Gender Equality in the Age of Climate Crisis

Progress of the World's Women Fact Sheets

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Introduction

The climate crisis threatens planetary life – and is deepening the inequalities that leave women and girls most at risk. This fact sheet presents selected data and evidence from the upcoming *Progress of the World's Women*, forthcoming in 2027, where these findings are developed in full.

As the world overshoots agreed limits on global heating, **women and girls are bearing the brunt of a crisis they have done least to create**.

On the current trajectory the world is headed for a minimum of 1.8°C of heating, unleashing even more devastating droughts, floods, wildfires and cyclones and creating irreversible loss and damage to communities and ecosystems.[1] The climate crisis is not gender-neutral: it amplifies inequalities in resources, rights, security and power.

At least **1.5 billion women and girls live in climate hotspots**, where high exposure to hazards intersects with precarious livelihoods and deep gender inequality (see Figure 1).[2]

An economic system based on growth at any cost drives the climate crisis, depleting precious environmental resources to create ever more wealth for a tiny global elite, while billions of women and girls struggle with daily existence.

The consequences of the climate crisis exacerbate existing inequalities, reaching every aspect of women's lives:

- Under a worst-case scenario, **up to 141 million additional women and girls could be living in extreme poverty by 2050**.[3] Based on data from 24 low-and middle-income countries, a 1°C increase in average temperatures is associated with women losing 34 per cent more of their total income than men.[4]
- **Climate change is increasing unpaid care responsibilities disproportionately shouldered by women and girls**, such as collection of water and fuel, and care for family members in the aftermath of disasters. Of the 1.8 billion people without water on their premises, women are primary water collectors in two thirds of households; collection times, on average, could increase by up to 30 per cent by 2050 under a high-emissions scenario.[5]
- Climate change is **exacerbating hunger**, as harvests fail, with women and girls paying the highest price. Women are already more likely to experience food insecurity than men.[6] By 2050, this could

[1] UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme). 2026a. "Limiting Overshoot – Navigating Exceedance of 1.5°C and Pathways towards Return." Nairobi: UNEP.
[2] Turquet, L., C. Tabbush, L. Williams et al. Forthcoming. *Progress of the World's Women 2027: Gender Equality in the Age of Climate Crisis*. New York: UN Women.
[3] UN Women and Pardee Institute for International Futures calculations using the International Futures modelling platform v.8.67. Accessed October 2026.
[4] FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations). 2024. *The Unjust Climate Measuring the Impacts of Climate Change on Rural Poor, Women and Youth*. Rome: FAO.
[5] Carr, R., M. Kotz, P.-P. Pichler et al. 2024. "Climate Change to Exacerbate the Burden of Water Collection on Women's Welfare Globally." *Nature Climate Change* 14, no. 7: 700–706.
[6] Bhatt, A., G. Fortuny, I. Berevoescu et al. 2026. *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2026*. New York: UN Women and DESA.

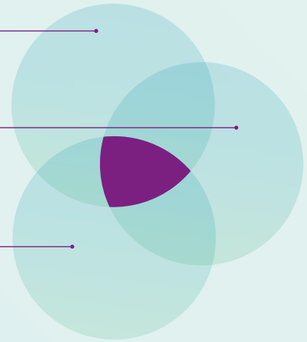
Figure 1 GENDER AND CLIMATE HOTSPOTS REVEAL AREAS OF ACUTE VULNERABILITY FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

GENDERED CLIMATE VULNERABILITY IS A FUNCTION OF:

EXPOSURE
Where women and girls live

SENSITIVITY
How heavily climate exposure harms women and girls

ADAPTIVE CAPACITY
The ability of women and girls to prepare for, respond to and recover from climate shocks



A woman on a floodplain has the same exposure as a man in that location. But her sensitivity may be determined by her **nutritional status** and **care responsibilities** and her adaptive capacity by her **land rights**, **mobility** and **access to decision-making**.[a]

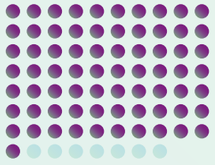
WHAT INCREASES SENSITIVITY AND REDUCES ADAPTIVE CAPACITY?

UNPAID CARE

Women and girls devote
2.5x
as many hours per day to unpaid domestic and care work as men do.[b]

LACK OF LAND RIGHTS

IN 71 OF 78
developing and European Union countries, women are less likely than men to own or have secure rights over agricultural land.[b]



PRECARIOUS WORK

55%
of women are in informal employment. These women lack social protection, decent work conditions and collective representation.[c]



LIMITED AGENCY

43.7%
of women aged 15–49 who were married or in a union in 2025 did not have full decision-making power over sexual and reproductive health and rights.[b]



Note: Data represent global averages, unless specified; [a] Bhatt et al. forthcoming-a; [b] Bhatt et al. 2026; c ILO 2023.

Hotspots of gendered climate vulnerability

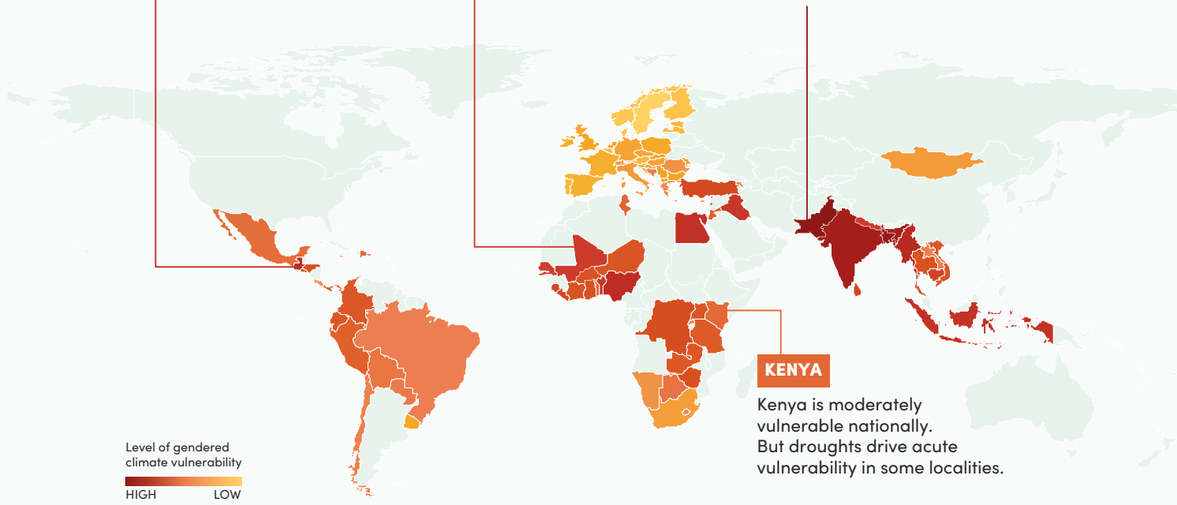
Countries in the top quartile of the climate vulnerability score are labelled as gender and climate hotspots. These are countries where women and girls face high levels of exposure and sensitivity and low adaptive capacity.

At least **1.5 BILLION** women and girls live in gender and climate hotspots, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Southern Asia.

GUATEMALA
Guatemala has high exposure to cyclones, and women's high rates of informal employment (86%) exacerbate their sensitivity.

MALI
Mali suffers from frequent droughts, while relatively low gender parity (0.6) affects adaptive capacity and increases climate vulnerability.

PAKISTAN
Pakistan is highly exposed to floods and cyclones, and women devote 11 times as many hours to unpaid care and domestic work as men do, increasing their sensitivity. However, stronger adaptive capacity in some areas reduces women's vulnerability.



KENYA
Kenya is moderately vulnerable nationally. But droughts drive acute vulnerability in some localities.

POLICY TAKEAWAY

In gender and climate hotspots, transformative adaptation is needed, including investments in social protection, care and climate-resilient agriculture, alongside measures to secure women's land rights and bolster their decision-making power.



Source: Bhatt et al. forthcoming-a. Note: The gendered climate vulnerability score captures a compounded risk environment in which women are more likely to be exposed to climate shocks, economically sensitive to the impact of climate change due to high representation in informal employment and structurally disadvantaged in adaptive capacity due to high gender inequalities in access to power, political representation, labour markets, health and education. Covers 95 countries and areas.

affect **an additional 185 million women and girls**, compared with 147 million more men and boys under a worst-case climate scenario.[7]

— Climate-related livelihood losses, displacement and resource scarcity can magnify existing drivers of **gender-based violence**. Across 14 countries, exposure to prolonged extreme drought was associated with 21 per cent higher odds of sexual violence against adolescent girls and young women.[8]

— Over the last decade, the pace of reduction for **child marriage** has almost doubled.[9] Climate change threatens to undo that progress. In 24 of 46 countries where data on child marriage can be disaggregated by exposure to slow-onset climate events, rates of child marriage were higher in more arid environments than in more humid ones, with gaps of more than 20 percentage points in countries like in Cameroon, Nepal and Nigeria.[10]

Available evidence largely underestimates the true scale of gendered harm, particularly for slow-onset climate events and disasters. As of April 2026, only 84 of 176 countries reported sex-, age- and disability-disaggregated data through the Sendai Framework Monitor, leaving significant gaps in understanding how disaster impacts differ across groups.[11] Without this data, disaster response and climate action are often inadequate and fall short of addressing the severe impacts of the climate crisis on women and girls.

To respond to these data gaps, the **Gender Equality and Climate Policy Scorecard** is the first global monitoring tool to systematically assess how countries respond to the gendered impacts of climate change and promote women's participation and leadership in climate action. It reviews 100 nationally determined contributions – governments' main climate strategies – across six gender dimensions, and hosts an online repository of promising policy examples for countries to learn from.

Overall, climate action often fails to recognize the roles that women and girls play in addressing the climate crisis, as leaders, policymakers, activists and workers. Thanks to relentless feminist advocacy, 60 out of 100 nationally determined contributions now acknowledge women's contribution to climate solutions.[12] Yet women are systematically under-represented in climate decision-making, from global to local level; women's organizations at the forefront of the crisis are starved of resources; and feminist environmental activists are often targeted for harassment and violence.

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[7] UN Women and Pardee Institute for International Futures calculations using the International Futures modelling platform v.8.67. Accessed October 2026.
[8] Hertzog, L., M. Makate and D. Chipanta. 2025. "Extreme Drought and Sexual Violence Against Adolescent Girls and Young Women: A Multi-Country Population-Based Study." *PLOS Global Public Health* 5, no. 6.
[9] Bhatt, A., G. Fortuny, I. Berevoescu et al. 2026. *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2026*. New York: UN Women and DESA.
[10] UN Women Asia and the Pacific. 2026. "Gender and Environment Dashboard." Accessed 5 November 2026.
[11] Launched in 2018, the Sendai Framework Monitor is the online system through which countries report their progress towards the seven global targets of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. It is managed by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). See UNDRR. 2026a. "Sendai Framework Monitor: Data and Analytics." Accessed 25 September 2026; UNDRR. 2026b. "Sendai Framework Data Shows Progress and Persistent Gaps in Reducing Disaster Risk." 26 September. Accessed 14 October 2026.
[12] UN Women and Kaschak Institute. n.d. "Gender Equality and Climate Policy Scorecard." Accessed 4 November 2026.

Feminist climate justice offers a pathway to a different future

Feminist climate justice starts from a simple proposition: **everyone should be able to enjoy their human rights and flourish on a clean, healthy and sustainable planet**. Achieving this requires moving towards economies organized around human and planetary well-being.[13]

Care lies at the heart of this agenda. Health, education, care services, water and sanitation are **climate infrastructure**: they are the systems through which households and communities absorb climate shocks. Yet they are largely invisible in adaptation planning and finance.[14] Investing in care systems can simultaneously reduce gender inequalities, create decent low emissions jobs and build climate resilience.[15]

Climate action must redistribute resources and power

Climate change is fundamentally an **inequality crisis**. Globally, the richest 10 per cent account for nearly half of **consumption-based emissions**, compared with just 10 per cent for the poorest half.[16] Climate inequality is also gendered: The wealth driving high emissions is concentrated in men's hands. Globally, men hold around **USD 105 trillion more wealth than women**.[17]

Climate justice therefore means curbing excessive consumption and emissions while expanding access to the resources required for a dignified life.

This distinction is increasingly important as renewable energy expands: Electricity demand from industry, cooling, electric vehicles and data centres is also growing rapidly. Yet access to energy is not equal: In 2024, an estimated 326 million women and girls, mostly in the Global South still lived without electricity.[18]

The key question is not only how energy is produced, but **who consumes it, for what purposes and whose needs are prioritized**.

The same principle applies to low-carbon transitions. UN Women modelling shows that without deliberate policy intervention, **less than 2 per cent of net new green jobs would go to women**. But investments in care, social protection and skills could transform the outcome. In this scenario, more jobs would be created and women could account for up to 66 per cent of net new jobs, or 68 million jobs by 2035 (see Figure 2).[19]

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[13] Turquet, L., C. Tabbush, S. Staab et al. 2023. "Feminist Climate Justice: A Framework for Action." Conceptual framework prepared for the Progress of the World's Women series. New York: UN Women.
[14] Climate and Care Initiative. 2026. "Centring Care in Climate Finance. A Feminist Blueprint for Adaptation, Resilience, and Climate Justice." Working Paper. Accessed 9 October 2026.
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[16] Ghosh, E., A. Nazareth, G. Wang et al. 2025. "Emissions Inequality Dashboard." Stockholm Environment Institute. Accessed 13 October 2026.
[17] Riddell, R., N. Ahmed, A. Maitland et al. 2024. *Inequality Inc.: How Corporate Power Divides Our World and the Need for a New Era of Public Action*. Oxford: Oxfam.
[18] Bhatt, A., G. Fortuny, I. Berevoescu et al. 2026. *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2026*. New York: UN Women and DESA.
[19] Bhatt, A., S. Staab, E. Alexandri et al. Forthcoming. "Who Gets the Green Jobs? Gendered Employment Outcomes Under Alternative Decarbonisation Scenarios." UN Women Discussion Paper Series. New York: UN Women

Figure 2 A GENDER-JUST LOW-CARBON TRANSITION CAN YIELD TRIPLE DIVIDENDS

BUSINESS AS USUAL

CURRENT TRAJECTORIES TO 2035

Governments adopt no additional climate- or gender-responsive policy actions.

EXPECTED TOTAL EMPLOYMENT BY 2035

3.64 BILLION

Global baseline

WOMEN'S SHARE OF JOBS BY 2035

40%

1.46 billion women employed



GENDER EMPLOYMENT GAP

PERSISTS

SCENARIO 1 • BASELINE DECARBONIZATION

AN ENERGY-ONLY GREEN TRANSITION

Governments implement net-zero strategies by 2050 focused solely on the energy sector, with no accompanying just transition measures.

NET NEW JOBS VS CURRENT TRAJECTORY BY 2035

-3.8 MILLION

As polluting sectors wind down

WOMEN'S NET NEW JOBS

-1.5 MILLION

Female share unchanged at 40%

DECARBONIZATION ALONE DOES NOT CREATE JOBS OR CLOSE GENDER GAPS.

SCENARIO 2 • ENHANCED BASELINE DECARBONIZATION

A LOW-CARBON TRANSITION WITHOUT GENDER POLICIES

Low-carbon investment includes climate-resilient agriculture, nature-based solutions, the circular economy and green transport.

NET NEW JOBS VS BASELINE DECARBONIZATION BY 2035

+12 MILLION

WOMEN'S SHARE OF NET NEW JOBS

~2%

Only 196,000 additional net new jobs for women globally

SCENARIO 3 • ENHANCED BASELINE DECARBONIZATION PLUS GENDER-RESPONSIVE POLICY ACTION

A GENDER-JUST TRANSITION

A low-carbon transition with investments in care, social protection, education and skills policies for women in emerging sectors addresses women's historical disadvantages in labour markets and makes investments in public services with benefits for all.

NET NEW JOBS VS BASELINE DECARBONIZATION BY 2035

+103.7 MILLION

WOMEN'S SHARE OF NET NEW JOBS

66%

Equivalent to 68 million additional jobs for women by 2035, with over half in sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Southern Asia



REDUCED INFORMALITY

~360 MILLION



Women workers gain social protection by 2035, improving job quality even where employment remains informal.

THE TRIPLE DIVIDEND OF INVESTING IN A GENDER-JUST TRANSITION

MORE QUALITY JOBS FOR WOMEN

48.3 MILLION

additional quality jobs for women in care-related sectors

LOW-CARBON JOBS

that support equality and rights



EXPANSION OF WOMEN'S OPPORTUNITIES

Through expanded care services, social protection and skills training

~19.8 MILLION

additional jobs in emerging sectors for women globally by 2035

A gender-just transition requires significant investment but generates major returns. This scenario assumes that the transition is financed through debt relief; progressive tax reforms, including from carbon taxes; official development assistance at the agreed target of 0.7% of gross national income; and finance mobilized under the New Collective Quantified Goal.

POLICY EXPENDITURE (2026–2050)

USD 51.2 TRILLION

GDP GAIN VS BASELINE (2026–2050)

USD 55.9 TRILLION

NET CUMULATIVE RETURN BY 2050

+USD 4.7 TRILLION

Source: GDP: gross domestic product. UN Women and Cambridge Econometrics calculations using the E3ME Model, 2026. 71 countries and areas. Additional employment figures are relative to the baseline decarbonization scenario (Scenario 1) unless otherwise noted. Formalization/reduced level of informality estimates use social protection coverage as a proxy per ILO recommendations. See Bhatt et al. forthcoming-b.

Transformative adaptation builds resilience for all

As climate risks intensify and mitigation efforts lag behind, women are already leading climate adaptation, but without adequate resources, recognition or decision-making power.

The Global Mutirão Decision agreed at COP30 calls for tripling adaptation finance by 2035, and yet current adaptation finance flows fall 12 to 14 times short of need. Scaling up adaptation is essential – but must not depend on women bearing the costs.

Transformative adaptation goes beyond helping people survive climate shocks: It addresses the gender inequalities and unequal power relations that determine who is at risk in the first place.

This means valuing water and energy as public goods, securing land rights for women farmers, and investing in social protection and care infrastructure. However, just **8.7 per cent of people in the most climate-vulnerable countries have access to at least one form of social protection**, compared with 52.4 per cent globally.[20] Globally, 2 billion women and girls lack any form of social protection.[21]

National climate policies are becoming more gender-responsive. Some **73 per cent of nationally determined contributions** – governments' self-defined climate action plans – **now acknowledge gender-specific climate risks**. However, just over 1 in 3 address them comprehensively. Actions on care, health and gender-based violence remain particularly neglected.[22]

Global rules and finance must deliver climate justice

Multilateral action has established critical foundations for global climate action. In 2015, the Paris Agreement set the goal of limiting warming below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, while pursuing efforts to 1.5°C, and integrated human rights and gender equality objectives.

Feminist advocacy has supported Parties to adopt more than 100 gender-related decisions under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change,[23] including the recent **Belém Gender Action Plan**, which advances action on women's health, gender-based violence, unpaid care, women environmental human rights defenders and gender- and age-disaggregated data.[24]

But implementation at the necessary level of ambition requires resources. Global climate finance reached around **USD 2 trillion in 2024**, yet 95 per cent went to mitigation and 78 per cent was concentrated in advanced economies and China. International climate finance for developing countries reached just **USD 136.7 billion in 2024** – **around 7 per cent of global climate finance and a fraction of the USD 455 to 584 billion a year that developing countries estimate they need annually**

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[20] ILO (International Labour Organization). 2024. *World Social Protection Report 2024-26: Universal Social Protection for Climate Action and a Just Transition*. Geneva: ILO.
[21] Staab, S., L. Williams, C. Tabbush et al. 2024. *World Survey on the Role of Women in Development: Harnessing Social Protection for Gender Equality, Resilience and Transformation*. New York: UN Women.
[22] UN Women and Kaschak Institute. n.d. "Gender Equality and Climate Policy Scorecard." Accessed 4 November 2026.
[23] WEDO (Women's Environment and Development Organization). n.d. "Gender Mandates in Climate Policy: Quick Analysis of Gender in UNFCCC Decisions." Gender Climate Tracker. New York: WEDO.
[24] UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change). 2026c. "Decision 7/CP.30: Belém Gender Action Plan." In *Report of the Conference of the Parties on Its Thirtieth Session, held in Belém from 10 to 22 November 2025: Addendum*. FCCC/CP/2025/12/Add.1.

by 2030. Almost 70 per cent of climate finance to developing countries is provided as loans, adding to already unsustainable debt burdens (see Figure 3).

A feminist climate justice approach to financing would mean increasing public and highly concessional finance, addressing unsustainable debt, and creating direct and simplified mechanisms that enable resources to reach **women's organizations and communities** bearing the brunt of climate change.

Transformative change is ultimately about politics and power

The barriers to climate justice are increasingly political rather than technical. Geopolitical fragmentation, debt, democratic backsliding, shrinking civic space and the convergence of anti-gender and anti-climate movements are impeding action.

Overcoming these barriers requires **renewed solidarity and collective action**. Four in five people worldwide – and nearly 9 in 10 in least developed countries – want stronger action to counter climate threats.[25]

Feminist, Indigenous, environmental, youth movements and trade unions are already coming together to challenge vested interests and expand what is politically possible.

Women environmental human rights defenders are often leaders in protests and conflicts with private companies and governments against environmental destruction. Women defenders are often harassed and are increasingly targeted for lethal violence: Over the past decade, the United Nations documented the killing of 751 women environmental defenders for doing this work.[26]

Despite these threats, movements continue to draw on a range of creative strategies – from protest, to strategic litigation, participation in democratic institutions, campaigns to shift narratives, and scaling-up community-led climate action in partnership with local government. To do this vital work, women environmental defenders and civil society must have access to policymaking processes, secure funding and protection from violence, criminalization and intimidation.

There is no single pathway to feminist climate justice. But the direction is clear. At COP31, UN Women calls on Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change to promote gender equality and women's livelihoods, rights and resilience.[27]

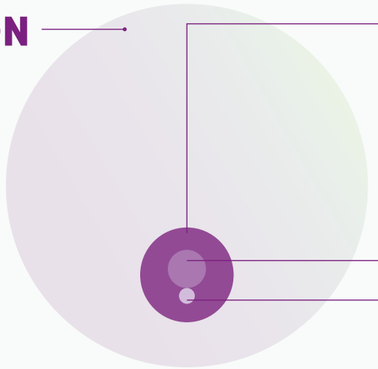
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[25] UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), Oxford University and Browning Environmental Communications. 2024. "Peoples' Climate Vote 2024." New York: UNDP.
[26] Data provided by the Innovation and Analytics Hub of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) database for reporting on SDG indicator 16.10.1 (verified attacks against human rights defenders), as of 22 September 2026. For further details, see OHCHR. n.d. "SDG indicators under OHCHR's Custodianship: SDG Indicator 16.10.1." Accessed 26 October 2026.
[27] UN Women. 2026. "UN Women at the 31st Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change." New York: UN Women.

Figure 3 CLIMATE FINANCE DOES NOT REACH THOSE WHO NEED IT MOST

2.008 TRILLION
in total global climate finance, 2024[a]

78%
of the total goes to advanced economies and China, 95% for mitigation[a]



136.7 BILLION
provided and mobilized by the Global North for developing countries[b]

17.3%
goes to the least developed countries[b]

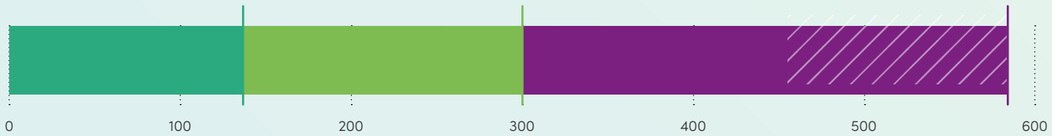
2.8%
reaches small island developing states[b]

CURRENT FINANCING AND TARGETS FALL SHORT FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

136.7 BILLION
provided and mobilized in 2024

NEW COLLECTIVE QUANTIFIED GOAL
300 BILLION
annually by 2035[c]

455-584 BILLION
needed annually by 2030[d]



Less than USD 500 MILLION has been paid into the Fund for responding to Loss and Damage, less than 0.2% of estimated loss and damage costs in developing countries by 2030.[e]

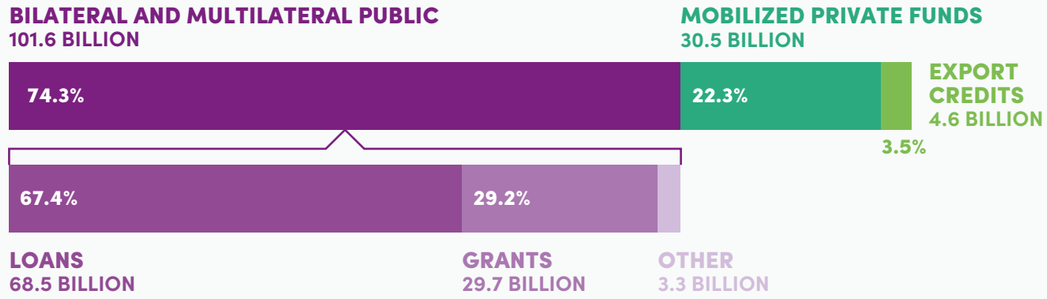
THERE IS PLENTY OF MONEY IN THE WORLD TO FILL THE CLIMATE FINANCE GAP

2.9 TRILLION
in **military spending** in 2025[f]

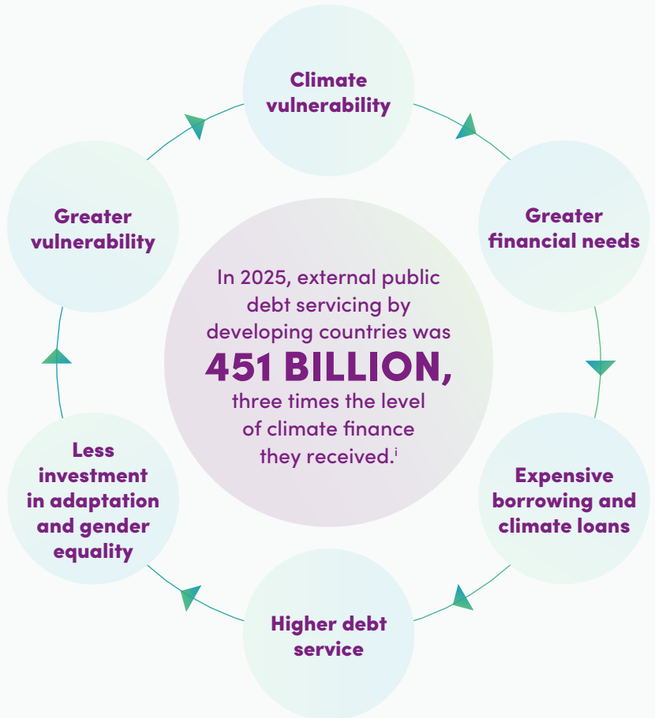
492 BILLION
lost annually to **global tax abuse**[g]

290-580 BILLION
in loss and damage financing **needed in total by 2030**[h]

Most climate finance for developing countries is from public sources, usually loans



ALTOGETHER, A VICIOUS CYCLE OF FINANCE NEEDS, GAPS AND DEBT MEANS WOMEN PAY A HEAVY PRICE



EVIDENCE FROM 85 DEVELOPING COUNTRIES ESTIMATES THAT HIGHER DEBT SERVICING IS ASSOCIATED WITH:

-10.6
Drop in women's employment or **92.5 million jobs**[j]



+32.5%
Increase in maternal deaths[k]



Notes: All financial estimates are expressed in USD. Climate finance estimates should be interpreted with caution. Methodologies differ across organizations and datasets. Data from CPI 2025 broadly estimate climate-related investment globally, while OECD 2026a is narrower in scope to track progress towards the USD 300 billion goal. The USD 455–584 billion estimate uses yet another methodology, based on 98 nationally determined contributions with timelines up to 2030. Loss and damage estimates are particularly varied. This analysis relies on UNCTAD 2024b and FRLD 2026b as of May 2026 for payments made and needs estimated. Impacts of debt on women's employment and maternal health are long term, computed using external debt as a share of gross domestic product rather than short-term estimates that use external debt as a share of exports. [a] CPI 2025; [b] OECD 2026a; [c] UNCTAD 2024b; [d] UNFCCC 2024d; [e] UN Women calculations based on UNCTAD 2024b and FRLD 2026b; [f] Military spending includes expenditures on armed forces, defence ministries, paramilitary forces and military space activities. See SIPRI 2026b; [g] Tax Justice Network 2024; [h] UNCTAD 2024b. [i] OECD 2026a; [j] UNCTAD 2026b; [k] Braunstein and Dehn 2026.

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