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USAID's Collective Action to Reduce Gender-Based Violence (CARE-GBV)

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# Foundational Elements for Gender-Based Violence Programming in Development

SECTION 3.5. SECTOR-SPECIFIC PROGRAM ELEMENTS

## **Addressing GBV through Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Programs**

Analytical Services IV Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ)  
Contract No. 7200AA19/D00006/7200AA20F00011

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AGENT</b>	Advancing Gender in the Environment
<b>CARE-GBV</b>	Collective Action to Reduce Gender-Based Violence
<b>ccGAP</b>	Climate change and gender action plan
<b>CEFMU</b>	Child, early, and forced marriage and unions
<b>CSA</b>	Climate-smart agriculture
<b>FGRM</b>	Feedback and grievance redress mechanism
<b>GBV</b>	Gender-based violence
<b>GenDev</b>	USAID Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Hub
<b>IPV</b>	Intimate partner violence
<b>IUCN</b>	International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources
<b>NAP</b>	National adaptation plan
<b>NDC</b>	Nationally determined contribution
<b>REDD+</b>	Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation
<b>RISE</b>	Resilience, Inclusive & Sustainable Environments
<b>SASAP</b>	Sectoral adaptation strategy and action plan
<b>SEA</b>	Sexual exploitation and abuse

<b>SOGIESC</b>	Sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics
<b>SRCS</b>	Samoa Red Cross Society
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>WRO</b>	Women's rights organization

# Introduction

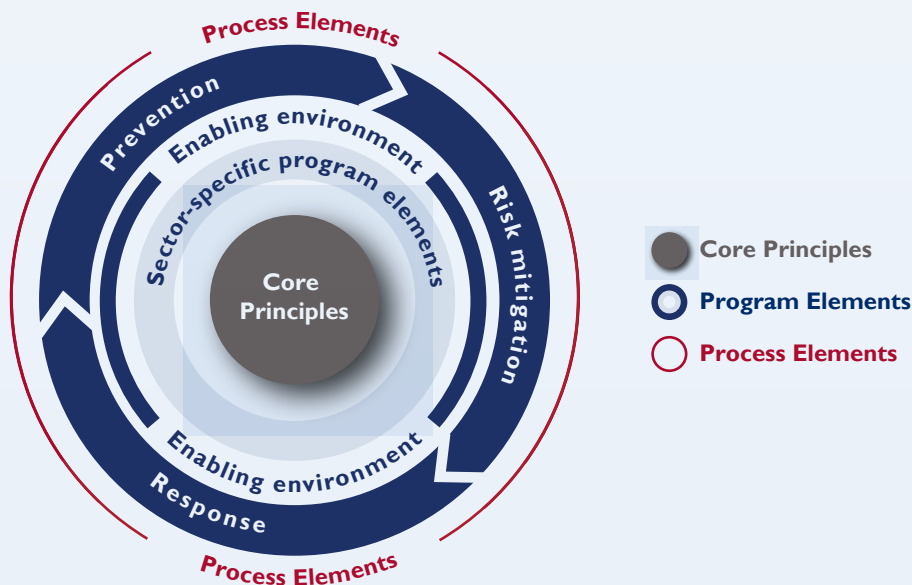
This document describes why USAID’s climate adaptation and mitigation programs should integrate programming to address gender-based violence (GBV) and details specific strategies for doing so. Program examples are provided to illustrate how the strategies can be incorporated into climate adaptation and mitigation programs, and links to tools and resources are provided for additional information.

This document is part of the *Foundational Elements for Gender-Based Violence Programming in Development*, which include core principles, program elements (prevention, risk mitigation, response, enabling environment), and process elements. Ideally, readers will familiarize themselves with these sections of the *Foundational Elements* before reading this brief. At a minimum, readers should be familiar with the following sections before reviewing this brief:

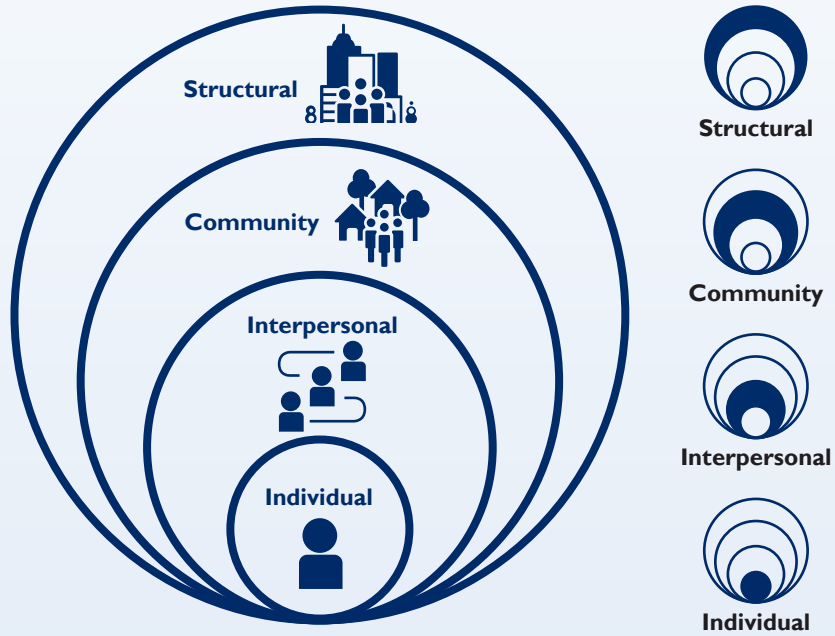
- Section 1.0. Introduction
- Section 3.2. Program Elements: Risk Mitigation
- Section 4.0. Process Elements:
  - Values, Organizational Culture, and Leadership (Program Example: A Framework for Safeguarding Program Participants)
  - Strategic Planning and Design (Gender Analysis and Referral Network Mapping)

## Box 1.0.: USAID Climate Strategy 2022–2030

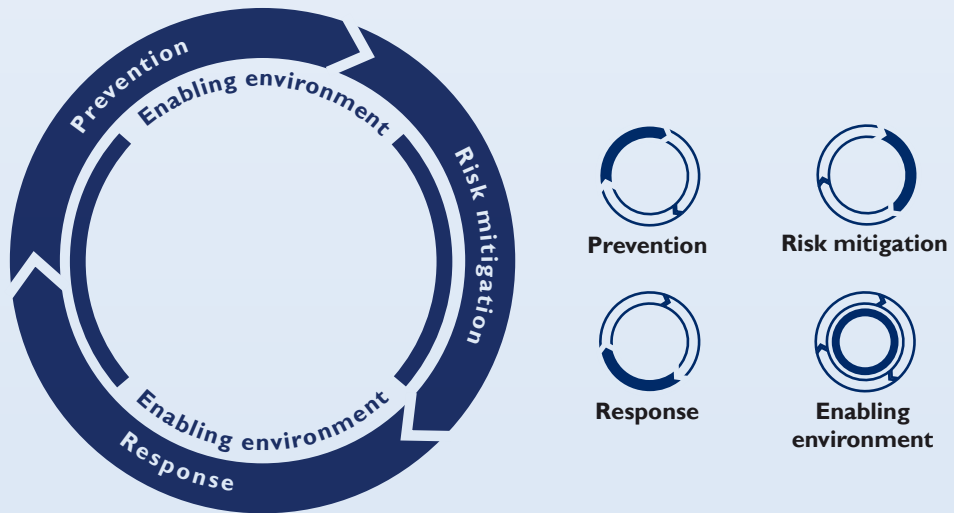
“Climate change...exacerbates economic, socio-cultural, and environmental inequities, increasing the vulnerability of marginalized and underrepresented groups to hunger, malnutrition, and violence—including gender-based violence and child abuse, dispossession, and disempowerment.” (USAID 2022a)



The strategies described in this brief are organized by levels of the socio-ecological model: individual, interpersonal, community, and structural. Effective GBV interventions typically include strategies that address multiple levels of the socio-ecological model.



Each strategy is also labeled as prevention, risk mitigation, response, or enabling environment.



# Why Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Programming Should Address GBV

The climate crisis is accelerating and directly affecting diverse people and communities through prolonged drought, floods, and slow-onset events that affect food security, resource availability and reliability, poverty alleviation, and country development goals. Climate change has differential gender impacts (United Nations 2019), and evidence on climate change and climate-related disasters indicates gender differences in survival, access to relief and recovery assistance, participation in climate-related planning and policymaking (UNFCCC n.d.), and GBV. This disproportionately affects women and girls who experience multiple and overlapping forms of discrimination, people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC); disabilities; racial or ethnic identities; nationality; immigrant or refugee status; and others.

Climate change, through a cascade of direct and indirect impacts, amplifies existing gender inequalities and other risk factors for GBV, including poverty, harmful gender and social norms,<sup>1</sup> interpersonal and community conflict, and displacement (GBV Area of Responsibility 2021, Castañeda Camey et al. 2020). Such conditions allow GBV to persist as a means to reinforce gender inequality and undermine climate mitigation, adaptation, and broader resilience-building investments and action (Owren 2021). This also harms overall progress toward gender equality, women's empowerment, and sustainable development goals.

Evidence from across regions shows specific links between climate change and GBV, including:

- **Harmful practices such as child, early, and forced marriage and unions (CEFMU):** Reports indicate that rates of CEFMU have increased due to the compounding stressors of climate change and, more recently, COVID-19 (e.g., school closures, stretched financial resources) (Castañeda Camey et al. 2020). In Afghanistan, Cameroon, India, South Sudan, and Yemen, for example, mounting concerns about food security have been associated with increased CEFMU (International Union for Conservation of Nature 2020). To understand the prevalence of this issue as result of climate change, some countries, such as Malawi, have included child marriage as one of the risks facing women and girls in its national post-disaster needs assessment (Owren 2021).
- **Sexual harassment, exploitation, and abuse (SEA) in situations of scarcity:** In periods of prolonged drought, women and girls must make longer journeys to obtain food and water, increasing their risk of sexual harassment and abuse (Apolitical 2019). In some communities in Namibia where drought has led to food insecurity, some women have felt they have no choice except to exchange sex for money and food to provide for their families' nutritional security, health, and well-being (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies 2015).
- **Exclusion and marginalization of diverse SOGIESC populations:** Persons of diverse SOGIESC have been excluded from temporary shelters or refused services following acute climate disasters. For example, in Fiji, individuals reported experiencing challenges in securing safe housing in the aftermath of Tropical Cyclone Winston and exclusion from relief efforts (Dwyer et al. 2018).

<sup>1</sup> Social norms are collective beliefs about what is typical or appropriate and promote equitable or harmful behaviors or practices. Gender norms are a type of social norm that influence behavior based on expected gender roles and responsibilities. GBV is rooted in harmful gender and social norms, and is both a consequence of gender inequality and a means to sustain it. The risks related to climate change can both exacerbate and entrench discriminatory norms that contribute to GBV.

- **Domestic violence and intimate partner violence (IPV):** Prolonged and sudden climatic events have led to resource scarcity and financial insecurity, contributing to increased household and community tensions and risk of domestic violence and IPV. In communities facing prolonged drought in Australia, financial pressures were linked to an increase in alcohol and drug consumption by men as a negative coping mechanism, which resulted in an increase in IPV (Castañeda Camey et al. 2020). Resource scarcity also intersects with gendered division of labor and expectations about responsibilities for household resource management, putting women disproportionately at risk. For example, in Sindh and Punjab, Pakistan, women reported experiencing domestic violence after failing to manage existing household water supply or deviating from established norms around women’s mobility by venturing to secure new water sources (United Nations Women 2020).

Understanding how climate change affects diverse gender and social groups and the risks it poses to their safety and well-being is key to addressing the multiple and overlapping systems of oppression and risk of GBV. When women, girls, people of diverse SOGIESC, and other marginalized groups experience bodily autonomy and lead lives free of oppression, stigma, violence, and coercion—including all forms of GBV—they and their families can exercise agency to make self-determined life choices and develop greater resilience to the consequences of climate change. In communities experiencing the sustained impacts of climate change, addressing GBV is critical for healthy and sustainable environments and supports advancing progress toward gender equality, women’s empowerment, and sustainable development goals.

Addressing gender inequalities and GBV in the context of the climate crisis is linked with other issues such as environment and natural resource management, land and property rights, energy and infrastructure, and water security, sanitation, and hygiene. For more information on addressing GBV in these sectors, see Section 3.5. Sector-Specific Program Elements.

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# How Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Programming Can Address GBV

Evidence shows that GBV and climate change are linked in a range of ways, requiring gender-responsive approaches to climate adaptation, mitigation, and broader resilience investments and action. The following strategies are focused on strengthening the enabling environment to address GBV and integrating GBV prevention and risk mitigation strategies into climate adaptation and mitigation programming. These strategies are not intended to be exhaustive; instead, they provide USAID staff with suggestions for strategies they might consider integrating into programming on climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience to meaningfully address GBV.

## Strategy #1: Advance girls' education and women's awareness and capacity-building through climate adaptation and mitigation strategies and support livelihood resilience to climate shocks



**Program elements:**  
risk mitigation



**Levels of socio-ecological model:**  
individual, interpersonal

Promoting girls' and women's education on and knowledge of climate stressors and impacts, adaptation and mitigation strategies, and climate-related technological innovations can enhance protective factors<sup>2</sup> that influence vulnerability and risk of experiencing GBV. Advancing education in climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies can build on their community-based knowledge and foster their engagement in climate leadership and pro-environment decision making.

To support resilience to climate shocks, for example, apply climate-smart agriculture (CSA) principles to community development projects (FAO 2022). Increased knowledge of food and nutritional security and the application of CSA practices can prevent food and resource scarcity that can lead to household tensions and GBV and increased exposure to GBV while en route for food, fuel, and water resources (Castañeda Camey et al. 2020). This can also reduce the risk of sexual exploitation and other forms of violence, such as engaging in transactional sex for food or resources, as well as the risks associated with CEFMU motivated by threats of food insecurity or financial stress.

<sup>2</sup> Protective factors are conditions or attributes that are associated with a lower likelihood of an individual perpetrating or experiencing violence. These factors occur at the individual, relationship, community, and societal levels. Education access and attainment are protective against many forms of GBV.



## Strategy #2: Engage men and boys as partners for addressing GBV in climate adaptation and mitigation programs



**Program elements:**  
prevention, risk mitigation



**Levels of socio-ecological model:**  
individual, interpersonal, community

Men and boys have a unique role to play as partners in gender equality by promoting and supporting healthy, positive masculinities that also underpin their ability to adapt, build resilience to, and mitigate climate change and its impacts (MenEngage Alliance 2016).

Organizations that engage men and boys in addressing environmental issues should work alongside women's rights and feminist movements to employ gender-transformative approaches that seek to integrate GBV into climate change mitigation and adaptation programming (see Section 2.0. Core Principles: Led by Women's Rights Organizations and Other Local Groups Working on GBV and Human Rights). Such work can address power imbalances between men and women by raising awareness of the gendered impacts of climate change and GBV; discussing concepts of the social construction of masculinity with evolving climate vulnerabilities; supporting positive, non-violent expressions of masculinity through mentoring, peer support, and group reflections (International Union for Conservation of Nature 2021); and working to transform harmful attitudes and norms (Strategy # 4) that contribute to gender inequality and GBV. Additionally, gender and GBV experts can provide training and messaging to local leaders on how to apply gender-responsive alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and facilitate gender-sensitive community dialogues on harmful gender attitudes and GBV.

In addition, male allies in leadership positions should be engaged to promote the inclusion of women's rights organizations (WROs), climate justice activists, and human rights groups in decision-making processes on climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies, policy making, and implementation (See Section 2.0. Core Principles: Led by Women's Rights Organizations and Other Local Groups Working on GBV and Human Rights).

## Strategy #3: Invest in locally led women's rights organizations and networks and engage gender and GBV specialists



**Program elements:**  
enabling environment



**Levels of socio-ecological model:**  
community, structural

Climate practitioners should engage locally led WROs and other human rights groups throughout the program cycle. Locally led specialists and organizations are well suited to navigate local norms, identify context-specific GBV approaches, and foster long-term change. Funders are well positioned to support the vital work of locally led organizations, especially those working with women, people of diverse SOGIESC, and youth. These groups should be provided with flexible, core, and recurring funding to promote their leadership in adaptation and resilience projects and promote the sustainability of their work (see Section 3.4. Program Elements: Enabling Environment: Invest in Women's Rights Organizations).

Prioritizing meaningful participation of women and other marginalized groups is recommended for all strategies, in line with the core principles that should underpin all activities. (See Section 2.0. Core Principles: Led by Women’s Rights Organizations and Other Local Groups Working on GBV and Human Rights). Practitioners should facilitate efforts to increase women’s participation and leadership in policymaking on climate change adaptation at the local, national, and international levels. This includes learning from their experiences and elevating the voices and rights of the groups they represent, opportunities for knowledge exchange, and capacity strengthening around the interlinkages among climate change, climate justice, gender equality, and GBV (Global Greengrants Fund et al. 2015).

Local gender and GBV experts should also be engaged to ensure that GBV expertise and survivor-centered approaches and resources are available and integrated into program design, implementation, and evaluation (see Section 2.0. Core Principles: Survivor-Centered and How to Implement a Survivor-Centered Approach in GBV programming [CARE-GBV 2021a]).

## **Strategy #4: Conduct gender analyses and social norms assessments, and address harmful norms that contribute to risk of GBV**



**Program elements:**  
prevention, risk mitigation



**Levels of socio-ecological model:**  
interpersonal, community, structural

As noted above, inequitable social and gender norms are drivers of gender inequality and GBV. All climate programming should produce a gender analysis that includes an assessment of social norms that contribute to GBV in the local context, how the proposed program may exacerbate or reduce GBV, and the safeguarding practices the program will put in place. For more information on including a focused GBV analysis as part of a gender analysis, see Section 4.0. Process Elements: Strategic Planning and Design. For more information on conducting, identifying, and addressing social norms, see how to identify and advance equitable social norms (CARE-GBV 2021b).

Climate programming that seeks to play a role in transforming social and gender norms should include a risk assessment of how proposed programming may shift norms and affect GBV, including possible backlash. Gender and social norm assessments can identify who experiences privilege and disadvantages with regard to natural resource use, control, and ownership; time and labor burden for productive, reproductive, and community work; education; income generation; and persistent gender norms that may limit access to alternative livelihoods. The assessment should also include identification of any unique vulnerabilities stemming from intersecting identities (including persons with disabilities and members of indigenous, ethnic, or religious minority communities), particularly in regions or landscapes susceptible to climatic events that drive drought, floods, storms, landslides, and conflict. Recommendations produced from this assessment should be meaningfully incorporated into the work plan (see Section 4.0. Process Elements: Strategic Planning and Design and Program Elements: Risk Mitigation).

Community programming should address gender and social norms that affect women’s labor and care responsibilities, and result in discriminatory practices in resource allocation, access, and control. Promote laws, policies, and guidelines that embrace women’s land ownership, access, and control and enhance the leadership, political participation, and collective agency of women’s groups and people of diverse SOGIESC as a stepping stone to building resilience to climate change and reducing the risk of GBV.

**Strategy #5: Advocate for and support the inclusion of robust, well-funded gender-responsive climate change mitigation and adaptation activities, including ensuring budget for GBV prevention, risk mitigation, and response**



**Program elements:**  
enabling environment



**Levels of socio-ecological model:**  
structural

Promote greater investment in systems strengthening related to GBV and the integration of GBV considerations into national, regional, and global climate policies and action plans. Funding should be earmarked for gender-responsive activities—those that identify and address gender-based inequalities and barriers—and other interlinked societal inequalities that place individuals and groups at risk for GBV. These steps should ensure that priorities and needs of people of diverse SOGIESC are understood and addressed, particularly in climate-related disaster and response planning.

For example, calls for funding should allow funds to be used to address the gendered division of labor, intra-household dynamics, and gender norms to ensure gender responsiveness and support opportunities to integrate GBV in climate change adaptation and mitigation programming. Sufficient budget should be allocated for specialists with expertise on climate, gender inequalities, and approaches to prevent and respond to GBV.

## Strategy #6: Support the development of gender-responsive climate strategies,<sup>3</sup> policies, and implementation plans that include attention to addressing GBV and the right to safety from violence, including for women environmental human rights defenders<sup>4</sup>



**Program elements:**  
prevention, response



**Levels of socio-ecological model:**  
structural

Support the development of national gender-responsive climate plans and policies—from nationally determined contribution (NDC) priority actions (UNFCCC 2022) to national adaptation plans (NAPs) and other sector-specific and subnational plans (McGray 2014), for example sectoral adaptation strategies and action plans (SASAPs) that specifically recognize that acute and slow-onset climate impacts are exacerbating gender inequalities and GBV risks. These efforts should include putting safeguards and accountability mechanisms in place to prevent and respond to GBV—both as a consequence of climate change and caused by climate action in climate plans and policies.

One example is through the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and USAID partnership Advancing Gender in the Environment (*AGENT*), which has collaborated with host governments and cross-sectoral stakeholders to develop national climate change and gender action plans (ccGAPs) that focus on identifying gender-specific issues and ensure that gender equality is integrated into policies and interventions related to climate change (IUCN 2020).

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<sup>3</sup> Gender-responsive climate strategies identify and critically examine gender-based inequalities and barriers to sustainable development. This approach integrates gender considerations into the planning, design, and implementation of climate-related investment and action, and promotes gender equality at all levels of the socio-ecological model.

<sup>4</sup> For more information on addressing GBV against women environmental human rights defenders, see Section 3.5. Sector-Specific Program Elements: Environment and Natural Resource Management.

# Program Examples

The following examples demonstrate how GBV prevention, risk mitigation, and response can be integrated into climate-related policy and programming.

## Example #1: USAID's Resilience, Inclusive & Sustainable Environments (RISE) Challenge

The RISE Challenge, funded by USAID, supports organizations to address the links between GBV and environment, including to adapt and implement evidence-based approaches to prevent and respond to GBV in environment-related programming. The programs target the underlying causes of GBV at the community and household levels that have far-reaching implications for individuals, families, and environmental sustainability outcomes (IUCN 2022, IUCN and USAID 2021).

In Fiji, Marstel-Day, WI-HER, and the World Bank-funded Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+) program work with multiple implementers and actors to address gender-based risks and resource-driven conflict and violence, including GBV, that may arise as a result of conservation programming. Their efforts include the following:

- Creating a feedback and grievance redress mechanism (FGRM) to help address the unintended consequences of REDD+ programming

- Establishing communication channels between communities and government agencies or companies for disputes and issue resolution

With funding from USAID's RISE Challenge, the project used the (iDARE) gender-integration methodology to enhance the FGRM into a remodeled FGRM+ to mitigate gender-based risk and address GBV arising from payment for ecosystem services programming. The FGRM+ is a gender-responsive blueprint for addressing resource-based conflicts that arise and are exacerbated by environmental conservation initiatives. This mechanism is customized to local context, incorporates protections for women and vulnerable groups into conservation programs, and safeguards against unintended negative consequences of programming (USAID 2022b).

## Example #2: Samoa Red Cross Society: Strengthening Protection, Gender, and Inclusion in Disaster Law

In Samoa, following research and analysis on sexual and GBV in the aftermath of the 2009 tsunami and 2012 Cyclone Evan, the Samoa Red Cross Society (SRCS) provided technical assistance and influenced national planning and policy development in the following ways:

- Provided recommendations and technical assistance on integrating GBV into the National Disaster Management Plan, including requiring that women's participation and leadership in disaster management be increased.
- Engaged public authorities to update the national standard operating procedures for disaster response to include GBV services and provide relevant training for local responders.
- Hosted training sessions, including a training entitled *Joint Action for Prevention and Response to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies* with participants from Pacific Red Cross National Societies, the International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent Societies, and national government and civil society stakeholders. In addition, SRCS partnered with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to facilitate a training on GBV programming in emergencies.
- Supported the inclusion of the benefits of gender equality to community resilience in the Samoa National Policy for Gender Equality (Samoa Red Cross Society 2018).

## Example #3: Building Resilient Communities, Wetland Ecosystems, and Associated Catchments

The Green Climate Fund's project Building Resilient Communities, Wetland Ecosystems, and Associated Catchments, implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), integrates customized GBV preventive actions into climate change mitigation and alternative livelihood components in two sub-counties in Eastern and Western Uganda. The project aims to facilitate transformation not only within the communities vulnerable to climate change, but also among decision makers and leaders at all levels. The project's gender analysis uncovered and addressed a range of connections between GBV and climatic crises, from links between droughts and SEA and CEFMU to a rise in IPV and domestic violence due to depleting agricultural and water resources.

The project has focused on risk mitigation in two communities through the following

activities implemented in partnership with the Center for Domestic Violence Prevention:

- Strengthening capacity among national partners around the intersections of GBV with their respective mandates and how to safely, ethically, and effectively address GBV.
- Mentoring district- and community-level workers to develop their capacity to address GBV risk factors.
- Engaging community members in participatory activities around critical reflection, analysis of power dynamics, understanding GBV and alternatives to GBV in the context of relationships, building gender-equitable attitudes and dismantling harmful gender norms, and providing GBV service referrals for survivors (Gevers et al. 2020).

# Tools and Resources

Resources from [The Gender-Based Violence and Environment Linkages Center \(GBV-ENV Center\)](#), coordinated under AGENT:

- Boyer AE, SS Meijer, and M Gilligan. 2020. “Advancing Gender in the Environment: Exploring the Triple Nexus of Gender Inequality, State Fragility, and Climate Vulnerability.” Washington, D.C.: IUCN and USAID. <https://genderandenvironment.org/triple-nexus/>.
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- IUCN. 2021a. “Gender Analysis Guide: A Technical Tool to Inform Gender-Responsive Environmental Programming for IUCN, Its Members, Partners and Peers.” Gland, Switzerland: IUCN. <https://genderandenvironment.org/iucn-gender-analysis-guide/>.
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<https://unfccc.int/topics/adaptation-and-resilience/workstreams/national-adaptation-plans-naps/guidelines-for-national-adaptation-plans-naps>.

UN Women, IUCN. 2022. “Tackling Violence against Women and Girls in the Context of Climate Change.” New York, NY: UN Women. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/03/tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-in-the-context-of-climate-change>.

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See also Section 3.5. Sector-Specific Program Elements: Environment and Natural Resource Management, Land and Property Rights, Energy and Infrastructure, Water Security, Sanitation, and Hygiene.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This document was written by Alyssa Bovell and Margaux Granat, with technical input from IUCN staff and other members of the CARE-GBV team, including Diane Gardsbane, Molly Gilligan, Michele Lanham, and Fatima Saeed. This document was copyedited by Natasha Mack and Jelena Burgić Simmons, designed by Jill Vitick, and laid out by Miel Design Studio. Thank you to Anjalee Kohli, from the *Foundational Elements* Technical Advisory Group for providing review and input and to the USAID staff who provided review and input: Karol Boudreaux, Cleo Chou, Corinne Hart, Georgia Hartman, Dani Merriman, Jipy Priscilla, and Brittany Thomas.

## SUGGESTED CITATION

CARE-GBV. 2022. “Sector-Specific Program Elements: Addressing Gender-Based Violence through Climate Mitigation and Adaptation Programs.” In *Foundational Elements for Gender-Based Violence Programming in Development*. Washington, D.C.: USAID.

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The goal of the Collective Action to Reduce Gender-Based Violence (CARE-GBV) activity is to strengthen USAID’s collective prevention and response, or “collective action” in gender-based violence (GBV) development programming across USAID. For more information about CARE-GBV, click [here](#).

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