

Climate Change, Gender Justice and Resilience: Making Policy and Law to Protect the Boy Child, Women and Girls for Posterity

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Kariuki Muigua*

Abstract

This paper critically examines how gender justice and resilience can be integrated in climate action. The paper observes that climate change is having disproportionate impacts on vulnerable individuals including the boy child, women and girls. It examines how climate change negatively impacts these groups. In light of its adverse impacts on the boy child, women and girls, the paper observes that tackling climate change is a matter of justice, fairness, equity and human rights. In particular, the paper posits that fostering gender justice and resilience is key towards empowering and protecting the boy child, women and girls from the adverse impacts of climate change. The paper discusses how policy and law can be utilised to protect the boy child, women and girls from the adverse impacts of climate change towards gender justice and resilience for posterity.

1.0 Introduction

Climate change is having devastating impacts on people and planet undermining Sustainable Development. The adverse impacts of climate change including intense droughts, water scarcity, severe wildfires, rising sea levels, extreme flooding, melting polar ice, catastrophic storms and declining biodiversity are being witnessed all over the world¹. It has been observed that these events are causing dangerous and widespread disruption, depletion and degradation of nature while also affecting the lives, health, livelihoods and well-being of billions of people all over the world².

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¹ United Nations., 'What is Climate Change?' Available at <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/what-is-climate-change> (Accessed on 09/04/2026)

² Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change., 'Climate change: a threat to human wellbeing and health of the planet. Taking action now can secure our future' Available at https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/downloads/press/IPCC_AR6_WGII_PressRelease-English.pdf (Accessed on 09/04/2026)

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Consequently, climate change has been described as one of the greatest challenges of our time whose adverse impacts undermine the ability of all countries to achieve Sustainable Development³. For example, higher temperatures due to climate change increase heat-related illnesses and make working outdoors more difficult therefore threatening development⁴. Further, rising sea levels threaten the well-being of coastal and island communities some who are displaced from their lands and territories⁵. Catastrophic storms due to climate change destroy homes, communities and infrastructure causing loss of lives, livelihoods and huge economic losses⁶. In addition, it has been observed that intense droughts affect agricultural productivity resulting in food insecurity while also increasing the vulnerability of ecosystems and forcing vulnerable populations to migrate in search of better conditions⁷. Biodiversity loss due to climate change also threatens key ecosystem services, including food, clean air, water and medicines, that are crucial for the well-being of both humanity and nature⁸.

Climate change is therefore a major impediment to the pursuit of Sustainable Development with adverse impacts on both people and planet. In particular, it has been observed that climate change has disproportionate impacts on vulnerable individuals, groups and communities including indigenous peoples and local communities, women, the youth, the elderly, people of colour, persons with disabilities and people and communities in developing countries⁹. Effective climate action therefore involves addressing the disproportionate impacts of climate change on vulnerable individuals, communities and regions for justice, equity, fairness and human rights¹⁰.

This paper critically examines how gender justice and resilience can be integrated in climate action. The paper observes that climate change is having disproportionate impacts on vulnerable individuals including the boy child, women and girls. It examines how climate change negatively impacts these groups. In light of its adverse impacts on the boy child, women and girls, the paper observes that tackling climate change is a matter of justice, fairness, equity and human rights. In particular, the paper posits that fostering gender justice and resilience is key towards empowering and protecting the boy child, women and girls from the adverse impacts of climate change. The paper discusses how policy and law can be utilised to protect the

³ United Nations General Assembly., 'Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.' 21 October 2015, A/RES/70/1., Available at <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf> (Accessed on 09/04/2026)

⁴ United Nations., 'Causes and Effects of Climate Change' Available at <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/causes-effects-climate-change> (Accessed on 09/04/2026)

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Center for Climate Justice., 'What is Climate Justice?' Available at <https://centerclimatejustice.universityofcalifornia.edu/what-is-climate-justice/> (Accessed on 09/04/2026)

¹⁰ Mary Robinson Foundation Climate Justice., 'Incorporating Human Rights into Climate Action' Available at <https://www.mrfcj.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Incorporating-Human-Rights-into-Climate-Action-Version-2-May-2016.pdf> (Accessed on 09/04/2026)

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boy child, women and girls from the adverse impacts of climate change towards gender justice and resilience for posterity.

2.0 Impacts of Climate Change on the Boy Child, Women and Girls

Climate change adversely affects the vulnerable including the boy child, women and girls. For example, it has been observed that the youth including the boy child and girls face a significantly diminished future as a direct result of the climate crisis¹¹. As climate change undermines Sustainable Development by devastating economies, ecosystems, human health and livelihoods, the youth will have to live with its impacts for longer timeframes compared to older generations diminishing their chance for a prosperous future¹². It has been pointed out that as the climate crisis worsens, today's youth and future generations will bear the consequences of the present climate actions and inactions¹³. In addition, it has been observed that children are more susceptible to the effects of climate change than adults, with immediate and lifelong impacts on their physical and mental health¹⁴.

The youth, including the boy child and girls are therefore disproportionately impacted by climate change. It has been correctly observed that although climate change is predominantly caused by the current generation of adults, its worst consequences will occur during the lifetimes of today's children and young people¹⁵. Adverse climatic events including rising sea levels, extreme weather events such as droughts and floods, and environmental degradation disproportionately impact the younger population, leading to severe economic, social, and psychological challenges¹⁶. It has been argued that children, including the boy child and girls, are more susceptible to the effects of climate change, such as food insecurity, water scarcity, conflicts, economic challenges, and forced migration due to their dependency on adults¹⁷. Climate change adversely impacts the boy child and girls since current generations and the next ones will bear the brunt of climate change impacts, as extreme weather events become more frequent and severe with time¹⁸. It has been pointed out that as a result of climate change, current and future generations will experience

¹¹ How Climate Change Affects Young People., Available at <https://www.yacvic.org.au/advocacy/climate/#:~:text=Young%20people%20will%20experience%20worse,successive%20generations%20in%20Australian%20history>. (Accessed on 09/04/2026)

¹² International Union for Conservation of Nature., 'Youth as Agents of Change for a Sustainable Future' Available at <https://iucn.org/blog/202308/youth-agents-change-sustainable-future> (Accessed on 09/04/2026)

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Sanson. A., Van Hoorn. J., & Burke. S., 'Responding to the Impacts of the Climate Crisis on Children and Youth' Available at <https://doi.org/10.1111/cdep.12342> (Accessed on 09/04/2026)

¹⁵ Sanson. A., & Bellemo. M., 'Children and Youth in the Climate Crisis' *BJPsych Bull.* 2021 Aug; 45(4): 205–209.

¹⁶ United Nations Development Programme., 'A Turbulent Future: How Climate Change Impacts Young People in the Pacific' Available at <https://www.undp.org/asia-pacific/publications/turbulent-future-how-climate-change-impacts-young-people-pacific> (Accessed on 09/04/2026)

¹⁷ Sanson. A., Van Hoorn. J., & Burke. S., 'Responding to the Impacts of the Climate Crisis on Children and Youth' Op Cit

¹⁸ Stockholm Environment Institute., 'Charting a Youth Vision for a Just and Sustainable Future' Available at <https://www.sei.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/stockholm50-youthreport-10.51414-sei2022.010.pdf> (Accessed on 09/04/2026)

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more frequent and severe wildfires, droughts, flooding, and heat waves among other adverse climatic events¹⁹.

In addition to the boy child climate change also disproportionately affect women and girls. For instance, it has been observed that women and girls, especially those living in the Global South, bear an unequal responsibility for securing food, water, energy, and other vital resources for their families as well as for caring for the young and elderly²⁰. Consequently, as climate change affects the availability of vital resources and impacts the vulnerable, women and girls usually bear the burden of traveling farther to collect scarce food, water, and firewood, and are often forced to stay behind in disaster-prone areas to care for the vulnerable²¹. It has been observed that in most societies, women tend to be overly burdened with household work and caring for children, the sick and the elderly putting them at risk when extreme climatic events such as floods strike²². In addition, disparities in economic opportunities and access to productive resources also make women more vulnerable to climate change since they are often poorer, receive less education, and are not involved in political, community and household decision-making processes that affect their lives²³.

Climate change therefore causes gender injustices since it affects men and women unevenly. It has been observed that climate change has severe impacts on those sections of the population, in all countries and regions, that are most reliant on natural resources for their livelihoods and/or who have the least capacity to respond to adverse climatic events such as droughts, landslides, floods and hurricanes²⁴. Therefore, since women, especially in the Global South, are heavily reliant on natural resources for their livelihoods and face unequal participation in decision-making processes, they are disproportionately affected by climate change²⁵. Disparities in economic opportunities and access to productive resources also make women more vulnerable to climate change since they are often poorer, receive less education, and are not involved in political, community and household decision-making processes that affect their lives²⁶.

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ United Nations Foundation., '5 Facts about Gender Equality and Climate Change' Available at https://unfoundation.org/blog/post/five-facts-about-gender-equality-and-climate-change/?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=19548803646&gbraid=0AAAAAD9kiAfKYJbc8LZSiXlvfAynYK8XI&gclid=EAIaIQobChMIwt7ciMrgkwMVRWZBAh3H7zIkEAAYASAAEgLAQ_D_BwE (Accessed on 09/04/2026)

²¹ Ibid

²² United Nations Development Programme., 'Overview of linkages between gender and climate change' Available at <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/UNDP%20Linkages%20Gender%20and%20CC%20Policy%20Brief%201-WEB.pdf> (Accessed on 09/04/2026)

²³ Ibid

²⁴ United Nations Climate Change., 'Gender & Climate Change: an important connection' Available at <https://unfccc.int/gender> (Accessed on 09/04/2026)

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ United Nations Development Programme., 'Overview of linkages between gender and climate change' Op Cit

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Gender inequality is amplified by climate change, with women and girls facing higher rates of violence and limited access to resources and decision-making processes²⁷.

In addition, girls, especially in the Global South, are usually forced to drop out of schools to help their families' secure vital resources affecting their right to education²⁸. Further, it has been observed that girls also face the risk of violence and sexual abuse when collecting scarce natural resources or staying in temporary shelters due to displacement as a result of climate change²⁹. Economic hardships caused by climate change have also subjected girls to cases of child marriage as a coping mechanism for vulnerable families³⁰.

Climate change therefore disproportionately impacts the boy child, women and girls. It is therefore imperative to foster gender justice and resilience in order to protect the boy child, women and girls from the adverse impacts of climate change for posterity.

3.0 Making Policy and Law to Protect the Boy Child, Women and Girls for Effective Climate Action

Climate change causes gender injustices and inequalities by disproportionately impacting the boy child, women and girls. Consequently, effective climate action involves fostering climate justice for the boy child, women and girls for posterity. The concept of climate justice focuses on how climate change impacts people differently, unevenly, and disproportionately, as well as redressing the resultant injustices in fair and equitable ways³¹. Climate justice focuses on the protection of human rights of the most vulnerable, including the youth, women and girls, and indigenous and local communities, in the face of a mounting climate crisis³². Climate justice advocates for fair, just, inclusive and equitable climate actions and solutions that prioritize the needs of those who are most affected by climate change³³.

Upholding gender justice and resilience is therefore a matter of climate justice due to the disproportionate impacts of climate change on the boy child, women and girls. In order to achieve this goal, it is imperative to make policy and law to protect the boy child, women and girls towards effective climate action for posterity. In particular, it has been observed that there is need for inclusive climate policies that involve

²⁷ United Nations Development Programme., 'A Turbulent Future: How Climate Change Impacts Young People in the Pacific' Op Cit

²⁸ 5 Ways Climate Change is Disrupting Girls' Lives., Available at <https://plan-international.org/case-studies/5-ways-climate-change-is-disrupting-girls-lives/> (Accessed on 09/04/2026)

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ Sultana. F., 'Critical Climate Justice.' Available at <https://www.farhanasultana.com/wp-content/uploads/Sultana-Critical-climate-justice.pdf> (Accessed on 09/04/2026)

³² Aliozi. Z., 'Climate Justice and Human Rights, in a World in Climate Emergency' Available at <https://repository.gchumanrights.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/2eba3de1-1427-481b-a2d6-07818e00a53b/content> (Accessed on 09/04/2026)

³³ Ibid

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young people in decision-making processes³⁴. The youth have been identified as catalysts of change whose activism, entrepreneurship, innovation and creative strategies provide valuable solutions that can bolster efforts to confront climate change³⁵. Involving the boy child and girls in decision-making processes can therefore bolster climate action for development. In particular, it has been observed that youth representation in climate action should be systematically encouraged, legally guaranteed and financially supported for effective climate action³⁶.

In addition to laws and policies that protect the boy child, it is imperative to mainstream gender perspectives in climate action in order to effectively protect women and girls³⁷. In particular, it has been observed that there is need to include women at leadership levels in climate policies and projects³⁸. It has been observed that given their position on the frontlines of the climate crisis, women and girls are uniquely situated to be agents of change providing innovative solutions to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change³⁹. According to the United Nations, women play a crucial role in strengthening climate action and conserving biodiversity by practicing sustainable agriculture in harmony with nature, preserving crop biodiversity, protecting pollinators, preserving ecosystems including forests, responding to climate emergencies and spearheading global and national climate movements⁴⁰. Consequently, it has been observed that involving women and girls in climate action leads to sustainable outcomes while neglecting the voice of women leads to inequalities and decreased effectiveness⁴¹. It is therefore imperative to make policy and law that involve women and girls in climate action towards gender justice and resilience.

Protecting the boy child, women and girls also involves making policy and law that enable them access climate finance. It has been observed that embracing a gender perspective on climate finance is vital in addressing systemic inequalities, unlocking the untapped potential of women-led solutions, and enhancing the effectiveness and sustainability of climate initiatives⁴². In addition, policies and laws that empower the

³⁴ United Nations Children's Fund., 'Youth in Climate Change Action: Bringing Young People to the Decision-Making Table' Available at <https://www.unicef.org/serbia/en/youth-climate-change-bringing-young-people-decision-making-table> (Accessed on 09/04/2026)

³⁵ World Economic Forum., 'How today's youth are taking the lead in global climate action' Available at <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2023/07/empowering-tomorrows-climate-leaders-how-youth-influence-climate-action/> (Accessed on 09/04/2026)

³⁶ Stockholm Environment Institute., 'Charting a Youth Vision for a Just and Sustainable Future' Available at <https://www.sei.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/stockholm50-youthreport-10.51414-sei2022.010.pdf> (Accessed on 09/04/2026)

³⁷ United Nations Development Programme., 'Overview of linkages between gender and climate change' Op Cit

³⁸ United Nations Climate Change., 'Introduction to Gender and Climate Change' Available at <https://unfccc.int/gender> (Accessed on 09/04/2026)

³⁹ United Nations., 'Why women are key to climate action' Available at <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/climate-issues/women> (Accessed on 09/04/2026)

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ United Nations Climate Change., 'Introduction to Gender and Climate Change' Op Cit

⁴² United Nations Women., 'UN Women calls for increased gender-focused climate finance at COP29' Available at <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2024/11/un-women-calls-for-increased-gender-focused-climate-finance-at->

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youth and women, among other vulnerable groups, to access justice in climate matters are key towards protecting them and upholding their fundamental rights that are violated by the climate crisis⁴³.

Through the foregoing, it is possible to protect the boy child, women and girls, through policy and law, in

4.0 Conclusion

Climate change disproportionately impacts the boy child, women and girls. Protecting the boy child, women and girls is therefore a matter of climate justice. It is therefore imperative to integrate gender justice and resilience in climate action by making policy and law to protect the boy child, women and girls in climate action. This can be attained by involving the youth and women in climate policies and decision-making processes, empowering the youth and women through access to adequate and timely climate finance, and enhancing access to justice in climate matters for the youth and women in order to protect their fundamental rights⁴⁴. Making policy and law to protect the boy child, women and girls in the face of climate change is a noble pursuit towards gender justice and resilience for posterity.

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⁴³ United Nations Development Programme., 'Overview of linkages between gender and climate change'
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⁴⁴ United Nations Development Programme., 'Overview of linkages between gender and climate change'
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