Effects of Climate Change on Sexual, Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child & Adolescent Health (SRMNCAH)

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Organization: Climate and Health Connect

How Climate Change Steals Care from Women and Children.

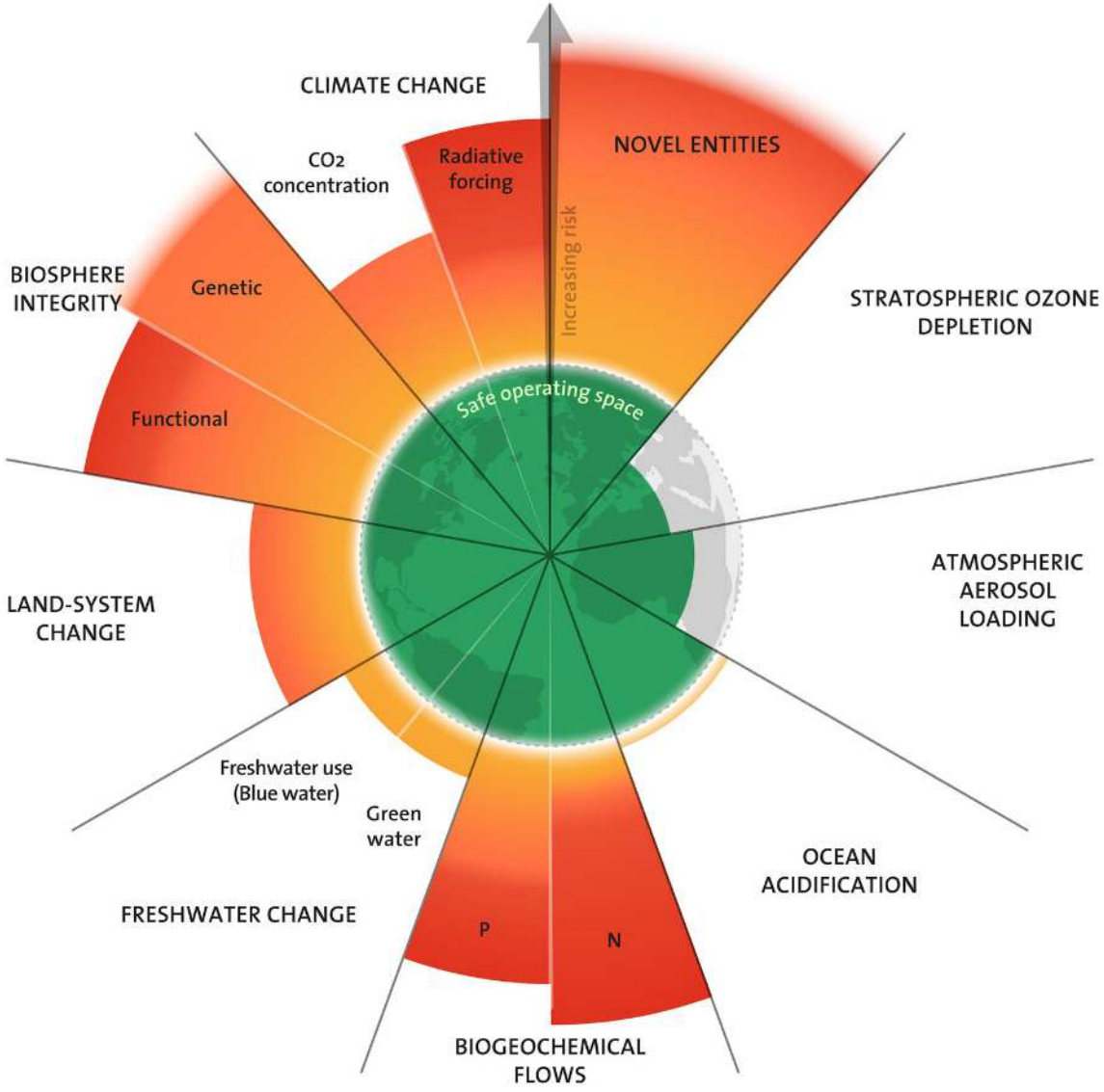
Sumaya is a 19-year-old pregnant woman in Wajir County. Every morning, even in her fragile state, she walks **15 km** to fetch water for her family. The journey is exhausting and exposes her to harassment and constant threat. Malnourished and anemic, she struggles to keep her pregnancy healthy. Food is scarce; repeated droughts have killed livestock , leaving her with barely enough to eat. Sometimes she survives on one meal a day.

On days when temperatures soar above **40°C**, she feels dizzy, dehydrated, and weak. She worries constantly about losing her baby, because women in her community often deliver preterm or give birth to underweight infants due to poor nutrition and heat stress.

Despite being in her 3rd trimester, Sumaya has **never attended an antenatal clinic**. The nearest facility is several hours away, and floods during the rainy season cut off roads completely. She knows she will likely give birth at home without skilled care. She also fears her baby will never receive life-saving immunizations, just like many other children in her settlement who remain unprotected against polio, measles, and tuberculosis.

Sumaya's story is not isolated. In Wajir and other parts of ASAL Regions.

Planetary health boundaries



Global Context

Climate change - **greatest health threat of the 21st century** (WHO).

Over **3 billion people** live in areas vulnerable to climate risks.

Rising **heat, floods, droughts, disease outbreaks** → strain SRMNCAH services globally.

Women & children disproportionately impacted → maternal mortality, child malnutrition, adolescent vulnerabilities.

In Africa

Africa contributes **<4% of global emissions** but is **most affected**.

- **Droughts & floods** → food insecurity → 45 million undernourished children (UNICEF).
- Sub-Saharan Africa has **highest maternal mortality ratio** (545 per 100,000 live births).
- Recurrent **cholera, malaria, Rift Valley Fever** outbreaks linked to climate variability.
- Adolescents: early marriage, GBV, unsafe abortions increase during crises.



Kenya’s Climate Reality

Kenya warming at **0.3°C per decade**; projections show **2°C+ rise by mid-century**. *(WMO, 2024)*

- Increasing frequency of **droughts, floods & heatwaves**.
- **80% of Kenya** is arid & semi-arid land (ASAL) → highly climate-vulnerable.
- Health systems already stretched, worsening SRMNCAH outcomes.

Maternal Health & Pregnancy Outcomes.

1

Heat stress increases risks of **preterm birth, stillbirth, hypertensive disorders**.

2

135,000 pregnant & breastfeeding women acutely malnourished (2023). *(MoH, UNICEF)*

3

Poor WASH & floods increase **risk of infections during pregnancy & delivery**.

Newborn & Child Health

760,000 children (6–59 months) acutely malnourished nationally (2025). *(Food Security Portal)*

27% of under-fives (~2M children) stunted; 11% underweight, 4% wasted. *(UNICEF, 2023)*

Rising **cholera, malaria & diarrheal outbreaks** after floods disproportionately affect children.

Nutrition & Food Security

Severe droughts → livestock deaths, crop failures → food insecurity.

- **65% of acutely malnourished children live in ASAL counties** (Mandera, Turkana, Wajir etc)
- Maternal malnutrition linked to **low birthweight, poor neonatal survival**.

Sexual & Reproductive Health

Droughts & displacement reduce access to **vaccination, screening, family planning & antenatal services**.

- Increased exposure to **gender-based violence** during migration & water collection. *(Kenya Gender Data 2023)*
- Adolescent girls: rising **early marriage, transactional sex & unintended pregnancies** in climate-affected regions.
- Lack of enough and clean water hampers personal hygiene leading to increased cases of urinary tract infection.

Adolescent Well-being

School closures after floods/drought → loss of education, higher **early marriage risk**.

- Climate stress linked to **STIs, unsafe abortions & poor SRH outcomes**.
- Rising **eco-anxiety, PTSD & depression** among youth in flood/drought-hit areas. *(MoH mental health reports, 2023)*

- **Indirect & Social Pathways**

Health services disrupted by damaged infrastructure (flooded roads, collapsed bridges).

Displacement & refugee camps increase overcrowding → poor hygiene, higher disease transmission.

Women & adolescents bear disproportionate burden in **water/fuel collection**, facing GBV risks.

•Kenya Health System Gaps

Inadequate **climate-resilient health facilities** (flood-proof, heat-ready).

- Shortages in **trained health workers** for emergency & SRMNCAH response.
- Weak **data & surveillance** linking climate events to maternal/neonatal outcomes.
- Supply chain interruptions → delays in **vaccines, nutrition & SRH commodities**.
- Weak integration of SRMNCAH into **national climate adaptation and disaster risk reduction plans.**
- Fragmented responses between health, environment, and humanitarian actors.
- Limited funding and prioritization of women and adolescents in climate-health financing.

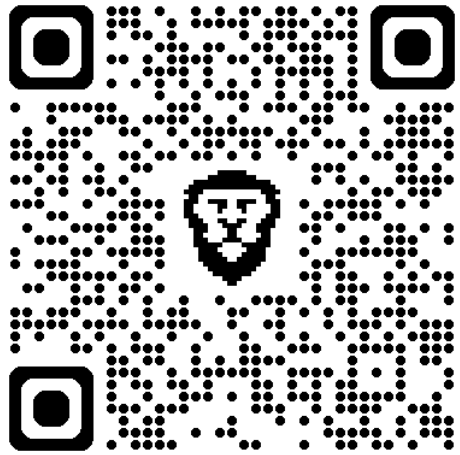
Climate and Health Connect's work in Climate and SRMNCAH

Addressing Climate-induced GBV – creating and training women groups made up of survivors of climate-induced SGBV, forming an SGBV support platform, and empowering them through training on climate-resilient small scale farming and tree planting, CHC has impacted over 700 women.



Climate and Health Connect's work in Climate and SRMNCAH

Cervical Cancer campaign and screening – 511 women were screened on Cervical cancer, campaign reached over 100,000 people, findings published in the Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology of East and Central Africa, that calls for urgent recognition of climate impacts on health outcomes.



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Gynecologic Oncology

Knowledge, attitudes, and prevalence of cervical cancer screening among women in Garissa County, Kenya

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Background: Globally, cancer is a leading cause of death, with cervical cancer being particularly prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa, including Kenya. Despite being preventable, cervical cancer remains a significant health burden due to low screening awareness and socioeconomic disparities. In Kenya, it is the second most frequent cancer among women. This is exacerbated by high HPV infection rates, underscoring the critical need for effective screening strategies. This study assessed the knowledge, attitudes, and prevalence of cervical cancer screening among women in Garissa County.

Climate and Health Connect's work in Climate and SRMNCAH

3. Climate and Health Clubs- High school students and youth are involved in planting trees, spreading health information, and becoming climate and health champions. This helps improve the mental health of the adolescents.



Climate and Health Connect's work in Climate and SRMNCAH

- 4. Free medical camps for Vesicovaginal Fistula Reconstruction- Drought and floods often forces home deliveries without skilled midwives, prolonged labour and lack of access to antenatal clinics leads to increased number of Obstetric fistula (Vesicovaginal Fistula).



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What do you think should be done to address climate impacts on SRMNCAH?

Call to Action

