

SRHR 50 NDCs

HOW ARE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS REPRESENTED IN NATIONAL CLIMATE POLICY?

A review of 50 Nationally Determined Contribution documents

INTRODUCTION

National climate policies play a key role in determining responses to climate change, including plans to build adaptive capacity and resilience. An evaluation of national climate policies with a specific focus on health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) issues, can provide important information on gaps and areas of potential improvement to ensure healthy and resilient communities.

Nationally Determined Contribution documents (NDCs) or Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (iNDCs) are some of the most central and globally representative climate policy documents. Submitted every five years, NDCs reflect the national climate plans of countries that have ratified the Paris Agreement and indicate their voluntary commitment to meet the agreed goals.

UNFPA, in collaboration with Queen Mary University of London, undertook a review and systematic content analysis of SRHR references and related thematic areas in NDC documents for 50 countries.

The review aimed to describe how SRHR is currently represented in NDC and related policy documents to help determine how climate policy can better reflect SRHR.

METHODOLOGY

The review included 46 NDCs and four iNDCs covering the period 2015 to 2020 and represents documents principally from the first wave of NDC submissions. The analysis was undertaken in relation to six SRHR-related thematic areas: gender, health, population dynamics, human rights, participation and vulnerable groups. Any reference to these themes was included in the systematic content analysis.

Initially, the analysis was performed for all 23 countries of the East and Southern African region. To elicit a more global view, the review was extended to include a further 27 countries across four out of the six UNFPA's sub-regions: Arab States, Asia Pacific, Western and Central Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean. Countries were selected in order to understand the framing of SRHR within national climate policies across different geographic, socio-economic and cultural contexts.



FINDINGS

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

References to SRHR were identified in six NDCs, including references to maternal mortality, access to family planning services, gender-based violence (GBV) and people living with HIV.



The Eswatini NDC describes how people living with HIV will be more severely impacted by climate change in part due to food insecurity: 50 per cent of the population are currently dependent on food aid and 26 per cent of Swaziland's adult population is currently living with HIV. It further describes how 'the health sector will be affected by climate change impacts, with groups such as households with members living with HIV expected to be particularly vulnerable' (Eswatini NDC, 2016: p2).



50%
of people in Eswatini dependent on food aid



26%
Swaziland's adult population is currently living with HIV



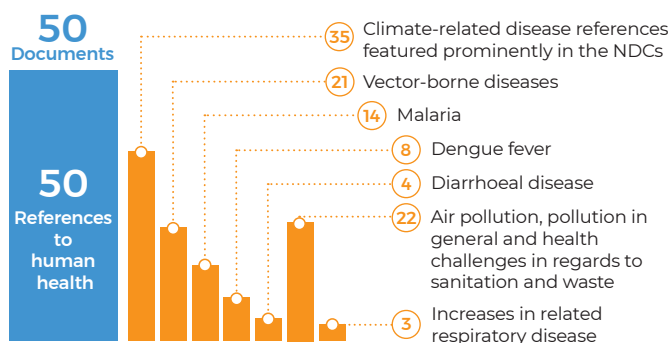
The Kiribati NDC document describes how: 'The effects of climate change are felt first and most acutely by vulnerable and marginalized populations, including women, children, youth, people with disabilities, minorities, the elderly and the urban poor. Violence against women and children is a widespread issue within Kiribati society, which can be exacerbated in times of disasters when normal social protection may be missing' (Kiribati iNDC, 2015: p15).

Health

Some reference to human health was featured in all 50 documents. Sixteen countries made direct references to increases in mortality due to climate change. Climate-related disease references featured prominently in the NDCs (35/50). Some countries explicitly described how changes in temperatures and weather patterns are increasing disease incidence. Vector-borne diseases (21/50), and specifically malaria (14/50), were the strongest disease-specific references, while dengue fever (8/50) and diarrhoeal disease (4/50) were also referenced. Air pollution, pollution in general and health challenges in regards to sanitation and waste were also referenced by 22/50 countries. Reported increases in related respiratory disease (3/50) also featured in a few cases.

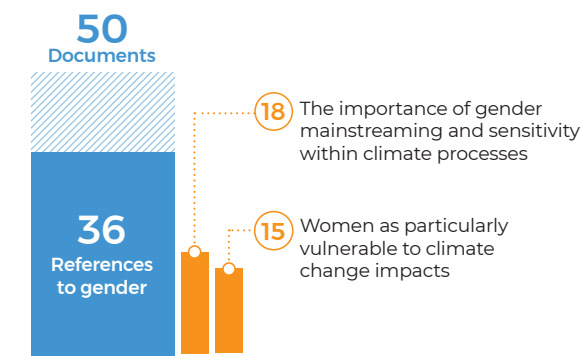


Food and water security were frequently described as important concerns related to health (44/50). The Seychelles describes food security as 'a crucial issue' and observes that 'there are clear linkages between water, food, ecosystem health and the well-being of people' (Seychelles NDC, 2015:



Gender

The majority of documents (36/50) made some reference to gender with variable depth and detail. Significant references related to gender included: the importance of gender mainstreaming and sensitivity within climate processes (18/50); gender as a cross-cutting issue of relevance; women as particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts (15/50); gender rights and equality; increasing the participation and decision-making power of women; empowering and building the capacity of women; and women in relation to particular sectors and areas such as energy and agriculture.



The promotion of energy-saving stoves was discussed in several African NDCs and sometimes included a gender component. Eritrea describes energy transitions as important for helping secure the 'health and well-being of women and children' (Eritrea NDC, 2018: p21) while Nigeria reports that 'women benefit most from clean, efficient cookstoves, gaining in health and in productive time where these are introduced' (Nigeria iNDC, 2015: p16).

Population Dynamics

References to population dynamics proved difficult to classify. Thirty-six documents referred to population dynamics in some capacity, with 26 making a reference to climate change. Fourteen countries referred to population dynamics in relation to emissions, public systems, and food and water security. The concept of controlling population growth was described in two NDCs. Five countries describe high-density populations and urbanization as placing pressures on health systems and water supplies as well as impacting infrastructure and waste and sanitation systems. Two countries refer to their small population size as a climate-related challenge, particularly for adaptation. A majority of countries (29/50) refer to urbanization,

migration and human displacement in their NDCs with two island nations including references to sea level rise and its existential and migratory effects.



Kiribati describes how sea level rise 'will threaten the very existence of Kiribati as a nation' and includes 'establishing host country agreements to government-sponsored and self-sponsored emigration to resettle I-Kiribati overseas and assist the inevitable migration of the population, due to climate change as and when this eventually arrives' in its adaptation plans (Kiribati iNDC, 2015: pp15,19).

Rights, participation and vulnerable groups

There were 12 direct references to human rights but numerous references to participation and vulnerable populations. Some countries link the NDC to existing national policies that outline constitutional or environmental rights, while others reiterate the human rights language of the Paris Agreement. Women and young people were often referred to as particularly vulnerable groups for climate impacts, and some NDCs go further to outline groups particularly dependent on natural resources. The importance of participation and consultation in climate action, as well as policy development was a strong theme throughout.



The Indonesian NDC draws together rights with health, gender and vulnerable groups, commenting that 'in line with the Paris Agreement, Indonesia respects, promotes and considers its obligation on human rights, the right to health, the right of adat communities (Indonesia: Masyarakat Hukum Adat and internationally known as indigenous people), local communities, migrants, children, persons with different abilities, and people in vulnerable situations, and the right to development, as well as gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity' (Indonesia NDC, 2018: p6).

Summary and recommendations

SRHR helps build resilience and adaptive capacity for climate change while reducing inequality and enabling justice. Increased recognition and action on the gender, health and human rights impacts of climate change has synergistic benefits for SRHR and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Six out of the 50 NDC documents reviewed included references to aspects of SRHR, but there is scope for greater and more meaningful inclusion of the full range of SRHR. Thematic areas related to SRHR (gender, health, population dynamics, human rights, participation and vulnerable groups) are frequently described and often intersect. However, many key SRHR issues were altogether absent and existing references were often vague and lacked sufficient emphasis and precision.

GOING FORWARD, CLIMATE POLICY SHOULD REFLECT THE FOLLOWING:

- SRHR is a cross-cutting issue and should receive a stronger focus in climate policy and programming.
- Gender-based violence (GBV) represents a key intersection of SRHR and climate change that should be addressed in climate change adaptation policy.
- SRH services are fundamental to health and should be central to strengthening health systems' resilience to climate change.
- The inclusion of SRHR and population dynamics in climate policy must be human rights-based, as reflected in the ICPD Programme of Action.
- An intersectional approach that explicitly considers existing barriers and inequalities will best promote the full realization of SRHR with corresponding benefits for climate adaptation and resilience.
- Individuals and communities face numerous environmental challenges simultaneously, including the climate, waste and biodiversity crises. It is key to recognize the linkages between the climate crisis and other environmental crises and their impact on SRHR.



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