



Global  
Menstrual  
Collective

# Climate Change & Menstrual Health & Hygiene are Interlinked

Here's How

# What is Climate Change?

**Climate change refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns**

## *Climate change*

- Impacts lives, livelihoods, health, ecosystems, economies, societies, cultures, services and infrastructure
- Through extreme weather, climate events, and persistent or long term effects of climate change
- Builds on vulnerabilities and enhances vulnerabilities of an exposed society or system



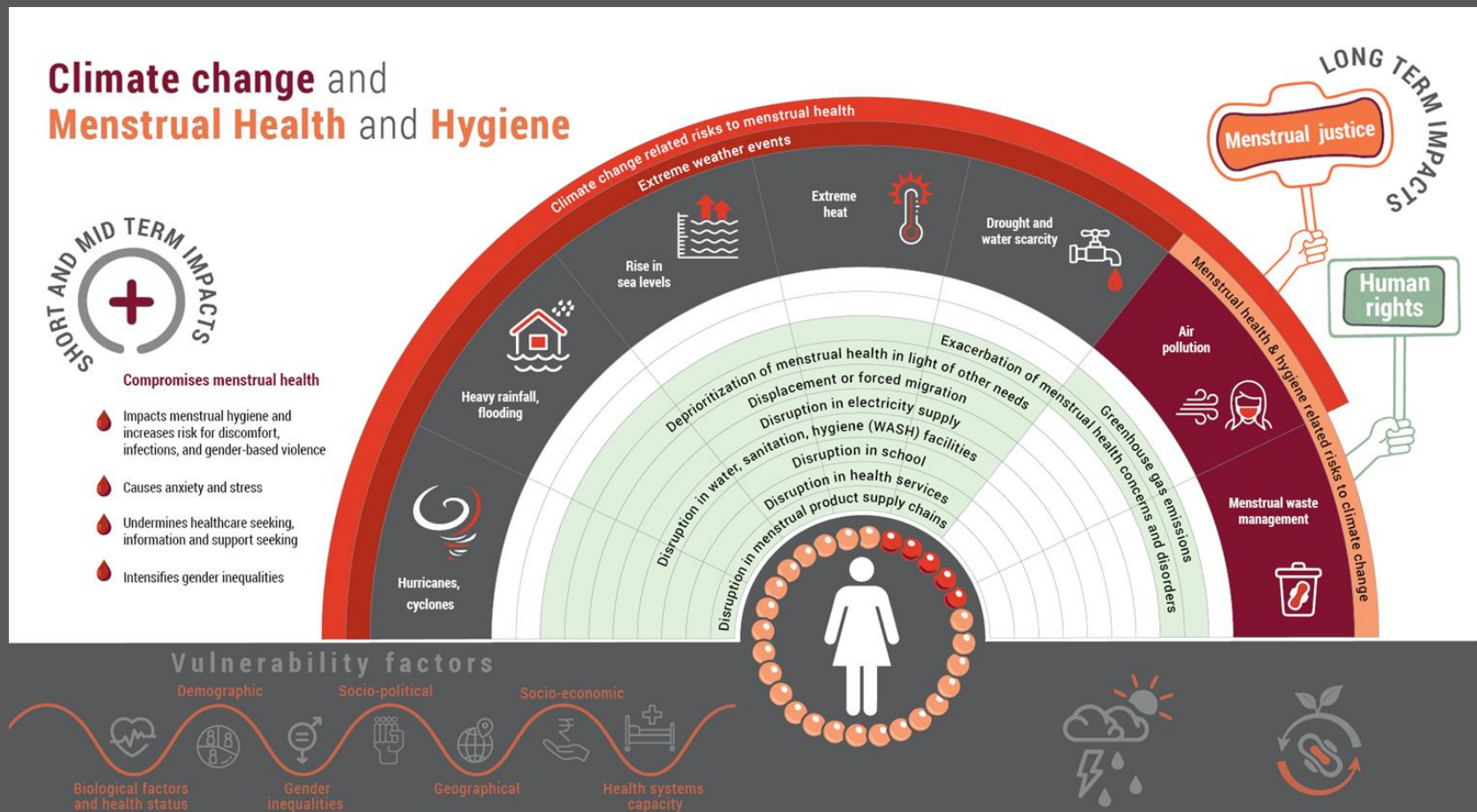
# By the Numbers

Climate change affects everyone, yet girls and women are disproportionately affected as climate change exacerbates prevailing and pervasive gender inequalities

- **3.6 billion people** already live in areas highly susceptible to adverse climate events ([source](#))
- **Double** the number of climate related disasters in the past two decades
- **13 million lives lost** due to environmental factors every year
- **134% increase in flood related disasters** since 2000, compared with the two previous decades. Most of the flood-related deaths and economic losses were recorded in Asia
- **158 million more girls and women** may be pushed into poverty by 2050 due to climate change ([source](#))



# Interlinkages Between Menstrual Health & Hygiene and Climate Change



# Single use menstrual products and climate change



## Single use menstrual products have environmental implications. How?

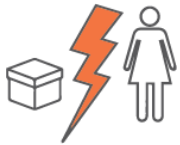
- Adds to waste volumes:
  - Single use menstrual product such as disposable sanitary pads and tampons are thrown after every use, adding to the waste generated
  - Single use sanitary pads take >500 years to decompose
- Contains harmful raw materials or components:
  - Single use products contain plastic, super absorbent polymers, and additives that contribute to soil, air and water pollution when discarded and treated poorly
- Waste management solutions are often inefficient:
  - The management of menstrual waste through disposal in landfills and treatment in incinerators contributes to greenhouse emissions due to inefficient and unsafe end of life treatment solutions

**BUT the linkage between menstrual health and climate change is NOT limited to single use menstrual products!**

Climate related  
extreme weather  
events *threaten*  
*access to and*  
*hygienic use of*  
*period products*

**How?**

- **Constraint access** to menstrual products of choice due to disrupted supply chains
- **Compromise hygienic use** and disposal of available products as water, toilet, and disposal facilities are affected



Climate related  
extreme weather  
events *hamper*  
*access to and use*  
*of supportive*  
*facilities and*  
*services*



## How?

- **Causes disruption or acute shortages in essential services** like water, sanitation, and waste management facilities needed during menstruation due to destruction or damage, or disrupted supply (in the case of water supplies)
- Affects personal hygiene, menstrual hygiene practices, effective washing of reusable period products, disposal of products
- **Restricts access to health services** for treatment and care
- **Curtails access to information and social supports** on menstrual health and hygiene

Climate related  
extreme weather  
events *affects*  
*safety, privacy,*  
*and can*  
*exacerbate stigma*  
*and discrimination*

## How?

- **Compromises the safety and privacy** of girls and women as they may be displaced from their homes, living in temporary or makeshift shelters or new areas that lack amenities or basic facilities.
- **Heightens stigma and discrimination** faced by women as displacement and forced migration can create insecure and exploitative social, physical and economic conditions





Climate change  
related forced  
migration  
*enhances*  
*vulnerabilities of*  
*people who*  
*menstruate*



## How?

- **Loss of health and support services** (e.g., access to information may be lost)
- **Loss of livelihoods or affected household income**, limiting the ability to purchase period products or seek health care
- **De-prioritization of the personal health needs** of girls and women in lieu of other essential needs of the family and community (e.g., food and water, shelter)
- **Pervasive inequitable gender norms** further constrain movement for girls and women, affecting access to products, services, and support
- **Increased vulnerability** when forced migration is combined with conflict

# Air pollution may *affect menstrual health*

## How?

- Some research points to the linkage between **high exposure to air pollution and endocrine disruption**, leading to hormonal imbalances. This can affect age at menarche, menopause, and menstrual concerns and disorders
- More research is needed to understand the impacts of air pollution on menstrual health



Climate change  
*exacerbates*  
*existing poor*  
*health,*  
*vulnerabilities, and*  
*inequalities*



**How?**

- **Compromises health** as people may need to use available products for a longer duration than considered safe or hygienic, use materials that may not be washed and dried appropriately, or use unsuitable or unsafe materials
- **Cause anxiety and stress** over menstrual management
- **Affects changing of** period products, personal hygiene practices, washing and drying of reusable products, disposal of used products
- Challenges may be particularly acute for:
  - Girls attaining menarche
  - Girls and women with menstrual problems and disorders (e.g., heavy bleeding) and abnormal uterine bleeding
  - Peri-menopausal women
  - Girls and women with disabilities
  - Girls and women from marginalized groups (even within their community - e.g., women in sex work, girls and women who are living with HIV or other infectious diseases) and vulnerable communities
  - People with gender diverse identities

# Resources & Must Reads

[World Bank Climate Change Knowledge Portal](#)

[Period poverty and menstrual belonging: a matter of climate justice](#)

[A Systematic Literature Review of Factors Affecting the Timing of Menarche: The Potential for Climate Change to Impact Women's Health](#)

[Menstrual products: A comparable Life Cycle Assessment](#)

[Project Dandelion](#)





This brief was prepared by members of the Global Menstrual Collective (GMC) Climate Change & MHH working group. The GMC is a global advocacy network that drives action on and investment in menstrual health and hygiene. The Climate Change & MHH working group seeks to outline the linkages between climate change and MHH, and to identify and share strategies and solutions to enable menstrual health and hygiene in the context of climate vulnerabilities.

This deck was developed with inputs from Lillian Bagala (Irise Institute East Africa); Bhuvana Balaji (Uninhibited/MH Hub); Marije Broekhuijsen (UNICEF); Chrissy Cattle (Irise International); Jacquelyn Haver (Save the Children); Sidra Irfan (Menstrual Rights Global); Lady Nancy Lisondra (International Planned Parenthood Federation); Arundati Muralidharan (GMC, MHA); Alethea Osborne (The Menstrual Cup Coalition); Sandra von Soelen (Simavi); Celtia Valcarcel (Menstrual Rights Global)

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