourism.⁸⁴ In the event of disasters and their aftermath, different population groups experience differentiated outcomes. By understanding these differences, policies and interventions can be tailored to strengthen resilience for all.⁸⁵

Why is disaster risk and response a gender issue?

- **Characteristics of individuals' identities - including gender, age, location, etc. - impact their exposure to and how they are likely to experience disasters and hazards.**
 - ⊆ The UNDP finds that globally women and children are 14 times more likely to die than men in the event of disasters.⁸⁶ The increased risk is largely rooted in the social and economic manifestations of gender inequality. Women are often poorer, have fewer assets and capital to be able to adapt to the changing climate, and are more excluded from decision-making processes. They tend to have less access to critical information for emergency preparedness.
 - ⊆ Studies have found that unmarried and older men are at increased risk during weather events due to greater social isolation and gender norms that deem it “unmanly” to ask for help. These factors were not found to be as relevant in impacting the vulnerability of unmarried women.⁸⁷
 - ⊆ Disaster risk reduction that considers gender inequalities is cost-effective, because it informs smart investments and reduces vulnerabilities, increasing public resilience and enhancing the safety and wellbeing of the population.⁸⁸
- **The strength of disaster management and responses is determined by how well individuals' differentiated needs related to safety, security and well-being are met. Women and girls have specific needs that may not always be considered in disaster response planning.**
 - ⊆ Women and girls who are displaced or live in shelters, camps or other places without privacy face an increased risk of gender-based violence and other human rights violations.⁸⁹

⁸³ [Small Island Developing States \(SIDS\): Gaps, Challenges and Constraints in Means of Implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#), UNDRR

⁸⁴ [Small Island Developing States, disaster risk management, disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and tourism](#), Neville Wright

⁸⁵ [Gender Dynamics of Disaster Risk and Resilience](#), World Bank

⁸⁶ [Gender, Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction](#), UNDP

⁸⁷ [Gender, Climate Change, and Health](#), World Health Organization

⁸⁸ [Making Disaster Risk Reduction Gender-Sensitive](#), UNDRR, UNDP and IUCN

⁸⁹ [Role of Climate Change in Exacerbating Sexual and Gender-Based Violence against Women: A New Challenge for International Law](#), Bharat H. Desai and Moumita Mandalb

- ⊆ Pregnant and nursing persons are particularly vulnerable in disaster settings. They require special consideration in responses, because of their increased need for food and water and decreased mobility, among other specific health and well-being needs.⁹⁰
- ⊆ Disasters can limit access to lifesaving sexual and reproductive health services, essential hygiene and menstrual health supplies, appropriate clothing items, and safety supplies that allow for individuals' equal safety, comfort, security and mobility. Dignity kits are one means through which relevant supplies can be provided in humanitarian response; these can also provide information on how to access needed health and legal services in an emergency setting.⁹¹
- **Disasters have always been among the common drivers of migration, however, extreme weather events due to the changing climate are projected to increase the displacement of peoples,⁹² with gender differentiated impacts.**
 - ⊆ Women and girls, especially those from marginalized groups, experience poorer displacement and migration outcomes due to pre-existing inequalities and traditional gender roles and expectations.⁹³ These groups face the most significant challenges when trying to rebuild their lives or find long-term solutions to the need for displacement, due to barriers in accessing resources in their communities of origin during migration, at destination (whether temporary or long-term) and in possible return processes.⁹⁴
 - ⊆ Women and girls also face greater risks at all stages of migration,⁹⁵ including increased risk of GBV and human trafficking in transit and destination locations.⁹⁶ The negative impacts of environmental migration and disaster displacement are also exacerbated for marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities, migrants with irregular status, LGBTI persons and elderly persons, due to their particular vulnerabilities, heightened risk of violence and societal exclusion.⁹⁷
- **Women make up the majority of hospitality workforce in the Caribbean, though they tend to be in lower-waged positions,⁹⁸ which makes their employment and economic standing more vulnerable to the adverse effects of natural hazards.**
 - ⊆ Women are more likely to lose jobs after a disaster event if hotels have to close due to damage, while men typically work in the maintenance of hotel grounds and facilities - positions which are relevant to post-disaster reconstruction.⁹⁹
 - ⊆ National tourism plans and policies to foster employment and economic development in the Caribbean generally do not include gender analysis in their development.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁰ [A Methodological Approach to Gender Analysis in Natural Disaster Assessment: A Guide for the Caribbean](#), ECLAC

⁹¹ [Dignity Kits Guidance Note](#), UNFPA Sub-Regional Office for the Caribbean

⁹² [Climate Change 2014 Synthesis Report](#), Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

⁹³ [Advancing Gender Equality in Environmental Migration and Disaster Displacement in the Caribbean](#), ECLAC

⁹⁴ [Five Findings on the Relationship between Migration, Gender and Climate Change](#), IOM Regional Office for Central, North America and the Caribbean

⁹⁵ [Ensuring Safe and Regular Migration for Women and Girls in the Context of Climate Change](#), UN Women

⁹⁶ [Advancing Gender Equality in Environmental Migration and Disaster Displacement in the Caribbean](#), ECLAC

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ [UN Women Caribbean Multi-Country Office Strategic Note \(2022 -2026\)](#), UN Women

⁹⁹ [Mainstreaming Gender into Disaster Risk Management for Tourism: Training Manual](#), UWI

¹⁰⁰ [Country Gender Assessment Synthesis Report](#), Rawwida Baksh and Associates

LEARN MORE ABOUT DISASTER RISK AND RESPONSE AND GENDER:

- [Gender Responsive Climate Actions in Small Island Developing States \(SIDS\)](#), UNDP and AOSIS
- [Integrating Gender in Disaster Management in Small Island Developing States: A Guide](#), UNDP
- [Primer on Gender-Responsive Disaster and Crisis Planning](#), ParlAmericas
- [Parliamentary Protocol for Disaster Risk Reduction and Climate Change Adaptation](#), ParlAmericas
- [Ensuring Safe and Regular Migration for Women and Girls in the Context of Climate Change](#), UN Women
- [The Review of Gender and the Sendai Framework](#), UNDRR
- [Advancing Gender Equality in Environmental Migration and Disaster Displacement in the Caribbean](#), ECLAC

INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS RELATED TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND GENDER:

- [Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean \(Escazú Agreement\)](#)
- [United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the related Gender Action Plan](#)
- [Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Section K: Women and the Environment](#)
- [Sustainable Development Goal 13: Climate Action](#)
- [Generation Equality Action Coalition Blueprint on Feminist Action for Climate Justice](#)
- [Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction](#)



Food insecurity has become an important development challenge facing Caribbean SIDS. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), as much as 67.5% of the subregion's population lives in moderate to severe food insecurity - compared to a global average of 27.6%; this is predominantly attributed to the high costs of accessing food, as well as the quality of food available.¹⁰¹ In the agricultural sector, farming is mostly small-scale and dependent upon family labour. Producers need access to finance mechanisms to be able to develop and expand their operations.¹⁰² Due to these constraints, an estimated 60 to 80% of basic food requirements must be imported to meet both domestic needs, as well as the needs of the tourism industry.¹⁰³ With global climate change, agro-ecological changes over the medium to long term are also expected to result in significant losses of agricultural production and will continue to impact food security in the region.¹⁰⁴

Why is food security a gender issue?

- **Globally, food insecurity disproportionately affects women.**¹⁰⁵
 - ⊆ Women are more vulnerable than men in relation to all dimensions of food insecurity: availability, access, utilization and stability,¹⁰⁶ and they have nearly a 27 per cent higher chance of being severely food insecure than men.¹⁰⁷
 - ⊆ Food insecurity also disproportionately impacts the rural poor, migrants, Indigenous, Afrodescendent and Indo-descendent peoples, among other traditionally marginalized groups due to socio-economic inequalities, discrimination and stigma.¹⁰⁸
- **Nutrient deficiencies are disproportionately experienced by women and children, which also has significant long-term impacts on society.**¹⁰⁹
 - ⊆ Women suffer the most from macro- and micronutrient deficiencies, especially during reproductive years. At the household level, women are frequently the ones who eat least, last and least well. This can result from care responsibilities and schedules but can also be connected to experiences of poverty by women-headed households. A frequent coping strategy of decreased capacity to purchase or grow high-quality, diverse foods is to shift to cheaper and less diverse diets, which frequently lack the key nutrients that pregnant women and young children require.¹¹⁰
 - ⊆ In most countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, chronic child undernutrition remained at an average of 11.5% in 2022 despite gradual declines in the rate over the previous decade. Research suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to have exacerbated the situation of malnutrition for children, however, especially in the most vulnerable households. Consumption patterns in lower-income households in particular shifted towards less nutritious and cheaper diets with less fresh food, sometimes even skipping

¹⁰¹ [Food Security in the Caribbean - A Policy Perspective](#), ECLAC

¹⁰² [Food Security and Nutrition in Small Island Developing States \(SIDS\)](#), FAO

¹⁰³ [Food Security in the Caribbean - A Policy Perspective](#), ECLAC

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ [Harnessing the Power of Gender Equality to Achieve Food Security](#), World Food Programme

¹⁰⁶ [Gender Inequalities and Food Insecurity: Ten Years After the Food Price Crisis, Why are Women Farmers still Food-insecure?](#), Oxfam

¹⁰⁷ [Gender and Food Security](#), Migration Data Portal

¹⁰⁸ [Reducing Inequalities for Food Security and Nutrition](#), FAO

¹⁰⁹ [Malnutrition Among Children in Latin America and the Caribbean](#), ECLAC

¹¹⁰ [Gender Inequalities and Food Insecurity: Ten Years After the Food Price Crisis, Why are Women Farmers still Food-insecure?](#), Oxfam

meals altogether, which is attributed to reductions in regular health check-ups, declines in newborn care services, reduced coverage of school meal programmes and the worsening economic crisis.¹¹¹

- ⊆ Malnutrition can begin at gestation and its prevalence impacts children's skill acquisition, cognitive development, risk for developing non-communicable diseases, mortality rates and morbidity during their lifetimes. Collectively these harms indicate current and future costs associated with negative health and education impacts that will be carried by the child, their families or carers, and all of society.¹¹²
- **Women make up the majority of informal workers in the agricultural sector in the Caribbean.¹¹³ According to the FAO, women farmers in developing countries are responsible for 60 to 80% of food production globally.¹¹⁴ Despite this, women farmers have less access to resources and inputs.**
 - ⊆ Legal and customary laws and practices hinder women's access and control of land.¹¹⁵ Research indicates that this is due to the following factors: the preference towards men in inheritance; men's privileges in marriage; a tendency to favour men in the land distribution programs at both community and State levels; and gender biases in the land market.¹¹⁶
 - ⊆ Even when women are able to access land, lack of ownership creates a disincentive to invest time and resources into sustainable farming practices which in turn lowers production.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, women-headed farms tend to be smaller and on lower-quality land.¹¹⁸
 - ⊆ Globally, agricultural assistance funds and initiatives tend to target 'market-ready' farmers, who usually are men.¹¹⁹
- **As powerful agents for change, supporting women's economic empowerment in this sphere (and others) has intergenerational benefits not only for their families but their communities and countries.¹²⁰**
 - ⊆ The FAO reports that by removing gender-specific barriers in farming, giving women the same access as men to agricultural resources, the yields on women's farms in developing countries can increase by 20 to 30%.¹²¹
 - ⊆ Addressing the gender gap in food production would reduce food insecurity by 45 million people; and by closing the wage gap in agricultural jobs, global GDP would increase by approximately USD 1 trillion.¹²²

¹¹¹ Early Childhood in Post-Pandemic Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC

¹¹² Malnutrition Among Children in Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC

¹¹³ Status of Women and Men Report: Productive Employment and Decent Work for All, UN Women

¹¹⁴ Protecting Land and Natural Resources Tenure Rights in the Era of COVID-19 by Heeding the Lessons from the Past, FAO

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ The Gender Gap in Land Ownership in Latin America, Carmen Diana Deere and Magdalena Leon

¹¹⁷ Food security and gender, USAID

¹¹⁸ Increasing women's access to Land and Property in the LAC, UN Women

¹¹⁹ Gender Inequalities and Food Insecurity, Oxfam

¹²⁰ Boost Women's Economic Empowerment, Women Deliver

¹²¹ The State of Food and Agriculture, FAO

¹²² The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems, FAO

LEARN MORE ABOUT FOOD SECURITY AND GENDER:

- [Primer on Gender-Responsive Parliamentary Work on Food Security](#), ParlAmericas
- [Agricultural Policy: Integrating Gender Equality and Human Security](#), ParlGenderTools
- [Gender, Agrifood Value Chains and Climate-Resilient Agriculture in Small Island Developing States](#), FAO
- [The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023](#), FAO
- [The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems](#), FAO
- [Regional Overview of Food Security and Nutrition in Latin America and the Caribbean](#), FAO
- [Caribbean Food Security & Livelihoods Survey – May 2023](#), WFP
- [Undernourished and Overlooked: A Global Nutrition Crisis in Adolescent Girls and Women](#), UNICEF
- [Gender Inequality of Climate Change and Disaster Risk in the Agriculture \(Food Security\) Sector](#), UN Women
- [Gender Inequalities and Food Insecurity: Ten Years after the Food Price Crisis, Why are Women Farmers Still Food-insecure?](#) OXFAM

INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS RELATED TO FOOD SECURITY AND GENDER:

- [Sustainable Development Goal 2: Zero Hunger](#)
- [Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition](#)
- [Rome Declaration on World Food Security](#)
- [Article 11 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)
- [Article 25 UN Declaration of Human Rights](#)
- [Article 14 \(g\) Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women](#)



Global climate, environmental, biodiversity and development goals cannot be achieved without healthy oceans. For the Caribbean SIDS in particular, the importance of a healthy ocean cannot be understated. The dependence of Caribbean economies on coastal and marine resources is among the highest worldwide, and the fisheries and aquaculture sectors are significant providers of food security and livelihoods.¹²³ An increasing number of SIDS are also identifying themselves as “large ocean states” to include the ocean areas and associated resources within their jurisdiction. These oceanic areas are referred to as “exclusive economic zones” or EEZs; globally, SIDS control about 30% of all oceans and seas through EEZs.¹²⁴ However, the impacts of climate change and threats from overfishing and pollution are driving changes to the ocean that jeopardize economies, societies, cultures and ecosystems.

Effective ocean governance should be inclusive, with consideration of gender, geography, culture and generations, to ensure all members of society are included in decision-making processes and their outcomes. Maximizing economic and social benefits from this large marine resource base can help SIDS achieve economic diversification, poverty reduction, food security, climate change mitigation, ocean conservation and energy security.¹²⁵

Why is ocean governance a gender issue?

- **Though the availability of disaggregated data should be strengthened on employment in the fisheries sector, research from Caribbean islands indicates gendered patterns in the roles individuals hold in fishing industries.**
 - ⊆ Men are the majority in all areas of the sector, particularly in the pre-harvest tasks (sales, ancillary services and fishing), while the post-harvest segments (seafood processing, storage, transport, marketing and distribution) are where women are most represented. Women fishers are also more engaged in near-shore fishing, while men tend to fish offshore.¹²⁶
- **According to the IUCN, despite Caribbean women’s lower levels of participation in the fisheries sector, plastic waste pollution in oceans affects them in disproportionate ways.**¹²⁷
 - ⊆ By virtue of their overrepresentation in the seafood processing segment, women in commercial fisheries and aquaculture are more often exposed to microplastics and heavy metals that accumulate in the organs of fish and seafood because of their overrepresentation in seafood processing. In addition, women in the Caribbean engaged in artisanal fishing spend more time on near-shore habitats, like mangroves, estuaries and the intertidal zone, where toxic substances accumulate.¹²⁸
- **Women’s work in fisheries is often informal,¹²⁹ meaning that they face greater exposure to climate shocks with even less capacity to adapt as they often lack job security, unemployment insurance, credit access and other protection schemes.**¹³⁰

¹²³ An Information Document for Caribbean Small Island Developing States, ECLAC

¹²⁴ Small Islands, Large Oceans: Voices on the Frontlines of Climate Change, IISD

¹²⁵ Rethinking the Oceans: Transitioning to the Blue Economy, Institute of Marine Affairs

¹²⁶ Gender and Plastics: A Review of the Links in Select Caribbean and Pacific Islands, IUCN

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Gender Dimensions of Ocean Risk and Resilience in SIDS and Coastal LDCs, ORRAA

¹³⁰ Sustainable Fishing and Women’s Labour in the Blue Economy, International Growth Centre

- **Women in ocean science continue to be underrepresented particularly in highly technical and decision-making categories according to a 2020 Global Ocean Science Report.¹³¹**
 - ⊖ A lack of diversity in scientists can mean a lack of diversity in thought, which is a threat to the innovation needed to tackle such complex environmental issues.
 - ⊖ As a growing economic area, it is important to ensure that women are considered within planning around the sector’s growth so that they can benefit equally from new economic opportunities.
- **Ocean defenders and activists are most often individuals from historically marginalized groups excluded from decision-making, including small-scale fishers, Indigenous peoples, Peoples of Colour, women and youth.¹³²**
 - ⊖ A phenomenon described as the ‘Blue Acceleration’ details the unprecedented scale and speed at which human activity in the ocean is taking place.¹³³ Without specific consideration to gender and the environment in major development projects, there is a risk of exacerbating inequalities rather than furthering environmental and human rights.¹³⁴

LEARN MORE ABOUT OCEAN GOVERNANCE AND GENDER:

- [Chapter: 13 Women and SDG14 – Life Underwater: Conserve and Sustainably Use the Oceans, Seas and Marine Resources for Sustainable Development](#), OECD
- [Gender Dimensions of Ocean Risk and Resilience in SIDS and LDCs](#), Ocean Risk and Resilience Action Alliance
- [Gender Inequality of Climate Change and Disaster Risk in the Fisheries Sector](#), EnGenDER Project
- [Ocean: A Call to Action for Health and Equity of The Ocean](#), Women and Gender Constituency
- [Empowering Women in Marine Communities to Mitigate the Impacts of Climate Change](#), World Wide Fund For Nature
- [Sustainable Fishing and Women's Labour in the Blue Economy](#), International Gender Champions Network

INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS RELATED TO THE OCEAN AND GENDER:

- [Sustainable Development Goal 14: Life Below Water](#)
- [High Seas Treaty](#) (*first signed in September 2023 at the UN; still in the process of being ratified*)

¹³¹ [Global Ocean Science Report 2020](#), UNESCO

¹³² [Ocean Defenders and Human Rights](#), Bennett et. al

¹³³ [The Blue Acceleration: The Trajectory of Human Expansion into the Ocean](#), Jouffray et al.

¹³⁴ [Ocean defenders and Human Rights](#), Bennett et. al



Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Access to clean water, along with sanitation and hygiene services, are vital factors in reducing risks to public health, such as disease epidemics and famine. Improved water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) practices can also boost a country's economic growth and contribute to poverty reduction.¹³⁵ Although there have been vast improvements in the region, access to clean and safe drinking water and adequate sanitation varies across the Caribbean SIDS, especially between urban and rural areas. The region also suffers from increasing water deficits which are due to changing climatic factors and human activities like the expansion of the tourism industry, accelerated population growth, urbanization and ineffective resource management.¹³⁶ Access to water and sanitation are human rights, and addressing the challenges that women and girls face in exercising these rights protects their health and be catalysts for increasing their educational and economic opportunities and their economic and political engagement, leading to greater empowerment and agency.¹³⁷⁻¹³⁸

Why is water, sanitation and hygiene a gender issue?

- **Water shortages and lack of access to potable water can place more stress on women than men in households.**¹³⁹
 - ⊆ As women tend to be the main caregivers, the effects of water shortages can increase their workloads. Within the household, water scarcity negatively affects school attendance and can lead to health consequences. It can also cause high absenteeism from work and have an impact on people's livelihoods. Where poor households do not have access to water mains, they may have to purchase water which reduces their available income for other household priorities.¹⁴⁰
- **When water cannot be accessed due to service interruptions, the process of identifying alternative sources is often led by women. This is especially notable in rural communities and in areas where piped water supply is sporadic or provided on a rotation basis.**¹⁴¹
 - ⊆ Paths to water resources can be unsafe, due both to the quality of the paths and the possibility of perpetrators of physical and sexual violence in these areas, endangering women and girls using them.¹⁴²⁻¹⁴³
- **In times of crisis, effective programming in the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sector reduces the burden of access to water, improves hygiene facilities and provides dignified menstrual health management.**¹⁴⁴
 - ⊆ Investment in gender-responsive water and sanitation infrastructure can also help prevent gender-based violence (GBV) in emergencies by having safe, well-sited water collection points and safe, well-lit women- and girl-friendly sanitation facilities.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁵ [Drinking Water](#), World Health Organization

¹³⁶ [Water resource sustainability: Challenges, opportunities and research gaps in the English-speaking Caribbean Small Island Developing States](#), Mycoo, M. & Roopnarine, R.

¹³⁷ [The role of water in catalyzing gender equality](#), Center for Strategic and international Studies

¹³⁸ [Water and Gender](#), UN Water

¹³⁹ [Integrating Gender Equality into Water Sector Operations](#), Caribbean Development Bank

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ [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](#), Mendoza, P.

¹⁴² [Disaster-Risk, Water Security Challenges and Strategies in Small Island Developing States \(SIDS\)](#), Gheunens et al.

¹⁴³ [Integrating Gender Equality into Water Sector Operations](#), Caribbean Development Bank

¹⁴⁴ [Gender-Responsive Water, Sanitation and Hygiene: Key elements for effective WASH programming](#), UNICEF

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

- **There is limited access to disaggregated data on employment in the water and sanitation sectors in the Caribbean SIDS, including the percentage of individuals in leadership positions.**
 - ⊖ This lack of data inhibits the ability of decision-makers to develop policy, legislation and other responses that meet the diverse needs of the individuals working in these spaces and to ensure equality of opportunity and conditions.

LEARN MORE ABOUT WASH AND GENDER:

- [Gender-Responsive Water, Sanitation and Hygiene. Key Elements for Effective WASH Programming](#), UNICEF
- [Progress on Household Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene 2000-2022: Special Focus on Gender](#), WHO, UNICEF, JMP
- [Women in Water Decision-Making](#), OECD.
- [Advancing towards Gender Mainstreaming in Water Resources Management](#), Global Water Partnership
- [From Commodity to Common Good: A Feminist Agenda to Tackle the World's Water Crisis](#), UN Women

INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS RELATED TO WASH AND GENDER:

- [Sustainable Development Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation](#)
- [Article 25 Universal Declaration of Human Rights](#)
- [Article 11 and 12 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)
 - [General Comment No. 15: The Right to Water](#)
- [Article 14 Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women](#)



Having economies dependent on tourism and hospitality, many Caribbean SIDS rely heavily on imported fossil fuels to meet local energy demands and to sustain these and other industries.¹⁴⁶ As a result, the cost of energy in Caribbean SIDS is among the highest in the world due to high fuel transportation costs, causing a higher price per unit of electricity than for non-island countries.¹⁴⁷ While many Caribbean SIDS are increasingly engaged in renewable energy transitions, the gap between fossil fuel dependency and more diversified energy portfolios remains significant.¹⁴⁸ There are expected to be great economic benefits from such a transition, however, resulting from lower marginal energy costs, lower overall energy intensity, and job creation.¹⁴⁹ Addressing energy-related challenges in the region requires an inclusive approach that takes into account the needs and participation of all members of the population.

Why is energy a gender issue?

- **Women face disproportionate negative effects of limitations in energy access within households and in society more broadly.**
 - ⊆ Research suggests that single-parent households, headed mainly by women, are among the groups that are disproportionately represented among the poor, and that women and girls bear the brunt of energy poverty given traditional care and household roles.¹⁵⁰
 - ⊆ As the primary caregivers and providers of food and fuel in SIDS, women are more exposed to risks related to electricity shortages and a lack of clean cooking fuel, which can compel households to use traditional low-efficiency fuels like crop residues, dung, charcoal and fuelwood that cause household air pollution (HAP) and associated respiratory problems and potentially death. This risk also affects the children in the homes.¹⁵¹
 - ⊆ A lack of adequate electricity in public and private spaces, including street lighting, can increase crime and gender-based violence.¹⁵²
- **Women and girls stand to gain significant benefits in well-being from modern energy access according to an International Renewable Energy Association survey (IRENA), since such access reduces drudgery and allows more time for education, income-generating activities, and other pursuits.¹⁵³**
 - ⊆ The World Bank Group further highlights the role of modern energy services in improving access to other necessary services like clean water, sanitation and healthcare.¹⁵⁴
- **The energy sector in the Caribbean has been identified as one of the least gender-diverse economic sectors and upholds long-standing barriers that inhibit the participation of women at all levels.¹⁵⁵**

¹⁴⁶ Guest Article: Renewables and Energy Transitions in Small Island States | SDG Knowledge Hub, IISD

¹⁴⁷ SIDS – Towards a Sustainable Energy Future, World Bank

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Huge Economic Benefits to be Reaped from Renewable Energy Transition, Caribbean Export Development Agency

¹⁵⁰ Integrating Gender Equality into the Energy Sector, Caribbean Development Bank

¹⁵¹ Energy Access in Small Island Developing States: Status, Barriers and Policy Measures, Surrop et.al

¹⁵² Ibid

¹⁵³ Renewable Energy: A Gender Perspective, International Renewable Energy Association

¹⁵⁴ Closing Gender Gaps in Latin America and the Caribbean, World Bank Group

¹⁵⁵ Empowering Young Women in Saint Lucia's Energy Sector, World Bank

- ⊖ According to IRENA, women hold only 32% of renewable energy jobs globally, and an even smaller percentage across the Global South.¹⁵⁶
- ⊖ Increasing women’s engagement in the renewables sector will expand the talent pool and offer substantial co-benefits by strengthening gender diversity in this field: studies suggest that women bring new perspectives to the workplace and improve collaboration, while increasing the number of qualified women in an organization’s leadership yields better performance overall.¹⁵⁷
- **According to UNIDO, without the active participation of women, it is impossible for SIDS to transition to sustainable energy for all and to achieve the SIDS DOCK goals:** to increase energy efficiency by 25% (2005 baseline) and to generate a minimum of 50% of electric power from renewable sources and a 50% decrease in conventional transportation fuel use by 2033.¹⁵⁸
- **Women across SIDS face barriers to taking advantage of sustainable energy services, investment and business opportunities.** Mainstreaming gender into energy initiatives, with recognition of women’s specific roles in energy use and production, will contribute to addressing these issues and to creating more comprehensive and long-term energy solutions.¹⁵⁹

LEARN MORE ABOUT ENERGY AND GENDER:

- [Gender Equality and the Sustainable Energy Transition](#), UN Women and UNIDO, 2023
- [Literature Review on Gender and Energy](#), GenderCC – Women for Climate Justice
- [Strategic Plan 2018-2028. “Island Energy for Island Life,”](#) The SIDS DOCK Foundation
- [The Lack of Gender Targets for Clean Energy is Harming Women and Girls](#), ENERGIA International Network on Gender and Sustainable Energy
- [Renewable Energy: A Gender Perspective](#), IRENA
- [Gender and the Environment: Building Evidence and Policies to Achieve the SDGs](#), OECD

INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS RELATED TO ENERGY AND GENDER:

- [Sustainable Development Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy](#)

¹⁵⁶ [Renewable Energy: A Gender Perspective](#), International Renewable Energy Association

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ [Gender Mainstreaming](#), UNIDO

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.