



CHOICE AND THE CLIMATE CRISIS

Building climate resilience by protecting women's reproductive choices

MSI teams are in climate-affected communities protecting women's access to reproductive health services—in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Malawi, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Myanmar, and beyond.



"Resources are scarce now because of climate change. Thanks to family planning, we can support ourselves, look after our children, and get on with everyday activities. This is why we use contraception—to reclaim our lives."

— Binetou, local leader in her climate-affected community of Joal, Senegal

Climate change is not gender-neutral

For our teams and clients on the frontline of the climate crisis, the link between climate justice and women's reproductive rights could not be clearer. Climate change is not a threat in the future, it's their daily reality. When drought hits, women and girls need to walk further to find water. When harvests fail, they can struggle to feed their families. When climate change makes their homes unliveable, they're displaced.

In climate-affected communities, the choice to access contraception and other reproductive health services can be the difference between life and death, or it can simply give a woman back her agency when everything else has been taken from her.

For example, MSI supported a client in Senegal who had lost her home due to rising sea levels. She accessed contraception with MSI, meaning she could avoid getting pregnant while finding a new home—and for as long as she wanted.



"In Ethiopia, heavy rains have washed bridges and roads away, cutting rural villages off from healthcare. One community was cut off from MSI support—when we were able to go back some months later, numerous women faced unwanted pregnancy and some had resorted to unsafe abortion, risking their lives out of desperation. We must protect access to reproductive choice in these climate-affected communities now."

— Abebe, MSI Ethiopia Country Director

Women and girls are the hardest hit

Evidence shows that women and girls pay the greatest price for the world's failing response to the climate crisis.

Facing gendered discrimination, lower incomes and poorer access to food and other resources, [the UN has warned](#) that women and girls will suffer for longer and more severely from climate shocks and disasters. And the [World Bank estimates](#) that climate change could displace more than 216 million people by 2050.

Building climate resilience

As climate-related emergencies—droughts, floods, and cyclones—become more frequent, we need to [ensure the resilience of our programmes](#) to meet women and girls where they are.

And to adapt and build their own resilience to these challenges, women and girls have made it clear that they want reproductive choice. With the choice to avoid unintended pregnancy, girls are [better able to finish their education and pursue careers](#), providing them with greater economic stability and agency when facing a disaster. With reproductive autonomy, women are also better placed to take on decision-making roles at a community and national level, enabling them to have a seat at the table in finding climate solutions, bringing a crucial gendered perspective.

14 million women at risk of losing reproductive choice

With their lives in upheaval from climate-related disruptions and destruction, protecting women’s access to contraception is paramount. But analysis from MSI Reproductive Choices across 26 climate-impacted countries found that from 2011–2021, an estimated 11.5 million women had their access to contraception disrupted. Our modelling indicates that this will worsen, with 14 million women at risk of losing access to contraception due to climate-related displacement between 2021–2031.¹

1. Full technical note and methodology available at msichoices.org



14M may lose access to contraception

which could lead to an additional:
6.2M unintended pregnancies
2.1M unsafe abortions
5,800 maternal deaths

While the devastating impacts of the climate crisis deepen, our role is to protect reproductive choice for women and girls on the frontlines of it. To safeguard their health and rights, support their education and leadership, and ensure women and girls can be part of finding solutions.

From the frontlines of the floods



Dr Tasneem Fatima is the director of health services for MSS; MSI’s partner organisation in Pakistan. She shared her story from the frontlines of Pakistan’s flooding crisis.

“For those who didn’t live through it, it must be difficult to imagine. In the summer of 2022, more than a third of our country—an area larger than Britain—was submerged under flood water in a climate disaster. Violent monsoon rains and water from melted glaciers swept away villages, affecting 33 million people. People lost their homes, businesses, even their clothes, and certainly any conventional access to healthcare.

Amid all of this, our team remained resilient and brave, and I could not be prouder. We’re the main organisation here providing sexual and reproductive healthcare, supported by the global MSI partnership. Our unique offering to this emergency response was our 15 mobile outreach teams which travelled into affected areas to reach people.

Displaced women came to us seeking antenatal and postnatal care, emergency contraception, condoms, menstrual kits, and clean birth delivery kits. I know of two women who came to us in labour, and our midwives brought them into our care, delivering their babies safely into the world in the back of a van.

In Pakistan, we are living through the stark reality of the climate crisis. We must prepare for the future. That means delivering climate-resilient reproductive health programmes and strengthening community health infrastructure. Women and girls should always have access to essential reproductive healthcare—both in normal times and during an unthinkable crisis like this.”

Responding to the devastating climate-related flooding in Pakistan in 2022, our local teams visited 1,600 emergency flood relief camps serving 185,000 people with essential healthcare.

Get in touch to learn how you can help deliver reproductive choice in challenging climate-impacted settings. Together, we can support women and girls’ health and choices when they need them most.

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