

# Written evidence submitted by MSI Reproductive Choices (CAUK0016)

## About MSI Reproductive Choices

MSI Reproductive Choices (MSI) is one of the world's largest providers of sexual and reproductive health services, and a global advocate for gender equality and reproductive choice. We work in 37 countries as a key partner to ministries of health. By the end of 2020, over 37 million women globally were using a form of contraception supplied by MSI.

## 1. Overview: why any climate change response must involve Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

1.1 Climate change cannot be addressed without securing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) for affected populations. Equally, SRHR cannot be safeguarded without a meaningful focus on the impact of climate change.

1.2 Climate change has a disproportionate impact on women, especially the women in the world with the least access to sexual and reproductive health services. This should be central to any climate change strategy.

1.3 It is well-established that climate change is an SRHR issue, and SRHR is a climate change issue. SRHR should never be viewed as of secondary importance to dealing with the consequences of natural disasters, water and sanitation rights, or other international development challenges. On the contrary, rates of maternal mortality, neonatal mortality, infant mortality, and sexual violence are often greater during times of crisis or instability.

## 2. Our evidence submission

2.1 Of those displaced by climate change, 80% are women.<sup>1</sup>

2.2 There are 24 million people on average displaced each year as a result of climate change.<sup>2</sup> Not only are the people displaced mostly women, but they are also disproportionately likely to be children or elderly, migrants, refugees or stateless people, sexual and gender minorities, or to have a disability or a serious health condition.<sup>3</sup>

2.3 Climate change restricts access to sexual and reproductive health services. The people most impacted by climate change are the populations with the poorest access to those services to begin with.<sup>4</sup>

2.4 Consequences of climate change such as drought and food insecurity have been linked to increases in transactional sex, and an associated rise in HIV. This reinforces the necessity of SRHR for the populations affected by climate change.

2.5 There is also evidence that when the need to travel by foot increases, which can happen as a result of natural disasters caused by climate change, it can lead to a rise in sexual harassment, rape, and other gender-based violence.<sup>5</sup> This is due to the fact that as this work is largely carried out by women and girls.

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<sup>1</sup> [UNDP Linkages Gender and CC Policy Brief 1-WEB.pdf \(reliefweb.int\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Disaster Displacement: A global review, 2008-2018, Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre \(IDMC\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies: Responding to Disasters and Displacement (2020), supra note 28.

<sup>4</sup> [Climate-Change-Report.pdf \(womendeliver.org\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Action against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: An Updated Strategy*, June 2011, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/4e01ffeb2.html> [accessed 10 May 2021]

2.6 COVID-19 creates further challenges. The populations internally displaced due to climate change are more likely to contract the virus, and service access disruptions due to the pandemic create further barriers to modern contraception and safe abortion.

2.7 A core part of the UK government's response to climate change should therefore protect investment in SRHR programmes, specifically those which provide emergency contraception to prevent or terminate pregnancies, STI care and prevention, and any other forms of support for those impacted by gender-based violence.

2.8 The UK government should ensure data collected in relation to the impact of climate change can be broken down by demographics like gender, race, age, and religion, so that gaps and patterns can be identified and analysed.

2.9 The expectation for humanitarian crises is detailed in the Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP)<sup>6</sup> for Sexual and Reproductive Health and should be upheld as part of any UK government response to climate change.

2.10 Any humanitarian crisis should be met with adequate sexual and reproductive health services, to avoid, or at least minimise maternal deaths, infant deaths, sexual violence, increased prevalence of STIs and HIV, and unsafe abortion. This includes humanitarian and development crises brought about as a result of global warming.

2.11 Climate change and sustainable future planning cannot be addressed without a serious commitment to SRHR. Similarly, SRHR cannot be secured without tackling climate change.

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<sup>6</sup> [MISP English New A latest.indd \(unhcr.org\)](https://www.unhcr.org/uk/2020/11/misp-english-new-a-latest.indd)