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**Women at the intersection of climate change, poverty, and vulnerability in MENA**

The Middle East and North Africa is both [a climate change hotspot](https://mena.iom.int/news/changing-climate-gender-equality-today-sustainable-tomorrow-and-call-inclusive-responses-climate-change-and-forced-migration-mena-region) and one of the world’s most gender unequal regions. According to the World Economic Forum’s [Global Gender Gap report 2023](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2023.pdf), the region is the furthest away from equality with a 62.6% parity score, suggesting it would take 152 years to fully attain parity at the current rate of progress.

As a result of gender inequality, women face [disproportionate risks](https://www.preventionweb.net/news/women-suffer-most-climate-displacement) from climate change. These risks can be attributed to women’s involvement in climate-sensitive livelihoods, such as agriculture and manual labor, in an effort to improve their families’ financial status and support their male counterparts. Around [50% of the workforce](https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/arabstates/Gender-policy_Final.pdf) in the agricultural sector in the MENA region is female. Faced with climate disasters, women are struggling [to find accessible water](https://reliefweb.int/report/world/if-women-dont-lead-well-lose-battle-against-climate-crisis) and are pushed to cultivate less fertile land. This limits their ability to grow crops and earn an income and contributes to food insecurity. Furthermore, discriminatory laws and prevailing social norms impede women’s access to resources, including land, credit, and water. This hampers their ability to develop their own agri-businesses and starkly [contrasts with the high percentage of women](https://www.fao.org/3/CC5060EN/online/status-women-agrifood-systems-2023/chapter1.html) working in the agriculture sector across the region — a figure that reaches up to [52% in Morocco](https://site.caes.uga.edu/studyabroad/2022/07/female-ag-workers-in-morocco/) and [45% in Egypt](https://aps.aucegypt.edu/en/articles/1328/enhancing-women-status-in-egypts-agriculture-sector-the-role-of-policy-interventions).

According to a [report](https://www.icarda.org/media/blog/four-ways-strengthening-gender-equality-agricultural-sector-mena-region) by the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), “Women own less than 5 percent of the agricultural land in the MENA region, and they are often excluded from decision-making related to land management.” The impacts of climate change also cause an increase in women’s and girls’ already unequal unpaid care and domestic responsibilities, trapping them in “time poverty” and constraining their access to education and employment opportunities. For example, in [Yemen,](https://civiliansinconflict.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/CIVIC_Report_Yemen_ClimateCrisis_ProtectionofCivilians.pdf) as a result of recurring droughts and aggravated water scarcity, girls have been forced to drop out of school to shoulder the growing burden as water becomes increasingly inaccessible and time-consuming to collect.

With the addition of regional conflicts, the result is mass displacement of women and girls, particularly as proximity to conflict increases. According to the [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees](https://data.unhcr.org/fr/documents/download/78893#:~:text=More%20than%2021%2C000%20families%20have,mostly%20in%20need%20of%20shelter.), due to the sweeping floods that took place in Yemen between May and August 2020, about 300,000 individuals lost their homes, crops, and livestock, and were subsequently internally displaced. In these situations of climate-induced migration, [women face greater risks than men](https://www.preventionweb.net/news/women-suffer-most-climate-displacement) due to gender-differentiated roles and the far greater burden of care work as compared to men. Therefore, when disasters hit, women are less likely to abandon their homes than men. In addition, the displacement process puts women and girls at high risk of gender-based violence, human trafficking, injury, and death. The UN Environment Program found as much as a [20-30% increase in human trafficking](https://www.undp.org/arab-states/publications/climate-action-gender-and-displacement-arab-region-turning-adversity-opportunity), particularly of women, in the wake of climate disasters. Furthermore, women and children are [14 times more likely to die](https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-13-climate-action) than men during a disaster. Vulnerabilities are further amplified for women who are of ethnic or linguistic minorities, have disabilities, are pregnant, or are older.

# Policy shifts and political challenges as Algeria prepares