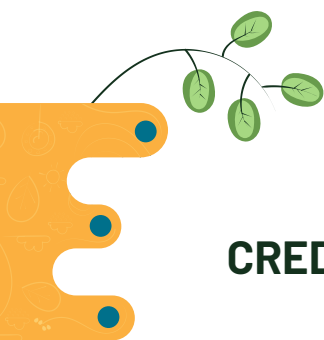


GENDER- TRANSFORMATIVE EDUCATION FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE: LINKAGES AND POLICY ADVOCACY ACTIONS

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EXECUTIVE STATEMENT

Gender inequities in education and climate justice are two of the most urgent needs of our time, yet the two concepts are often disconnected. This Policy Brief seeks to link gender-transformative education (GTE) with climate justice through: 1) summarizing the current literature linking gender, and climate disasters and the role of education to address inequities; 2) identifying existing linkages between gender and climate justice in international agreements; 3) conceptualizing GTE for climate justice; and 4) proposing policy advocacy actions that can help facilitate linkages between GTE and climate justice. This paper focuses on climate action in the Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) region, but considerations may be applicable in other settings around the world.

This brief uses a gender-transformative and intersectional lens to identify the gendered impacts of climate disasters on schooling and wellbeing, with a specific focus on LAC. It also highlights the existing national frameworks that link gender and climate justice, and conceptualizes GTE for climate justice. Lastly, it offers advocacy recommendations to support gender-transformative and climate-just education.

CLIMATE JUSTICE AND GENDERED EFFECTS: FRAMING THE PROBLEM

Evidence suggests that climate risks and the effects of climate change are gendered. When data are disaggregated by biological sex or orientation, for example, it is easy to see how different climate risks may impact people in diverse gender roles in significant ways. The effects of climate changes, such as droughts or hurricanes due to increased temperatures, on individuals' education and wellbeing depends on one's context and differing vulnerabilities, including gender and social norms, economic status, and location, and other factors.^{1,2} For instance, after a natural disaster, boys from poor households may be expected to leave school to work, while displaced girls may be expected to leave school to find water, firewood, and care for siblings. Youth from LGBTQAI+ families are uniquely vulnerable to climate changes because they face multiple forms of discrimination^{3,4} which limit their basic human rights to housing, food, and education. Below is a summary of the disproportionate gendered needs related to the impacts of climate disasters on schooling for boys/men, LGBTQAI+ youth and families, and girls/women.

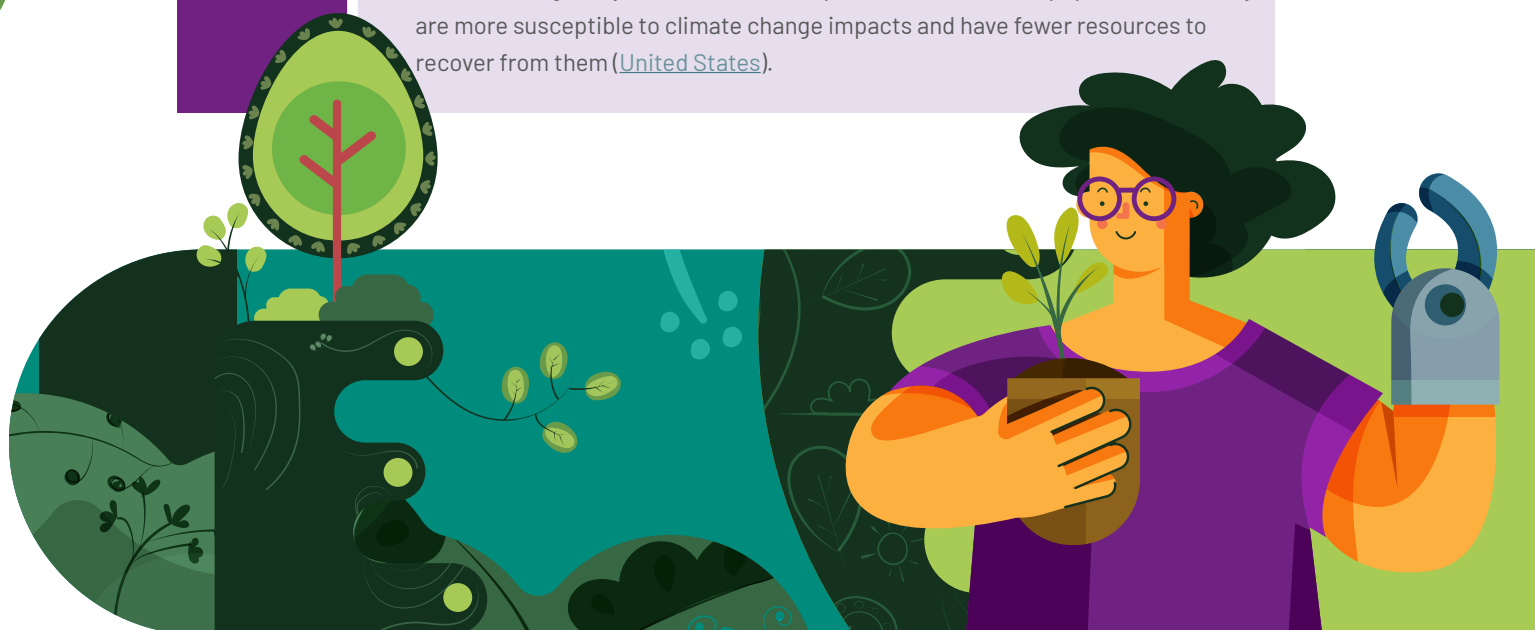
- 1 Erman, A., DeVries Robb, S.A., Thies, S.F., Kabir, K., & Maruo, M. (2021). *Gender dimensions of disaster risk and resilience: Existing evidence*. World Bank. <https://hdl.handle.net/10986/35202>
- 2 Fruttero, A., Halim, D., Broccolini, C., Coelho, B., Gninafon, H., & Muller, N. (2024). Gendered impacts of climate change: Evidence from weather shocks. *Environmental research*: 3(4), 045018. <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/2752-5295/ad8025/meta>
- 3 Bleeker, A., Escribano, P., Gonzales, C., Lliberati, C., & Mawby, B. (2021). *Advancing gender equality in environmental migration and disaster displacement in the Caribbean, Studies and perspectives series-ECLAC subregional headquarters for the Caribbean, No. 98*. United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. <https://repositorio.cepal.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/f31b2e7b-6ed8-4d0d-96a9-c75e4a059747/content>
- 4 Chakma, T. (2023). *LGBTQ+ communities and climate change*. Gender + Environment Data Alliance. https://genderenvironmentdata.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/GEDA_LiteratureLandscapeSummary_LGBTQCommunitiesandClimateChange_v1.pdf





Table 1: Summary of gendered needs related to the effects of climate disasters on schooling and wellbeing

WHO	IMPACTS OF CLIMATE DISASTERS ON EDUCATION AND WELLBEING
Boys/men	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boys with higher prenatal flood exposure had fewer years of schooling (Colombia). Boys taken out of school to reduce school-related costs, such as transportation (2011 drought in Mexico). Boys taken out of school to work (2003 tropical cyclones in Fiji). Droughts increased school enrollment for boys from poorer households with little to no land wealth (2001-2002 drought in Nicaragua).
LGBTQAI+ youth and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is limited evidence on how climate disasters affect gender minorities. LGBTQAI+ families faced increased safety risks and violence in IDP camps, and they were excluded from emergency food rations when rations were offered exclusively to women as 'female heads of households' (2010 Haiti earthquake). LGBTQAI+ families had difficulties finding safe housing after Hurricane Dorian because of increased violence in collective shelters (2019 Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas). Disaster relief (food and clothing) was restricted in working class neighborhoods and Red Light Districts where LGBTQAI+ families lived (Chile 2010 earthquake). Climate change may increase health disparities for LGBTQAI+ populations, as they are more susceptible to climate change impacts and have fewer resources to recover from them (United States).



Girls/ women

- Females experienced greater losses of learning years due to rising temperatures than males ([sample of 130 countries](#)).
- Girls are more likely to be the first to drop out of school (compared to boys) when household resources are strained by climate crises ([Ethiopia, India, Peru, Vietnam](#)).
- An increase of 1 C is associated with a 34% reduction in total income of female-headed households relative to male-headed households ([24 countries including Ecuador and Peru](#)).
- Girls are more likely to miss school or be taken out of school after climate crises to earn money, assist with domestic chores (find fuel and water), and care for siblings ([LAC](#)).
- Climate crisis push families to marry their girls early to reduce household expenses⁵ ([globally](#)).
- Girls missed school when menstruating because schools lacked basic hygiene and sanitation facilities⁵ (globally, [Jordan and Sudan](#)).
- Climate change has caused water, food, and economic insecurity and displacement, exacerbating gender-based violence against girls/women ([globally](#)). Increased temperatures were associated with increased violence against girls and women, as each degree centigrade increase in temperature was associated with an increase in prevalence of violence against women and girls of 4.49% ([South Asia](#)).
- Girls and women reported rape while collecting water, fuel, and food after floods ([2020 Sudan floods](#)).
- Indigenous women are particularly at risk of targeted violence as they serve in roles as environmental human rights defenders ([globally](#)).

5 Resurrección, B.P., Bee, B.A., Dankelman, I., Young Park, C.M., Haldar, M., & McMullen, C.P. (2019). *Gender-transformative climate change adaptation: Advancing social equity*. Background paper to the 2019 report of the Global Commission on Adaptation. <https://gca.org/reports/gender-transformative-climate-change-adaptation-advancing-social-equity/>



COMPOUNDING FACTORS: GENDER, CLIMATE, AND REGIONAL RISK

In Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC), economic and gender inequalities – combined with increased climate disasters – cause major disruptions to education. LAC is the region with the most economic inequality, with the largest divide between the richest 1% and the poorest 50% of any region,⁶ as two of the three richest men in LAC have more wealth than 334 million poor.^{7,8} The gap has increased over the past 25 years, as the richest have 55 times more wealth than the poorest half of the region.⁶

Inequality gaps have also persisted and widened for historically excluded groups, including women, girls, and LGBTQAI+ persons. Researchers have found a stark earnings gap favoring men over women in LAC, which was due to unobservable characteristics associated with discriminatory gender biases (instead of personal characteristics such as level of education, economic sector, urban/rural, etc.).⁹ In LAC, it was found that households with one woman raising

children alone had a total income of \$8.40 USD/day, compared to the \$14.90 USD/day average LAC household¹⁰. These inequalities affect access to education, as the poorest households in rural areas have a 69% school attendance rate, 13 percentage points lower than the richest households living in urban areas.⁶

Climate changes, such as increased temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, and increased incidences of drought and vector-borne diseases (e.g., dengue, malaria, Zika) are increasingly more common in LAC.¹¹ In 2021, 9 out of 10 children in LAC were exposed to at least two climate and environmental disasters per year (e.g., heat waves, cyclones, hurricanes, water scarcity).¹² Climate changes in LAC have resulted in both major flooding and drought and have increased the rate of infectious diseases (e.g., cholera, dysentery). It has been argued that the youngest children (in early childhood education) are disproportionately vulnerable to climate crises (such as the 2024 [flood in Rio Grande do Sul](#) in Brazil) because of their specific developmental needs.¹³ In addition, indigenous peoples in Latin America are seen as particularly vulnerable to

- 6 Brown, C., Naveda, E., Paz Arauco, V., & Ruiz, S. (2024). *Econounestra: Time for an economy for everyone*. https://oi-files-cng-v2-prod.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lac.oxfam.org/s3fs-public/DocumentoDiagramado_ENG.pdf
- 7 Oxfam México. (2024). El monopolio de la desigualdad: Cómo la concentración del poder corporativo lleva a un México más desigual. <https://www.oxfam.mx/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/El-monopolio-de-la-desigualdad-Davos-2024-Briefing-Paper.pdf>
- 8 Sanchez, J. (2024, August 22). *The ten richest Latin Americans in 2024, by wealth*. Statista. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/957865/richest-latin-americans-by-wealth/>
- 9 Urquidí, M., & Chalup, M. (2023). *The gender earnings gap in Latin America and the Caribbean: An analysis of its components*. Inter-American Development Bank. <https://publications.iadb.org/en/gender-earnings-gap-latin-america-and-caribbean-analysis-its-components#:~:text=The%20earnings%20gap%20favoring%20men,Published:%202025>
- 10 Buitrago-Hernandez, P., De Hoop, J., Ishak, P., Melgar Calderon, R., & Ñopo, H. (2024, March 1). *Poverty is not gender neutral in Latin America and the Caribbean*. World Bank. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/latinamerica/poverty-not-gender-neutral-latin-america-and-caribbean#:~:text=Households%20with%20one%20woman%20raising,that%20for%20the%20region%20overall>
- 11 Blackman, A., Cavallo, E., Hoffman, B., Vogt-Schilb, A., Alejos, L., Alfonso, M., Alpizar, F., Alvarez, L., Balza, L., Becczuk, R.N., Blyde, J.S., Bos, M.S., Celis, C., Delgado, R., Dolabella, M., Calatayud, A., Dueñas, J., Gabrielli, V., Galindo, A.,... Yáñez-Pagas, P. (2025). *Peril and promise: Tackling climate change in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Inter-American Development Bank. <http://dx.doi.org/10.18235/0013427>
- 12 UNICEF. (2021a, August 20). *9 out of 10 children in Latin America and the Caribbean are exposed to at least two climate and environmental shocks*. UNICEF. <https://www.unicef.org/lac/en/press-releases/children-latin-america-and-caribbean-are-exposed-climate-climate-environmental-shocks>
- 13 Jucá, B., & Barbosa, L. (2024, March 15). *Brazilian youngsters discuss how they are tackling the climate emergency*.





climate crises, as much of their livelihood comes from forest and water resources¹⁴. Climate change is impacting education at all levels, and groups like [UNESCO have argued](#) that climate change and disaster risk reduction elements should be integrated into adult education.

In addition, climate change affects wellbeing which, in turn, affects education – for instance, youth stress and eco-anxiety¹⁵ can in turn increase school absenteeism.¹⁶ Climate change increases vulnerability for the most marginalized in education, in particular girls; the least educated children are more susceptible to environmental shocks and stressors, more likely to be taken from school to work, and more likely to be displaced when disaster happens.¹⁷

Considering the gender and context-specific effects of climate disasters on education, the next section highlights the international frameworks and policies created in an attempt to meet these needs.

EXISTING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN GENDER AND CLIMATE IN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS

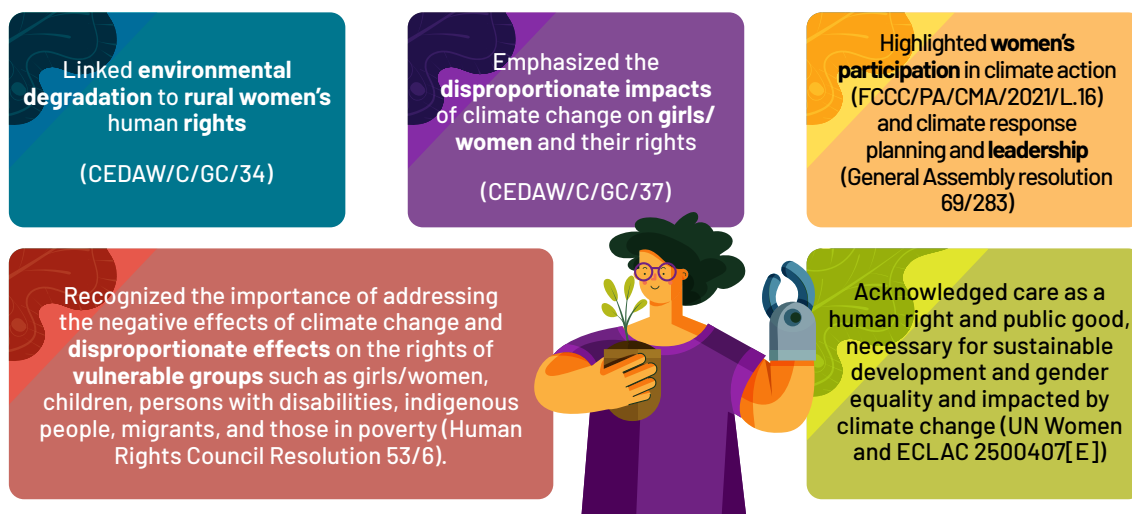
National frameworks and policies are increasingly meeting the needs of marginalized groups and the impacts of environmental disasters on them.¹⁸ Figure 1 highlights recent international frameworks and policies that recognize the intersectional and often gendered nature of climate change on different vulnerable groups. It also includes the recently adopted Tlatelolco Commitment, adopted by the member States of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean at the sixteenth session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean in August 2025. This Commitment recognizes care as a human right and public good that is threatened by climate change, and commits to establishing a care society for sustainable development and gender equality.

Mongabay. <https://news.mongabay.com/2024/03/brazilian-youngsters-discuss-how-they-are-tackling-the-climate-emergency/#:~:text=The%20climate%20crisis%20and%20the,of%20violations%20of%20their%20rights.>

- 14 Kronik, J., & Verner, D. (2010). The role of indigenous knowledge in crafting adaptation and mitigation strategies for climate change in Latin America. In R. Meams & A. Norton (Eds.), *Social dimensions of climate change: Equity and vulnerability in a warming world* (pp. 145–172). The World Bank. DOI 10.1596/978-0-8213-7887-8.
- 15 Nandyal, N. (2025). *Youth agency in the face of climate change: The promises and limits of environmental education in coastal Ecuador* (in publication process). (Doctoral dissertation, University of Minnesota). ProQuest Dissertations & Theses.
- 16 Pinchoff, J., Etetim, E.-O., Babatunde, D., Blomstrom, E., Ainul, S., Akomolafe, T.O., Carranza, B.M., Del Valle, A., & Austrian, K. (2025). How climate change is shaping young people's health: A participatory, youth co-led study from Bangladesh, Guatemala, and Nigeria. *British Medical Journal (BMJ) Global Health*, 10(1), e016788. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjgh-2024-016788>
- 17 UNICEF. (2021b). *The climate crisis is a child rights crisis: Introducing the children's climate risk index*. New York: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). <https://www.unicef.org/media/105376/file/UNICEF-climate-crisis-child-rights-crisis.pdf>
- 18 UN Secretary-General. (2022). *Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes*. (E/CN.6/2022/3). United Nations. <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3956348?ln=en&v=pdf#record-files-collapse-header>.



Figure 1: International frameworks and policies that include an intersectional approach to climate justice



Under the Paris Agreement, countries submit Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) outlining their post-2020 climate action plans. Yet only 26% of NDCs referenced education as a strategy for climate change adaptation and mitigation¹², signaling more work is needed to integrate education into NDCs and create gender-transformative, climate-just education policies and systems. Given the needs highlighted above – and the recent political will to use an intersectional lens focusing on climate and gender justice – the next section describes key advocacy points for interventions to promote gender-transformative education and climate justice.

HOW GTE CAN INFORM CLIMATE JUSTICE

Gender-transformative education seeks to recognize causes of gender inequalities and injustices and change attitudes and behaviors

in all parts of an education system.¹⁹ An education system includes education policies, data/evidence, curricula, pedagogies, the school environment, democratic participation in education (including children, young people, teachers, etc.), and community involvement and leadership. GTE includes addressing disparities (e.g., in budgets, school participation, leadership, outcomes, etc.); changing norms and structures in education, work, and health; using equitable teaching practices and curriculum; creating healthy and safe educational spaces for young people in all their diversity; and fostering young people's knowledge, skills, and actions.²⁰

In this section we introduce two GTE lenses that have the potential to address the pressing climate justice needs in LAC and the broader world. To link these GTE practices in the education system with climate change and promoting climate justice, we need to view educational **advocacy and practices** through an intersectional and relational lens.

19 UNGEI. (2025). *Gender-transformative education glossary*. United Nations Girls' Education Initiative. <https://www.ungei.org/gender-transformative-education-glossary>

20 Plan International, Transform Education, UNGEI, and UNICEF. (2021). *Gender transformative education: Reimagining education for a more just and inclusive world*. <https://www.ungei.org/publication/gender-transformative-education>



The first tenet, an **intersectional lens**, can be used to identify how different forms of inequality exacerbate each other, for instance based on one's gender identity or sexual orientation, disability status, income, race or ethnicity, where they live, and migrant status.^{21,22} Intersectionality informs GTE by focusing on different power relations based on status and experiences, and suggests that no human is defined by a single identity alone. Moreover, if one has more than one identity that is marginalized in a particular society, discrimination, stigmatization, and environmental risk may be cumulative. Intersectionality considers if and how people have power to address, change, or respond to climate changes and their effects. Because of this, we argue that all climate risks must be examined through an intersectional lens to understand how different people experience climate changes and effects. Gender identity is an important primary consideration, but examining risk through an intersectional lens can help identify how and why social marginalization interacts with climate injustice.

The second tenet, a **relational approach for feminist climate justice** recognizes that humans are in relation with one another and nature, and calls for recognition and respect of diverse identities, redistribution of resources, representation of women and marginalized groups in climate decision-making, and reparations for past and future harm.¹⁹ A feminist-informed approach to the environment centers care, human-nature relationships, and interdependence. This vision focuses on a world of qualities over quantities, in which the interrelationships of all who inhabit the planet are seen as a source of survival and thriving.²³ A feminist relational view of climate justice sets aside a survival of the fittest approach (which often creates untold suffering) and envisions a shared earth model that requires communication, care, and mutual respect.

An intersectional and relational approach to GTE and climate justice works to address social structures in educational spaces and communities that cause discrimination and inequality

21 Omega Institute for Holistic Studies. (2016, February 19). Kimberle Williams Crenshaw: What is intersectional feminism? [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0TFy4zRslTY>

22 Turquet, L., Tabbush, C., Staab, S., Williams, L., & Howell, B. (2023). Feminist climate justice: A framework for action. Conceptual framework prepared for *Progress of the World's Women* series. UN Women.

23 Goodwin, B. (1994). How the leopard changed its spots. The science of complexity. Princeton University Press.



and drive climate change. This includes tackling the structural drivers of climate change and gender inequalities while recognizing the interdependences between humans and ecosystems. An intersectional and relational approach shifts school practices, pedagogies, and curricula to identify and challenge inequalities in classrooms while promoting sustainable environmental practices. This approach also includes representation of *all* voices, challenging power relations, promoting teacher-to-teacher peer learning, and adopting whole school approaches to ensure leaders unpack gender inequalities and forefront environmental sustainability to create schools that are safe spaces for all students.

TAKING ACTION

Based on the conceptual connections made in the above sections, several advocacy approaches can be used to link GTE and climate justice. We recommend a few actions below, but acknowledge this is not a comprehensive list. Structural barriers cause unequal effects of climate change and keep marginalized groups from having equal access to education

and information systems, limiting mobility, decision-making, and access to resources and training.²⁴ Below are some major advocacy points to promote gender-transformative and climate-just education at different levels using an intersectional and relational vision for feminist climate justice.

SCHOOL-LEVEL

1. **Embed a gender-transformative approach to climate education in schools.** Use a GTE approach with curricula that include life skills and skills for climate justice. For instance, embedding GTE in the [greening curriculum guidance](#) and the [green school quality standard](#) may help schools build relational and collective action to address gender inequalities and climate injustice together. In addition, [school gardening](#) and [home grown school feeding initiatives](#) can promote school attendance, women's employment, and environmental conservation. A combined GTE and climate justice approach can help youth and educators gain skills to problem-solve, reduce their carbon footprints, build relationships with one an-

24 UN Women. (2025, April 21). *How gender inequality and climate change are interconnected*. UN Women. <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/explainer/how-gender-inequality-and-climate-change-are-interconnected#:~:text=Women%20and%20girls%20are%20less,dengue%20fever%2C%20and%20Zika%20virus>.



other, work towards environmental sustainability, and become climate-conscious adults.²⁵ Combining gender into educational climate reforms – such as [gender-transformative climate literacy](#) and [transformative climate education](#) – can help empower youth and educators to take collective social action to achieve climate justice and dismantle gender inequalities.

COMMUNITY-LEVEL

1. **Recognize and identify the interlinkages between education, gender, and climate change in your context.** Climate change impacts education in different ways depending on gender and other vulnerabilities, and gender transformative education can play a major role in reducing inequalities to achieve climate justice. Disaggregate data and conduct impact studies based on different vulnerabilities to learn about the specific and gendered impacts of climate change on education for different groups in your context. Community led discussions and projects, such as the [I-SEED](#) greenhouses for women and young people affected by gender-based violence in Jamaica, can help identify drivers of gender inequalities while building sustainable livelihoods.

POLICY AND PLANNING LEVELS

1. **Considering the gendered impacts of climate disasters on education, use a GTE lens to adapt all parts of the education system for greater climate resilience.** Identify the root causes and gendered climate risks

and needs related to education for youth with disaggregated data, and create comprehensive education sector plans based on these studies. Adapt school emergency response plans to consider the vulnerabilities and needs of different groups when restoring learning after natural disasters,²⁶ such as the specific needs of LGBTQAI+ families, girls, and boys in your context.

2. **Integrate marginalized groups into environmental and educational policymaking and leadership,** as they are often most affected by the impacts of climate change on education. Groups such as *La Via Campesina* have pushed for gender-transformative approaches to climate change and focused on increasing leadership from historically marginalized groups.¹⁹ With an intersectional lens, they have created spaces for marginalized groups, such as women's working groups and an [LGBT Collective in Brazil](#). They also have prioritized parity of representation and built cross-regional solidarity in their efforts to advance the rights of peasants and protect the environment.
3. **Link climate justice actions with gender-affirmative social policies and programs.** The most economically marginalized individuals in societies are often those most at risk from climate disasters. For instance, unequal gender and social relations can lead to disproportionate care responsibilities, particularly for girls and women, which are exacerbated by climate change and can limit educational outcomes.⁵ Linking child-headed households, employment inequality, and unpaid care work to greening initiatives can help reduce

25 UN Climate Change. (2023, December 8). *Breaking barriers: Gender-transformative education as a catalyst for climate justice* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PHGlzzUETe0>

26 Venegas Marin, S., Schwarz, L., & Sabarwal, S. (2024). The impact of climate change on education: And what to do about it. Washington D.C.: World Bank. <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/099043024150036726>

intersectional inequalities and promote climate justice. [More vulnerability and adaptation assessments are needed](#) in LAC to create intersectoral public policies that increase climate resilience, reduce social inequities, and improve population health. Support national policies to mainstream the climate justice perspective into school curricula and all types of learning, adapting the approach to each educational stage. Prioritize and listen to multi-sectoral calls to action, such as [this feminist youth-led statement](#) and the [Fortaleza Declaration](#), for

gender-transformative education to advance climate justice.

4. **Ensure that immediate responses to climate emergencies are gender-inclusive.** Create policies and programs that consider specific needs of different groups, such as safe shelter so that LGBTQAI+ families do not face [increased safety risks](#). Provide secure housing, basic needs to families, and childcare, so that LGBTQAI+ families, boys, and girls are able to return to school (and not taken out of school to [work](#) or [care for siblings](#)).

