

Women and Girls at the Forefront of Climate Action in Libya

2022 International Women's Day
Webinar

Summary report



Norwegian
Government



WFP
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Programme Alimentaire Mondial
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برنامج الأغذية العالمي



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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This publication summarizes discussions and recommendations produced during the online webinar organized by UN Women in Libya in celebration of International Women's Day on 8 March 2022. The event was organized with the generous funding of the government of Norway and in partnership with the World Food Program (WFP). Views expressed in this publication are those of the presenters during the event and do not necessarily represent the views of UN Women, the United Nations or any of its affiliated organizations.

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Report lead: Hadeel Saadeh

Copy-editor: Melissa Crane Powers, International Consultant, UN Women Libya

The report was convened with the inputs of:

- Hala Bugaighis - Director of Jusoor Center for Studies and Development.
- Daniella Dam De Jong- Associate professor at the Grotius Centre for International Legal Studies at Leiden University.
- Khawla Rammali- Climate Fellow for UN Climate Change and UNU-EHS
- Nissa Bek Derna – Media personality, Climate Activist, and Founder of Project Mulan
- Amal Ridene- Tunisian Young Climate Change Negotiator
- Malak Altaeb – Independent Consultant and Researcher on Environmental Policy, with a focus on water and food security in Libya and the MENA region including higher education research.
- Youser Benali – Senior Programme Associate (Livelihood, Climate Change and Food Systems) WFP
- Ghada Kannou- Women, Peace, and Security Programme Assistant, UN Women Libya

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UN Women in Libya organized an online webinar on the occasion of International Women's Day on 8 March 2022. The webinar highlighted the potential of Libyan women and girls' engagement in climate action, identified key challenges to their participation and captured recommendations on the way forward.

It was agreed during the webinar that women and girl's role in climate change, particularly in conflict and post conflict countries, should be recognized both as a right and a requirement for climate action. Women and girls still face inequality, including exclusion from decision making and economic opportunities. Yet, their equal participation is likely to increase the effectiveness of mitigation and adaptation measures, as they bring their unique perspectives, experiences and resources to bear on the situation.

Participants agreed that climate change is absent from public discourse in Libya. They stressed the need for more awareness and education on the existing climate crisis. The roles different actors can play in mitigation and adaptation measures was discussed.

When it comes to climate policy, participants stressed that research is a prerequisite. Lack of gender disaggregated data on climate change hinders women and girls' active engagement in climate action. This is more critical in conflict and post conflict settings where information before the conflict is no longer valid. More specifically, the need is arising for research on the climate, gender and conflict nexus.

Recommendations focused on adopting an integrated approach to gender mainstreaming and promoting women's agency in economic sectors as well as natural resource management as a way to achieve sustainable development. There was also a set of recommendations on the need to develop effective climate change awareness programs that involve all actors, including government, the international community, media, civil society and the public. Finally, participants recommended investing in institutionalized research for informed and effective climate change policy.



Credit: Magenta

INTRODUCTION

Libya is particularly vulnerable to climate change due to its geographic location. Climate change is subjecting the country to extreme climate events represented in increased and more severe sand and dust storms, droughts and increased temperatures. This is causing more stress on its already limited water sources and arable land. There is already significant decrease in rainfall, leading to economic loss in the agriculture sector, which is heavily reliant on irrigation. Higher temperatures are expected to lead to further disruptions in water and electricity supply systems, which could result in tensions and increased vulnerabilities. The political context in the country has thus far diverted attention and resources from climate action.

In June 2021, the Libyan House of Representatives ratified the Paris Agreement on combating climate change and adapting to its effects. The country is now expected to submit its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) for the first time. In October 2021, the Libyan Council of Ministers made the decision to re-establish the National Committee for Climate Change. This creates momentum and opportunity for effective climate action that engages the different components of society, particularly women and girls.

During its 66th session held in March 2022, the UN Economic and Social Council's Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) identified its priority theme as:

“Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes...”

- 1 World Bank Climate Change Knowledge Portal. Libya
- 2 ICRC. 2022. Libya: Conflict weakens farmers' abilities to mitigate climate risks
- 3 Climate Security Expert Network. 2021. Climate Fragility Risk Brief – Libya. M. Brubacher.
- 4 NDCs embody efforts by each country to reduce national emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change.



The Commission called for all actors to integrate a gender perspective in the planning, implementation and reporting of climate action and for empowering women to become agents of change in climate action. It recognized the need for producing data and research on climate change and ensuring they are gender sensitive. This is particularly important in conflict settings where vulnerability increases and where equal engagement of women in just transition is needed. Finally, the Commission recognized that different groups in society require different approaches for their engagement as their priorities vary based on age, gender, geographic location and disability, among other characteristics.

Within this context, UN Women in Libya organized an online webinar on International Women's Day of 2022 on the role of Libyan women and girls in climate action. Discussion and recommendations are expected to inform the development of Libya's NDCs. Participants included researchers, climate activists and development practitioners. The webinar was live streamed on social media.



SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS AND TAKEAWAYS

The webinar highlighted experiences of Libyan women in Climate change awareness and research. It also explored the potential for Libyan women's empowerment and engagement in order to achieve sustainable development and climate resilience. During the webinar, results of a desk review commissioned by UN Women on women's economic empowerment and access to natural resources was presented. The study focused on the oil and gas sector, as the key component of Libya's economy, and access to water. In addition, preliminary findings were shared of an assessment conducted by WFP on livelihoods, climate change and food systems. A success story from Tunisia on engaging young men and women in formal climate negotiations was also highlighted.

In particular, issues under the following areas were discussed:

- A** Women's economic empowerment and access to natural resources
- B** Climate change awareness and youth action
- C** Climate resilience and livelihood policy

A WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND ACCESS TO NATURAL RESOURCES



WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND ACCESS TO NATURAL RESOURCES

Climate change is not gender neutral. It affects men and women differently. In many countries, access to and management and sustainability of basic resources, such as water, food and energy, are all the responsibility, and therefore concern, of women. Women are many times expected to develop sustainable agriculture, manage water resources among the community, and come up with renewable energy sources without access to land, financial means, or technology.

Similarly, women and girls suffer disproportionately from conflicts. They face unique challenges to economic inclusion and rights during conflict and post conflict recovery. Yet, when it comes to decision making about natural resources, climate change and conflict, women's influence is limited. Where women face the most severe economic exclusion is also where their participation is most needed. For a country in crisis, conflict or post conflict, like Libya, women's economic participation is critical for development, stability and long term peace.

Findings of the desk review on women's economic empowerment and access to natural resources shows a direct correlation between higher levels of women empowerment in post conflict states on the one hand, and rapid economic recovery and poverty reduction on the other. This is because, in practice, women have shown to focus on development priorities that are beneficial for both men and women, such as access to clean water, sanitation and environmental protection. This means that economic empowerment of women and allowing them greater control over resources increase investments in children's health, education and nutrition, thereby benefiting future generations.

In Libya's case, improving employment opportunities for women in the oil and gas sector, and integrating women's concerns in the allocation of revenues from oil and gas exploitation will significantly increase Libya's development potential. While there is a tendency to view the oil and gas sector exclusively as an economic sector, it cannot be viewed in isolation of its impact on the environment and climate. It is important to integrate women in this sector both as economic actors, in terms of employment, and decision makers to benefit from their perspective on the environmental aspects. Improving women's agency in consultations and decision making processes related to the design,

planning and operation of projects in the extractive industries will reduce the negative impacts related to oil and gas exploitations, such as environmental degradation and pollution caused by mining.

Similarly, involving women in natural resource management is essential for climate resilience. The desk review highlights studies that show how women's knowledge of sustainable natural resource management is vital for climate mitigation and adaptation policies. This is particularly important when it comes to water stress in Libya. Involving women in local water management can greatly improve water quality, as women often have knowledge of local water supplies and are the ones responsible for managing the supply in the home.

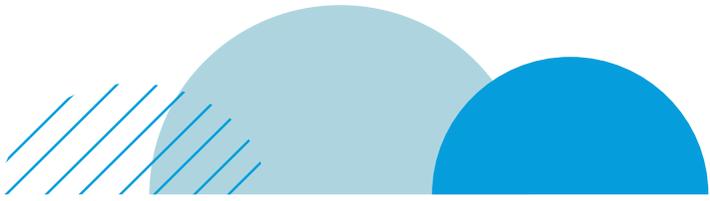
The desk review also reveals that Libyan women are absent from economic planning and decision making. This is caused by a lack of awareness of the fact that women have different needs. In addition, gender mainstreaming is not viewed as much of a priority as other issues in the economic sector, both by international and national players. For example, a gender perspective was largely missing from Libya's economic track process and the economic roadmap prepared by economic track members. When the economic roadmap was prepared, there were only three women in the Libyan expert committee. Additional women were later invited to attend. Women are also not represented in banking, in the central bank or in decision roles related to the country's economic policies, strategies and visions. This confines women's economic participation to micro, macro and small businesses. In the long run, this does not support women's economic participation as it limits their role to only a traditional economic role.

A case study from Uganda was highlighted where there has been success in integrating women's concerns into development strategies. Uganda developed a water and sanitation gender strategy where the government committed to provide better access for women and to take gender perspective into account for water resource management. In addition, the Ugandan National Climate Change policy of 2015 and national development plan acknowledge and provide solutions to gender inequality. They also prioritize several sectors, including oil and gas and minerals sectors, which makes the experience relevant to Libya.

⁵ The economic and financial track is one of the three intra-Libyan tracks that the UN Support Mission to Libya (UNSMIL) is organizing for the peace process - along with the military and political tracks. These were endorsed by the International Conference on Libya held in Berlin in 2020.

B CLIMATE CHANGE AWARENESS AND YOUTH ACTION





CLIMATE CHANGE AWARENESS AND YOUTH ACTION

There was consensus during the webinar that climate change is not a topic of conversation in Libya, whether in political or social settings. To begin with, there is a lack of interest by media outlets in topics related to climate change. There is also lack of government interest and action to engage the public, particularly young activists, in climate policy or to inform them about existing campaigns and projects. Finally, there is lack of funding of climate action initiatives. If this persists, future climate policies will lack public support as people cannot see the impact of these policies on their lives.

It was also agreed that there is lack of data on Libyan perspectives on climate change and how to communicate climate issues to Libyans. This data informs about people's values, beliefs and concerns in order to use arguments that resonate with them and ensure their ownership. Online discourse of Libyans following Libya's ratification of the Paris Agreement in 2021 reveals a lack of understanding of the impact of climate change and the need to take action. First, there is a common belief that climate change is caused by major industrial countries and countries with nuclear programs, and that, in return, only those countries are affected by climate change. Online exchanges focused on the financial implications of signing the agreement and how the agreement contributes to shutting down the only source of income in the country, namely oil. Libyans also believe there are other pressing issues for a country at war, including unemployment and health.

Despite these challenges, it was highlighted in the webinar that women in Libya are aware and interested in climate change. One of the reasons women's participation is weak is their unwillingness to participate due to traditions that hinder their participation in such activities. A number of interventions during the webinar stressed that women who are interested in engaging in climate action should be proactive in claiming their place and creating spaces for themselves and other women. Even when faced with obstacles, they should find ways to participate, make a change and have their demands heard. It was indicated that the right environment for

women's participation will not always be provided and that women can utilize media, social media, or start with small circles in order to reach the bigger circles.

Climate education for children was highlighted as key for making longer term impact. Different approaches should be applied for different groups in climate education. For example, people's reaction to climate education is usually based on emotional responses rather than scientific facts. In order for them to take action and have a sense of ownership, they have to see how the issues are affecting their immediate surroundings. On the other hand, with children and young people, scientific facts resonate, partly because they are unbiased.

ONLINE DISCOURSE OF LIBYANS FOLLOWING LIBYA'S RATIFICATION OF THE PARIS AGREEMENT IN 2021 REVEALS A LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE NEED TO TAKE ACTION.

Tunisia's success story in submitting their updated NDCs to the Conference of the Parties in 2021 (COP26) was highlighted during the webinar. First, gender aspects were integrated into the adaptation and mitigation measures that were the focus of the commitments. These include capacity building, training, economic empowerment and inclusion of a gender lense in all studies to be conducted. Similarly, a group of young men and women climate activists were selected to support the Ministry of Environment in the climate negotiation process. These Young Negotiators had an active role in COP26 and are currently building on that success. Challenges to the Young Negotiators experience so far include lack of funding to attend events and the fact that members are not available full time as they are part time volunteers.

CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD POLICY



CLIMATE RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD POLICY

Research in conflict and post conflict settings is essential for post conflict recovery, particularly in light of climate change. Data available before the conflict is no longer relevant. Population numbers, distribution, and health and disability data change due to displacement, migration, casualties and injuries. Disruption of governance and economic activity affects unemployment and poverty rates, economic indicators and infrastructure. Climate change creates new vulnerabilities in relation to access to natural resources, displacement, and the spread of disease. In some cases, it causes competition over natural resources and the provision of services. Women and girls in particular are more vulnerable in this setting, as they are often expected to manage resources in the household and they face additional challenges in relation to their livelihood.

The need for research on climate change in Libya was stressed by presenters. To begin with, research will help understand the climate system, its stimuli and its effects, which have been visible for at least the past ten years. It will also help identify adaptation and mitigation measures in the short and long run, particularly in light of the conflict. For example, Libya's water security is reliant completely on the Great Man-Made River, which is not sustainable. The conflict contributed to the water crisis as water sources, including the Man-Made river, were constantly under attack. This caused interruptions in the water supply for different groups.

The desk review commissioned by UN Women reveals that the issue of climate change has been absent from Libya's recovery agenda. There was no mention of climate change, sustainable management of natural resources or environmental risks in conflict recovery plans developed in the past few years. Similarly there are currently no environmental or water strategies for Libya.

LIBYA'S WATER SECURITY IS RELIANT COMPLETELY ON THE GREAT MAN-MADE RIVER, WHICH IS NOT SUSTAINABLE.

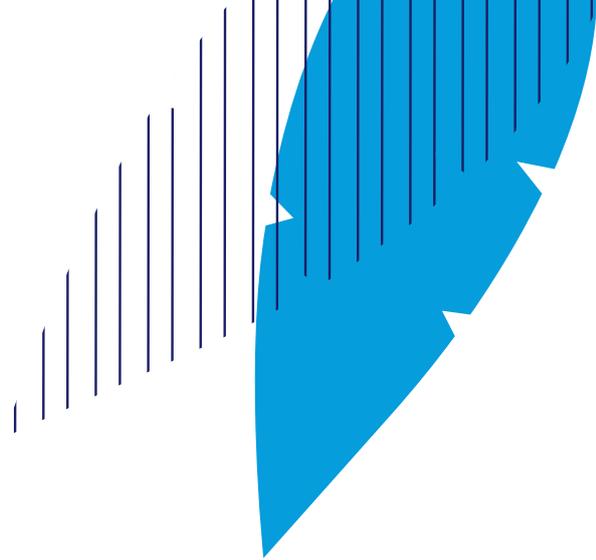
One of the economic activities most vulnerable to climate change in Libya is the agricultural sector. Preliminary data presented by WFP indicates a lack of awareness among farmers about the impact of climate change on agriculture. In addition, there are no government funded training or awareness raising initiatives related to climate change adaptation. Farmers rely on knowledge transferred from older generations. For example, single crop agricultural practices are dominant, while crop diversification is deemed risky. In addition, monitoring water usage is only applied by a minority. There is also a lack of information on environmental laws and policies and a lack of adherence to existing legislation, such as in relation to wildlife protection and pollution.

Currently, there are no institutional mitigation measures in place. In case of agricultural output losses, Libyan farmers rely on their social networks and social safety nets in the form of borrowing money or in-kind transfers from the Red Crescent. Some farmers have absorptive, coping strategies including spending savings or selling assets. There are no financing and insurance options or unions for farming communities. Finally, climate-resilient infrastructure is non-existent. Farmers' reliance on electricity to operate

irrigation systems, water pumps and storage units leaves farmers vulnerable to electricity cuts. These cuts are increasing due to rising temperatures and the lack of maintenance of electricity systems. Frequent interruptions in the irrigation systems cause crop failure and production rate fluctuation. There are also no reforestation campaigns to help fight extreme climate events. In addition, access to low water-use irrigation systems varies between regions due to cost or lack of infrastructure.



Women and girls in particular are more vulnerable in this setting, as they are often expected to manage resources in the household and they face additional challenges in relation to their livelihood.

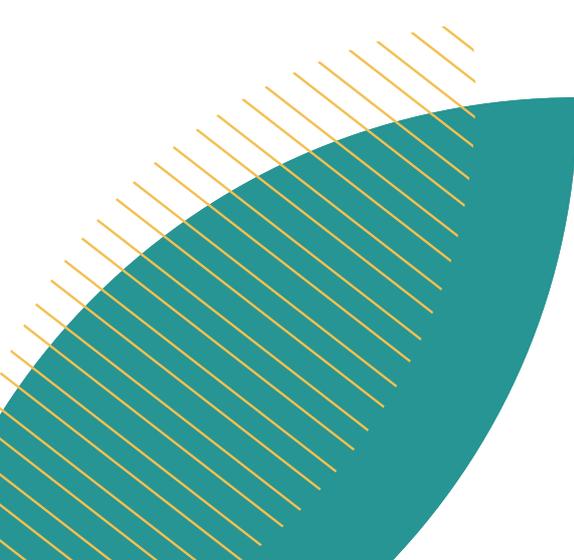


RECOMMENDATIONS

Libya ratified CEDAW in 1989, with reservations. The Convention includes articles on the right of women in relation to climate change, disaster risk reduction and gender. This applies to assessment and data collection, policy coherence, capacity development, access to technology, extraterritorial obligations, international cooperation and resource allocation. In addition, Libya signed the Paris Agreement in 2016 and ratified it in 2021. These global priorities need action locally, in the form of policies, raising awareness, data collection, funding, engaging all stakeholders and understanding root causes in order to come up with local solutions.

UN Women offers spaces for different stakeholders to understand how they need to complement each other, in terms of policy and legislation, working with civil society, and on information and data collection. The goal is to understand the niche comparative advantage of each partner, what they can contribute, and what can be done and improved. The webinar is a roadmap with the hope of having a coalition of people who believe in climate action who will build on the results of this webinar.

Below is a list of recommendations identified by participants during the webinar in relation to the areas discussed:



- Adopt an **integrated approach to gender mainstreaming**. This includes consultations, decision making, and capacity building.
- Promote **women's agency in natural resource management** in Libya, in light of climate change.
- Conduct a **national assessment of priorities**, awareness levels, barriers to action, target audience and messages related to climate change in Libya. Facilitate discussion on the extent to which **Libyans understand climate effects** and how it reflects to their lives.
- Develop a **National Climate Awareness Programme**. The impact of climate change should be linked to every day concerns through telling stories in addition to presenting the numbers and future projections and by focusing on the positive aspects of climate action on Libya.
- Include in **awareness and educational campaigns** information on the difference between weather and climate, which human activities are responsible for climate change, the fact that the impact of emissions is not limited to specific countries, and that climate change is closely linked to social and economic challenges.
- Bring to the forefront the **discussion on climate change in Libya** and how the conflict is contributing to it. This is an opportunity to build on the success of Libyan women in civil society in raising awareness at the grassroots level. Working with local councils could be a start, particularly among women members.
- Utilize **media as one of the means to reach the general public** when it comes to climate change awareness. If used properly, it could spark public interest in climate change.
- **Integrate outreach activities into national climate policies** from the start to ensure the public is informed about national climate change strategies and that people are engaged in developing and implementing national policies.

- Ensure the government is **responsive to youth climate activist efforts** to reach out and engage in order to jointly develop effective communication strategies to engage Libya's youth.
- The international community should consider supporting small scale projects and **initiatives on climate change awareness targeting young people.**
- **Establish an administrative body** in Libya with the tangible role on the ground of bringing together researchers, university graduates and faculty. This body should provide access to government entities, economists, and decision makers in order to develop evidence-based policies.
- **Raise awareness of the importance of research in higher education.** Develop students' research skills and knowledge, particularly at the Bachelor's level, in terms of research methods, managing a research project, conducting literature review, data collection, particularly from government entities, and data analysis. Provide funding for research by public and private sectors.
- **Promote a bigger role for civil society** in terms of statistics and data collection in the environmental sector, as they have direct contact with local communities.
- **Utilize research to reduce reliance on oil** in Libya and develop renewable sources and raise awareness of the concept of sustainable development and its goals.

UN Women is the UN Organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes, and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to all national development planning and budgeting.

UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality..

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