

# Leading Climate Action: Women Confronting Loss & Damage in FCAS

## Implications for the UK's international climate policy

### Introduction

Climate change drives increasingly intense extreme weather events, with the greatest burden falling on countries that have contributed the least to global emissions. Fragile and Conflict-Affected States (FCAS), among the most vulnerable to risk, lack the capacity to address losses and damages due to centuries of exploitation by Minority World countries. FCAS also receive the least climate financing due to perceived risks, limiting humanitarian action to immediate emergency relief after disasters rather than longer term rebuilding, recovery and resilience efforts. Within these contexts, women and girls suffer disproportionate losses. Despite being among the most impacted and the leaders of climate action in their communities, women and their organisations receive little support.

The UK – along with other Global North countries – holds a significant historic and present responsibility for climate loss and damage experienced by communities in the Global Majority. The UK is a major polluter and has disproportionately contributed to rising global emissions and climate change.<sup>1</sup> The last UK Government made a number of commitments on climate, including a promise of £11.6 billion to International Climate Finance (ICF) which included a contribution towards the newly established Loss and Damage Facility. However, these commitments to ICF have not been met and, even with the £11.6 billion commitment in place, it remains well below what is needed to address the scale of the loss and damage crisis.

### Gaps in international Loss & Damage policy

The much-awaited Fund for responding to Loss and Damage was finally operationalised through a historic agreement at COP28 in 2023. However, pledges to the Fund have so far been minimal compared to need. Further attention and efforts are required to strengthen climate action in FCAS, as well as concrete financial commitments. Moreover, gender remains on the outskirts of the discourse around climate and security, while climate remains largely an afterthought in the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda. In practice, international fora continue to witness a siloed approach between climate, peace and security, leading to the obfuscation of women's experiences, and failure to address the specific needs and roles of women in climate resilience and adaptation strategies.

### Feminist research on Loss & Damage in FCAS

There is currently only limited community-based research documenting the climate-conflict-gender nexus. ActionAid has undertaken research (to be published in November 2024) which aims to contribute to filling this gap by examining loss and damage in three FCAS countries in which ActionAid is responding to humanitarian crises caused by conflict and climate change – DRC, Nigeria and Somaliland – taking an in-depth look at the disproportionate impact of these intersecting crises on women and girls. Below is a summary of key findings from the research.

<sup>1</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/7nehw22j>

## Key findings

- Climate change exacerbates existing tensions and vulnerabilities caused by conflict, and vice versa, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings. Women and girls are disproportionately impacted due to existing gender hierarchies and patriarchal norms.
- The complex interplay of conflict, climate change and gender results in multiple economic and non-economic losses and damages. In DRC, Nigeria and Somaliland, these include severe food insecurity and water scarcity, reduced ability to maintain livelihoods, and worsening physical and mental health.
- The research particularly highlights the gendered non-economic losses and damages experienced by women and girls, who are disproportionately impacted by increased Gender-Based Violence (GBV), increased care responsibilities and reduced educational opportunities. 90% of women in DRC reported an increased risk of GBV due to conflict and climate change, and two-thirds of women in Nigeria attributed girls' school dropout to either climate change or conflict.
- Conflict has been destroying the ability of communities to cope with the impacts of climate change. The data highlights the difficulties in adapting and building resilience in such fragile and hostile environments. Conflict settings create barriers to resilience and threaten safety and wellbeing.
- As climate change and conflict continue to strain resources and disrupt livelihoods, it is crucial to support women and their organisations to build resilience to both climate and conflict shocks and to address the gendered impacts of these shocks.
- With their community knowledge and context specific understanding of the needs of women and girls, Women-Led Organisations (WLOs) and Women's Rights Organisations (WROs) are best placed to respond – however these organisations lack the funding to sustain and scale up their work.

- There is a need for sustained funding and capacity building for women and their organisations to support them to develop and implement effective resilience and adaptation strategies in FCAS.

## Policy Recommendations

Recommendations to the UK Government & international community

### Programming

#### **1. Integrate conflict resolution, loss and damage, and gender in programming to build resilience in FCAS.**

There needs to be an increase in loss and damage programming in FCAS, with a focus on the impacts of climate change and conflict on women and girls, in order to increase their resilience and to reduce risks of conflict and fragility. Current efforts are insufficient in addressing the complex challenges faced by groups which have been socioeconomically marginalised. Existing programs that address elements of this conflict-climate-gender nexus should be strengthened and expanded to optimise resources and foster coordinated efforts. Climate should be connected more explicitly to the WPS agenda, and nexus programming should be pursued including climate.

#### **2. Prioritise women-led initiatives to deliver programming to address loss and damage in FCAS.**

While women-led initiatives provide distinct viewpoints and methods that contribute to more inclusive and efficient strategies for addressing loss and damage, women are not currently able to participate meaningfully in decision-making. Supporting women to effectively lead change fosters gender transformation and strengthens community resilience to climate-related challenges. This in turn promotes local ownership and sustainability by engaging communities in the long-term. This can be achieved by:

a) Ensuring women's meaningful participation, including through adequate representation, in decision-making processes related to climate change adaptation, peacebuilding, and development.

b) Mainstreaming gender in all loss and damage programmes in FCAS to ensure women's meaningful participation in the design, implementation, and evaluation of projects.

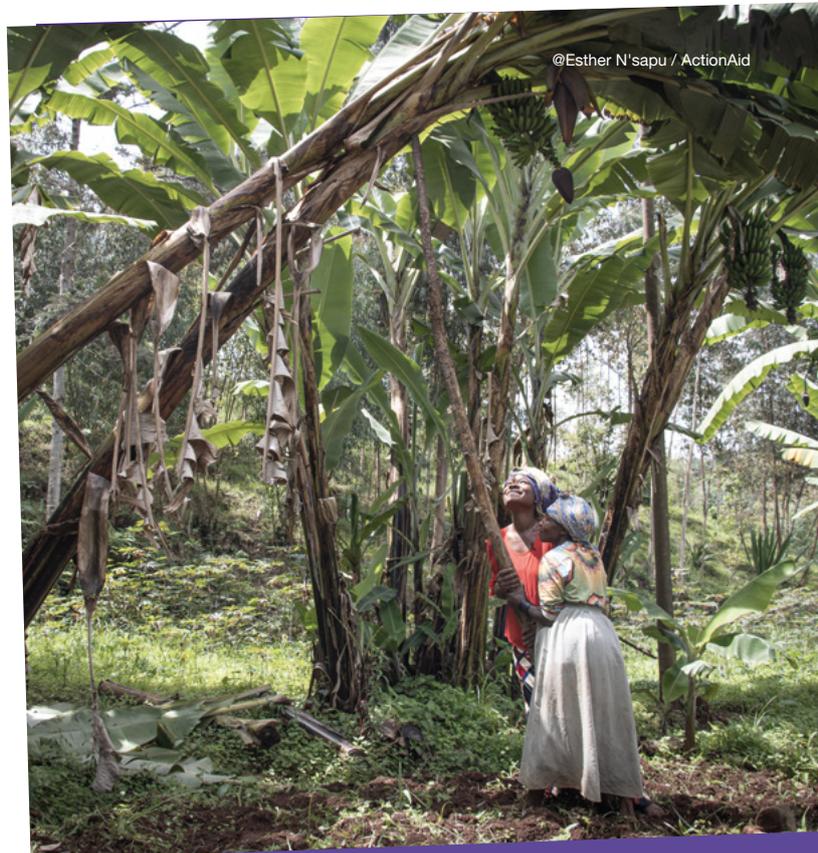
## Funding

### 3. Strengthen the capacity of WLOs and WROs in FCAS to access loss and damage funds.

Women's resilience in FCAS is in peril, and funds are not reaching the communities experiencing the worst impacts of climate change and conflict. WLOs and WROs are often unaware of the funds available to them for responding to loss and damage, or how to access them. Fostering meaningful access to funds by raising awareness of available loss and damage funding and simplifying access for communities is essential to addressing loss and damage at the community level. Investing in grant writing and proposal development training for WLOs and WROs in FCAS will increase their ability to access these funds. International organisations and governments must ensure their partnerships with WLOs and WROs are equitable and based on mutual trust, joint strategies, risk-sharing and accountability. This will increase the opportunities for WLOs and WROs to secure funds in the long term.

### 4. Providing long-term, flexible funding to WLOs, WROs and affected communities in FCAS.

The findings demonstrate that communities in FCAS experiencing the worst impacts of climate change while in protracted crises face difficulties accessing critical public services for long periods of time. This not only reduces their resilience to climate change but also has serious detrimental impacts on their wellbeing and the fulfilment of their human rights. One-off and ad hoc financial support



@Esther N'sapu / ActionAid

Zandi, Rooted Resilience, The Democratic Republic of Congo. Agroecology is supporting women who experience landslides, flooding and changing weather patterns.

## Women's resilience and adaptation

Despite facing multifaceted challenges, communities in Mushonezo, DRC, have demonstrated resilience and adaptation through community-led initiatives and partnerships. Reforestation efforts, construction of rainwater harvesting systems, and mutual support networks are some examples of community action to address environmental and social challenges. Women have adopted resilience and adaptation strategies, including the relocation of exposed sites, construction of emergency shelters, establishment of alert committees, reforestation, construction of bridges, and channelling of rainwater.

is often insufficient and unpredictable. WLOs and WROs are often burdened by bureaucratic reporting requirements which make it harder for them to access critical funds. Alongside emergency relief, longer term financial support, as well as reduced reporting requirements, should be provided to allow communities to build long term resilience, conduct adequate programmatic planning and invest in their futures.

At COP29, the UK Government has the opportunity to meet its international commitments on climate justice, gender equality and 'development'. ActionAid's research demonstrates the disproportionate impact of climate change on women and girls and the critical role WLOs and WROs play in providing climate solutions. The UK has a responsibility to respond in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. The UK Government must:

### **5. Advocate for the establishment of a community direct access funding modality for the Fund responding to Loss and Damage (FRLD), prioritising small grants to WLOs and WROs in FCAS.**

Our research findings show the extent of the needs at community level which are not being addressed, due in part to insufficient funding reaching communities. Direct access to the FRLD by communities is necessary to ensure support reaches the most affected, especially in countries facing instability and conflict where government support systems are not as strong, minimising intermediaries. Small grants to WLOs and WROs should be prioritised, as well as to NGOs working directly with them who can provide contextualised support and capacity strengthening.

### **6. Ensure the UK Board member for the FRLD advocates for the establishment of a gender strategy for gender-responsive financing.**

The findings demonstrate the gendered impacts of climate change in FCAS. The losses and damages faced by women and girls, particularly non-economic losses and damages, are disproportionate and therefore require particular

attention. There is currently no gender and inclusion policy or strategy for the FRLD. The Board for the FRLD should establish a clear gender strategy or action plan to ensure that funds dispersed take into account the particular needs of women and girls and ensure that loss and damage financing is gender-responsive.

### **7. Advocate for the inclusion of a quantified sub-goal for Loss & Damage in the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) for climate finance.**

To ensure that the financial needs for loss and damage are adequately addressed, the UK Government must push for the inclusion of specific quantified sub-goals for loss and damage, alongside mitigation and adaptation, during the NCQG negotiations at COP29. Establishing such goals is critical for fully leveraging the FRLD, especially in FCAS, where gender responsive funding must urgently reach women and girls. Without the establishment of these sub-goals, the mandate to meet the vast financial needs will not be realised and will leave the FRLD under resourced and unable to provide effective assistance.

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