**Terms of Reference**

**Towards A feminist Approach to Climate Justice: Understanding the Links Between Climate Change, Gender, and SRHR in the Middle East and North Africa**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assignment** | Conducting a research paper on the links between climate change, gender, and SRHR in the Middle East and North Africa |
| **Geographic scope** | MENA Regional Focus (Oxfam in MENA works in Algeria, Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Lebanon, Occupied Palestinian Territories, Tunisia and Yemen) |
| **Duration** | 20 days |

# Background

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is at the forefront of climate change impact as it’s projected to experience devastating impacts of the climate crisis. From rising temperatures and dwindling water resources to desertification and extreme weather events. The rate of warming in the region is higher than the global average as the temperature is anticipated to increase during the summer season, with a projected rise of up to 4°C by 2071-2100 in comparison to pre-industrial temperatures.[[1]](#footnote-1) It is projected that certain regions in the MENA will experience increased heat and humidity levels that surpass the limits of human tolerance and adaptability by the end of this century. In various regions of MENA, the simultaneous occurrence of heat and drought is expected to expedite the process of desertification and result in a rise in dust storms. Further, the region also faces a plethora of challenges including inequitable social conditions, political instability, conflicts, displacement, poverty, loss of livelihoods, unemployment, gender inequality, severe water scarcity, degradation of natural resources and increasing land degradation, aridity, rising population and unsustainable consumption patterns, and food insecurity. With these challenges, climate change impacts are expected to further worsen conditions as it is referred to as a “threat multiplier”, exerting more pressure on systems and reinforcing pre-existing inequalities and threats. The effects of climate change are inherently gendered and should be further studied and mitigated, given the pre-existing gender discriminatory structures and practices in the region. Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are an important aspect of overall human well-being. SRHR encompasses a range of issues, including access to family planning, maternal and child health care, prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and the right to make decisions regarding one's own body and reproductive choices. Climate change poses unique challenges to SRHR, affecting bodily autonomy, reproductive choices, and overall well-being, particularly for women and girls.

1. **Water Scarcity and its Implications on SRHR**

The defining characteristic of The MENA region is water scarcity that is compounded by climate change (e.g., desertification and increased temperatures), the limited availability of fresh water and the growing populations. Data from World Resources Institute’s Aqueduct tools reveal that 10 of the 17 most water-stressed countries globally are in the region.[[2]](#footnote-2) This effect of climate change extends beyond significant environmental and economic impacts, as it also has implications for the political stability and security of the region. Further, as water resources are used faster than they're replenished by precipitation, the MENA region is expected to be among the first regions to exhaust its water resources. Climate change will likely reduce total and per capita water availability to fall below the absolute water scarcity threshold of 500 cubic meters per person per year in 2030.[[3]](#footnote-3) According to Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, the special representative of the UN Secretary General for Iraq, speaking to the Security Council, "By 2035, it is estimated that Iraq will have the capacity to meet only 15 percent of its water demands".[[4]](#footnote-4) Inadequate governance practices have further compounded the issue by excessive extraction from rivers and aquifers which led to the degradation of already scarce water resources. Further, limited water resources affect agriculture, food security, and human health, all of which have dire implications for SRHR. Scarce water supplies can lead to reduced access to clean water for hygiene and sanitation purposes, increasing the risk of waterborne diseases. Water scarcity also adversely affects menstrual hygiene management (MHM). Limited access to water and sanitary facilities creates challenges for women and girls during menstruation forcing them to resort to unhygienic materials or practices, which increases the risk of infections and reproductive health complications. In Lebanon, a study by Oxfam revealed that the combination of displacement, water scarcity, and competition over water resources between refugees and host communities has further exacerbated the challenges faced by Syrian refugee women and girls in managing their menstrual hygiene.[[5]](#footnote-5) The study shows that the scarcity and high demand for water, combined with the lack of affordable and accessible menstrual hygiene products, forced refugee women and girls to rely on alternative solutions like reusable cloths, which can pose health risks if not cleaned properly.[[6]](#footnote-6) In Tunisia, water scarcity in rural areas has led to limited access to safe drinking water forcing women and girls, to walk long distances to collect water. This physically demanding task not only consumes time but also exposes them to the risk of sexual violence and harassment. [[7]](#footnote-7)

1. **Impact on Food, Agriculture and Livelihood**

Extreme weather events resulting from climate change, such as droughts and floods, coupled with water scarcity, are significantly affecting food production and agricultural practices in the MENA region. Research shows that by 2030, food security will be affected by more frequent, longer, and more intense heat extremes and droughts. The resulting food insecurity and malnutrition have severe consequences for SRHR. Inadequate nutrition affects reproductive health, maternal well-being, and fetal development. Malnourished women are more likely to experience complications during pregnancy and childbirth, leading to increased maternal and infant mortality rates. For example, in Yemen, the combination of food insecurity, conflict and water has increased malnutrition rates, leading to increased maternal and infant mortality rates.[[8]](#footnote-8) Moreover, inadequate water availability for irrigation can impact agricultural productivity, affecting the availability and affordability of nutritious food, which is crucial for maternal and child health. As agriculture is a major source of livelihood for many in the MENA region, climate change threatens the livelihood of millions of women which will result in feminizing the poverty and limiting resources for SRHR.

1. **Conflict, Climate Change-Induced Displacement and SRHR**

Climate change contributes to migration and conflict and acts as a threat multiplier to human security in the region. The rising temperatures, water and food scarcity, the loss of livelihoods due to climate change, and the spread of desertification are projected to fuel existing conflicts, trigger new ones and displace millions of people in the MENA region. This displacement adds to existing challenges faced by governments and communities, straining resources and infrastructure as well as contributing to social instability in an already conflict-affected region. Displaced women and girls often face barriers to accessing SRHR services, including reproductive healthcare, contraceptives, and maternal health services, resulting in an increase in vulnerabilities and risks. They also become more susceptible to sexual violence, exploitation, child marriage and encounter obstacles in accessing essential SRHR services, including contraceptives, prenatal care, and safe childbirth facilities. A systematic literature review found that Syrian refugee women and girls in Jordan faced many difficulties in accessing SRHR services, including reproductive healthcare, contraceptives, and maternal health services. The lack of proper facilities and resources, coupled with the disruption caused by the conflict and displacement, resulted in heightened risks for refugee women and girls as they became more susceptible to sexual violence, exploitation, and other forms of abuse.[[9]](#footnote-9)

1. **Energy Poverty and SRHR**

Increasing energy demand, the interplay between water resources and energy, conflict, political and economic instability, and the dependence of MENA countries on nonrenewable energy sources such as fossil fuel have all contributed to the current energy challenges. Energy poverty, where communities lack access to reliable and affordable energy, is a prevalent issue in the MENA region. The ongoing power shortages in the MENA due to faltering government power grids and reliance on privately run backup generators have significant implications for women and girls and their SRHR. The power cuts lead to food spoilage, health risks, and economic losses, disproportionately burdening women and girls and impacting their health, education, and safety. Moreover, the unreliable power supply disrupts essential healthcare infrastructure, including hospitals, compromising the provision of essential SRHR services. Lebanon provides an example of this interconnectedness, as evidenced by the energy crisis in 2020 that led to extensive electricity shortages, significantly impeding the functioning of hospitals.[[10]](#footnote-10)

1. **Climate Change, Gender Inequalities and SRHR**

As shown above, climate change, gender inequality, and SRHR are interconnected in many ways. Structural inequalities and intersecting identities such as gender, age, race, economic status, education, ability, and other social factors are determinants of an individual's vulnerability and adaptive capacity to climate change. It’s well-documented in the literature that gender inequality makes women and girls more vulnerable to climate change and climate change exacerbates the existing social and economic gender inequalities. This mutually reinforcing relationship exacerbates women’s and girls’ unequal access to natural and financial resources as well as reduces water and food security, decision-making power, and resilience to extreme weather events. Understanding the intersectionality of climate change and gender inequalities is crucial to ensure that climate actions not only mitigate and tackle climate change but also address the structural inequalities that hinder women's and girls' ability to enjoy their SRHR as well as respond and adapt to climate change. Such understanding is essential in creating of a more gender-just, equitable, sustainable and resilient future.

# Rationale of the Research

Building on the previous Oxfam’s and Kvinna till Kvinna’s research “***Feminist Movements and Climate Justice in the Middle East and North Africa”***[[11]](#footnote-11) which has highlighted the need for robust data and knowledge of the intersections of gender equality and climate in the MENA region, Oxfam seeks to recruit a consultant to conduct a research paper that aims to fill the existing knowledge gaps, generate evidence and a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted relationship between climate change, the prevalent gender inequalities and SRHR in the region. Specifically, it will examine the intersections between SRHR and various climate change impacts including energy poverty, climate-induced migration and displacement, water scarcity and food insecurity, agriculture, and loss of livelihood. Furthermore, the study will explore how the prevalent legal and socio-economic discriminations and inequalities in the region exacerbate the challenges faced by women and girls and hampering their ability to adapt to the impact of climate change and thus creating additional barriers that impede their ability to fully enjoy and exercise their SRHR. The study will also challenge the prevailing narrative that attributes climate change concerns solely to overpopulation, particularly focusing on the blame placed on women's reproduction. Instead, it will highlight the role of industrial and governments, with its patriarchal bias, which is reflected in the underrepresentation of women in decision-making structures, contribute to the climate crisis through poor climate change response, gender-blind climate policies, and exclusion of women and girls from climate policymaking and response processes, specifically National Determined Contributions (NDCs). Finally, the research will call for a twin-track approach that recognizes the critical importance of simultaneously addressing climate change and the structural inequalities that hinder women and girls from fully enjoying and exercising their rights. This approach acknowledges the need to enhance their adaptive capacity and ensure their meaningful participation in climate policymaking processes.

# Objectives

The primary objective of this research project is to examine and understand the relationship and the interconnection between SRHR and climate change in the MENA region and to develop evidence-based recommendations that advocate for the integration of gender-responsive policies and actions in the climate response, policy and finance. The research aims to:

1. Fill the existing knowledge gaps and generate evidence on the multifaceted relationship between climate change, gender inequalities, and SRHR in the MENA region.
2. Analyze and develop case studies around the intersections between SRHR and specific climate change impacts in the MENA region, including energy poverty, climate-induced migration and displacement, water scarcity and food insecurity, agriculture, and loss of livelihood or other impacts.
3. Identify and examine the legal and socio-economic discriminations and inequalities prevalent in the region that hinder women and girls from adapting to the impacts of climate change and exercising their SRHR.
4. Assess the existing policies, programs, and financial mechanisms related to climate change and their integration of SRHR.
5. Identify all the actors that are relevant to make a proper diagnosis of the causes behind the gaps in the analysis connecting SRHR to climate justice, as well as the actors who should be involved to build the connection.
6. Challenge the prevailing narrative that attributes climate change concerns solely to overpopulation and highlight the role of industrial and governmental actors in contributing to the climate crisis through poor climate change response and exclusion of women and girls from climate policymaking and response processes, including NDCs.
7. Develop a set of evidence-based recommendations that advocate for a twin-track approach that prioritizes SRHR in climate action by addressing climate change and structural gender inequalities simultaneously.

# Scope of Work

The consultant will be responsible of the following tasks:

1. Collect secondary data by conducting a comprehensive literature review on the intersections between climate change, gender inequalities, and SRHR in the MENA region
2. Develop a research methodology and data collection plan, including interviews, and focus group discussions (FGDs) with relevant stakeholders, such as women's rights organizations, feminist actors, SRHR practitioners, climate change experts and affected communities.
3. Collect primary data through the identified methods, ensuring a diverse and representative sample of participants.
4. Analyze the collected data, using both qualitative and quantitative methods, to identify patterns, trends, and key findings related to the multifaceted relationship between climate change, gender inequalities, and SRHR in the MENA region.
5. Identify all the actors that are relevant to make a proper diagnosis of the causes behind the gaps in the analysis connecting SRHR to climate justice, as well as the actors who should be involved to build the connection.
6. Develop case studies to illustrate specific examples of the challenges faced by women and girls in the MENA region regarding climate change impacts and SRHR.
7. Provide policy recommendations based on the research findings, advocating for a twin-track approach that addresses climate change and structural inequalities simultaneously, enhances the adaptive capacity of women and girls, and ensures their meaningful participation in climate policymaking processes.
8. Prepare and submit an inception report, a draft research report, a final research report, and a policy brief, incorporating feedback received during the review process.

# Deliverables

Under the guidance of the Regional Gender Justice Coordinator and the Regional Climate Justice Advisor, the consultant is expected to deliver the following:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Inception Report** | A detailed outline of the research methodology, data collection plan, and timeline within two weeks of the assignment commencement. |
| **Interim Report** | A progress report outlining the findings and analysis of the research, including case studies, within five weeks of the assignment commencement. |
| **Draft Research Report** | A comprehensive research report with key findings, recommendations, and policy guidelines within seven weeks of the assignment commencement. |
| **Final Research Report** | Revised and finalized research report incorporating feedback and recommendations within two weeks of receiving feedback from Oxfam. |

# Timeline

The estimated timeline for this research project is two months, starting from mid-July to mid-September.

# Qualifications and Experience

The consultant should have the following qualifications and experience:

* Advanced degree in a relevant field (e.g., gender studies, public health, environmental science, social sciences).
* A minimum of 10 years of professional experience at national and/or international levels in the areas of gender equality, SRHR and climate change.
* Extensive knowledge and expertise in SRHR, gender equality, and climate change, with a demonstrated understanding of their intersection.
* Solid experience in conducting research on gender-related issues, SRHR, and climate change, including qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis.
* Extensive experience in policy analysis, report writing including the ability to formulate recommendations based on the findings. Proven record of conducting research and consultations in the region as well as in the targeted countries.
* Fluent in English and Arabic, excellent writing skills in English.
* Ability to plan and meet requirements on time.

# How to Apply

Interested applicants are invited to submit their applications [jordan\_procurement@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:jordan_procurement@oxfam.org.uk) that include the following:

1. **A cover letter.**
2. **Technical offer** including how the applicant would tackle the research project in terms of approach and methodology, number of days, time frame and action plan for the research, daily rates, research team size and expertise (if applicable) and any other logistic or ethical considerations.
3. **Financial offer** that includes a detailed budget including taxes, social security contributions and VAT. Financial offer needs to specify different costs for research data collection tools. Offers have to also include costs for 3%, 4% and 5% margin of error as well as approximate representative population.
4. Previous published examples of similar work.
5. Contracted consultant cannot further subcontract the assignment. In cases where the tender includes a team of consultants, their division of labor shall be presented in advance to Oxfam.

**This call for application is open to consulting firms and individual consultants. The deadline for receiving application is July 5, 2023.**

1. Zittis, G. et al., 2021: Business-as-usual will lead to super and ultra-extreme heatwaves in the Middle East and North Africa. Npj Clim. Atmospheric Sci., 4(1), 1–9 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <https://www.wri.org/applications/aqueduct/country-rankings/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Falkenmark, M., J. Lundqvist, and C. Widstrand. 1989. “Macro-Scale Water Scarcity Requires Micro-Scale

   Approaches.” Natural Resources Forum 13: 258–67. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-8947.1989.tb00348.x>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <https://www.thenationalnews.com/mena/iraq/2023/05/18/iraq-will-only-be-able-to-meet-15-of-its-water-needs-by-2035-un-official-warns/> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/621005/rr-menstrual-hygiene-management-syrian-refugee-women-bekaa-180620-en.pdf;jsessionid=8E76C0E692B9211A2FEF443238F17027?sequence=1> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. ibid [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. <https://www.afd.fr/en/actualites/tunisia-facilitating-access-water-and-womens-empowerment> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. <https://borgenproject.org/tag/maternal-health-in-yemen/> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. <https://reproductive-health-journal.biomedcentral.com/counter/pdf/10.1186/s12978-020-01005-7.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. <https://uprdoc.ohchr.org/uprweb/downloadfile.aspx?filename=8435&file=Annexe2> [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. <https://kvinnatillkvinna.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Feminist-Movements-and-Climate-Justice-in-Middle-East-and-North-Africa.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-11)