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From Rising Tides to Shrinking Rights: Probing the Intersection of Climate Crisis and Sexual Reproductive Health Rights in Africa

By: *Murithi Antony**

Abstract

In the wake of the intensifying climate change crisis, several challenges have emerged that transcend beyond the boundaries of environmental concerns. The crisis has affected multiple aspects of human life, and one crucial yet often disregarded area is sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR). This article delves into the intricate nexus between the climate change crisis and its cascading impact on access to sexual and reproductive health rights across Africa. The writer sheds light on the disproportionate burden borne by marginalized communities, particularly women and girls, as they cope with exacerbated vulnerabilities stemming from climate change. The article explores various mechanisms through which the advancement of sexual and reproductive health rights can be effectively pursued amidst the challenges posed by the climate change crisis. Concluding with a resounding appeal, the writer rallies the engagement of young individuals, policymakers, and stakeholders, urging them to proactively champion climate change mitigation and the progress of SRHR throughout the African continent.

Key Words: *Climate Change, Human Rights, Equality, Mitigation, Reproductive Health.*

1. Introduction.

As the opening scenes of the popular television series “The 100” unfold, the earth is shown to be a desolate and uninhabitable place.¹ The planet has suffered a catastrophic

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environmental collapse caused by centuries of human exploitation and neglect. In this dystopian world, the remaining survivors of the human race are forced to eke out a living in space, waiting for the day when they can return to a planet that is once again capable of sustaining life.² As one watches this series with curious and inquisitive mindset, several questions linger in the mind: But what if this bleak future is not just a thing of science fiction? What if the world is already on the brink of a climate crisis that threatens to render large parts of the planet uninhabitable, particularly in Africa?

That the devastating effects of climate change are not mere figments of our imagination, is axiomatic.³ They are real, and they are happening right now.⁴ The effects of climate change crisis on fundamental human rights call for proactive measures and the formulation of remedies to mitigate these adverse impacts, and to protect human rights.

It is upon this contextualization that the article begins by explaining, albeit briefly, the concept of climate change. The article delves into a concise exploration of sexual reproductive health rights (SRHR) in Africa. The interconnection between these two concepts is then examined, culminating in recommendations on advancing SRHR amidst the challenges posed by the climate change crisis.

¹ The 100, Season 1, Episode 1, "Pilot."

² *Ibid.*

³ See, Martin Beniston, 'Climate change and its impacts: growing stress factors for human societies,' International Review of the Red Cross; Volume 92 Number 879 September 2010, available at < <https://international-review.icrc.org/sites/default/files/irrc-879-beniston.pdf>> accessed on 3rd July 2023.

⁴ Scott, M. J., et al. "Consequences of Climatic Change for the Human Environment." *Climate Research*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1990, pp. 63-79. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24863378>. Accessed 11 Dec. 2023.

2. Decoding Climate change

Before delving into an analysis of the concept of climate change, it is essential to first establish a clear understanding of the terms 'weather and climate'. Weather is the temperature, humidity, precipitation, cloudiness and wind that we experience in the atmosphere at a given time in a specific location.⁵ Climate, on the other hand, refers to the comprehensive statistical representation of weather patterns, encompassing the mean and variability of temperature, precipitation, and wind over a designated period, which can range from months to millions of years.⁶ The standard period for such analysis typically spans an average duration of 30 to 35 years.⁷ The concept further encompasses the interrelated conditions prevalent within oceans, land surfaces, and their intricate interactions, incorporating anthropogenic disturbances, as well as ice sheets.⁸ Climate change, therefore, is the long term change in the average weather patterns of a region or the whole world.⁹

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Aliyu Baba Nabegu, 'Understanding Climate Change' (2016) available at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/310844056_understanding_climate_change> (accessed on 3 July 2023).

⁷ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). (2006). Inventory of Anthropogenic Emissions of Greenhouse Gases. Retrieved from <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/docs/2006/06%20%20national%20inventories/general/15.pdf>

⁸ Hoyt, D. V. and K. H. Schatten, *The Role of the Sun in Climate Change* (Oxford University Press, 1997) <https://library.uniteddiversity.coop/Climate_Change/The_Role_of_the_Sun_in_Climate_Change.pdf> (accessed on 3 July 2023).

⁹ United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). (2006). Inventory of Anthropogenic Emissions of Greenhouse Gases. Retrieved from <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/docs/2006/06%20%20national%20inventories/general/15.pdf>

Climate change is primarily caused by human activities,¹⁰ with the combustion of fossil fuels like coal, oil, and natural gas being the largest contributor.¹¹ When these fuels are burned for energy production, transportation, and industrial processes, they release greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.¹² Deforestation, another human activity, reduces the earth's capacity to absorb carbon dioxide, as trees play a crucial role in carbon sequestration.¹³ Additionally, industrial processes release potent greenhouse gases like methane and nitrous oxide which intensify the natural greenhouse effect, trapping more heat from the sun and leading to global warming, which in turn drives climate change.¹⁴

3. Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights: An examination.

Access to sexual and reproductive health rights constitutes a fundamental human right across all life phases.¹⁵ However, this concept

¹⁰ Funk, Christopher C., et al., "Assessment of Climate Change Hotspots in East Africa: Implications for Finding Adaptation Strategies," *Global Environmental Change*, 21(2), 2011.

¹¹ Aliyu Baba Nabegu, 'Understanding Climate Change' (2016) available at <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/310844056_understanding_climate_change> (accessed on 3 July 2023).

¹² Florides, Georgios & Christodoulides, Paul. (2008). Global warming and carbon Dioxide through sciences. *Environment international*. 35. 390-401. 10.1016/j.envint.2008.07.007.

¹³ Chen, Li and Gao, Jiti and Vahid, Farshid, *Global Temperatures and Greenhouse Gases: A Common Features Approach* (September 30, 2019). Available at SSRN: <<https://ssrn.com/abstract=3461418>> or <<http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3461418>>

¹⁴ Chen, Li and Gao, Jiti and Vahid, Farshid, *Global Temperatures and Greenhouse Gases: A Common Features Approach* (September 30, 2019). Available at SSRN: <<https://ssrn.com/abstract=3461418>> or <<http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3461418>>

¹⁵ United Nations, 'Reproductive Rights are Human Rights: A handbook on National Human Rights Institutions,' (2014). Available at <<https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/NHRIHandbook.pdf>> accessed on 29th August 2023.

continues to evade numerous individuals in Africa, particularly affecting the vulnerable and marginalized communities, especially women and children.¹⁶ The persistence of this challenge within various communities impedes the bedrock of societal stability, causing development disparities and hindrances to access to justice.¹⁷ These challenges are further compounded by the adverse effects of climate change, which necessitates urgent interventions.¹⁸

Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) encompass, *inter alia*, the right of all persons to make informed decisions regarding their sexual and reproductive well-being without discrimination, coercion, or violence.¹⁹ These rights include the right to access comprehensive sexual education, affordable and quality healthcare services related to reproductive health, family planning, contraception, safe and legal abortion, prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and the ability to make choices about one's own body and reproductive life.²⁰ Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights aim to ensure that individuals can exercise control over their sexual and

¹⁶ Ayanleye, Oluwakemi, Women and Reproductive Health Rights in Nigeria (January 18, 2014). OIDA International Journal of Sustainable Development, Vol. 06, No. 05, pp. 127-140, 2013, Available at SSRN: <<https://ssrn.com/abstract=2381324>> accessed on 29th August 2023.

¹⁷ UNEP, 'Climate Change and Human Rights,' (2015) available at <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/9530/-Climate_Change_and_Human_Rightshuman-rights-climate-change.pdf.pdf> accessed on 29th August 2023.

¹⁸ UNEP, 'Climate Change and Human Rights,' (2015) available at <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/9530/-Climate_Change_and_Human_Rightshuman-rights-climate-change.pdf.pdf> accessed on 29th August 2023.

¹⁹ Mohammed, Majed, The Impact of Tropical Deforestation on Climate Change (May 26, 2021). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3853646>.

²⁰ Megan Daigle, Alexandra Spencer, 'Reproductive justice, sexual rights and bodily autonomy in humanitarian action: what a justice lens brings to crisis response,' available at <<https://odi.org/en/publications/reproductive-justice-sexual-rights-and-bodily-autonomy-in-humanitarian-action-what-a-justice-lens-brings-to-crisis-response/>> accessed on 1st September 2023.

reproductive life, promoting physical and mental well-being, gender equality, and the overall advancement of human rights.²¹

The International Conference of Population and Development (ICPD) defined Reproductive health as;

*“a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes”. Men and women should be able to enjoy a satisfying and safe sex life, have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so. This requires informed choice and access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable health-care services.*²²

It further defines Reproductive Health Care as;

“the constellation of methods, techniques and services that contribute to reproductive and sexual health and wellbeing by preventing and solving reproductive health problems. It also includes sexual health, the purpose of which is the enhancement of life and personal relations and not merely counselling and care related to reproduction and sexually transmitted diseases”.

Further, various other international human rights instruments acknowledge and emphasize the importance of upholding sexual and reproductive health rights. For instance, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa stipulates that States Parties have an obligation to guarantee the respect and advancement of women's right to health, which encompasses sexual and reproductive health.²³ The protocol goes further and lists what these rights encompass as:-

²¹ See, International Conference of Population and Development.

²² International Conference of Population and Development.

²³ Article 14, Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa.

- a) *the right to control their fertility;*
- b) *the right to decide whether to have children, the number of children and the spacing of children;*
- c) *the right to choose any method of contraception;*
- d) *the right to self-protection and to be protected against sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS;*
- e) *the right to be informed on one's health status and on the health status of one's partner, particularly if affected with sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, in accordance with internationally recognized standards and best practices;*
- f) *the right to have family planning education.*²⁴

These provisions are further echoed by other human instruments in Africa such as the Banjul Charter;²⁵ the Africa Children's Charter;²⁶ ICESCR;²⁷ ICCPR;²⁸ CEDAW;²⁹ among others, all of which have been ratified by most countries in Africa. The importance of sexual and reproductive health and rights is further underscored by their enshrinement in the constitutions of different African countries, hence underscoring their significance. For instance, the Constitution of Kenya guarantees the right to the highest attainable standard of healthcare, encompassing access to reproductive health services.³⁰

Regrettably, notwithstanding these recognitions, the realization of sexual and reproductive health rights in Africa is but a distant aspiration, hindered by numerous obstacles such as insufficient

²⁴ UNEP, 'Climate Change and Human Rights,' (2015) available at < https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/9530/-Climate_Change_and_Human_Rightshuman-rights-climate-change.pdf.pdf> accessed on 29th August 2023.

²⁵ *African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.*

²⁶ *African Charter on Rights and Welfare of the Child.*

²⁷ *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.*

²⁸ *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.*

²⁹ *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.*

³⁰ Article 43, the Constitution of Kenya 2010.

resources,³¹ expertise,³² and political commitment.³³ These challenges are exacerbated by the detrimental effects of the climate crisis.³⁴

4. The Interplay of Climate Change and Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights: Unveiling a Vital Connection

The impacts of climate change manifest in a multifaceted array of impacts that significantly affect various aspects of human life globally. The scope of this article however discusses impacts related to access to sexual and reproductive health rights. These impacts include the disruption of healthcare infrastructure, food and water scarcity, conflicts, displacements and migrations, heightened inequalities, and increased gender-based violence, alongside psychological and mental health effects, as shall be expounded in the ensuing discourse.

4.1. Disruption of Access to Health Care

Hurricanes, floods, and prolonged droughts, are just some of the ways in which climate change manifest itself, all of which significantly disrupt healthcare systems.³⁵ A notable illustration occurred in 2020 when East Africa experienced severe floods that obliterated hospitals, adversely affecting numerous individuals.³⁶ Additionally, the deterioration of

³¹ Gwatimba, Leah, et al. "Obstacles to the Realization of Women's Reproductive Health Rights in Zimbabwe." *African Journal of Reproductive Health / La Revue Africaine de La Santé Reproductive*, vol. 24, no. 3, 2020, pp. 146-53. JSTOR,

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/27086549>. Accessed 11 Dec. 2023.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ Shalev, Carmel. "Rights to Sexual and Reproductive Health: The ICPD and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women." *Health and Human Rights*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2000, pp. 38-66. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.2307/4065196>. Accessed 11 Dec. 2023.

³⁵ Rousseau C. Climate change and sexual and reproductive health: what implications for future research? *Sex Reprod Health Matters*. 2023 Dec;31(1):2232196. doi: 10.1080/26410397.2023.2232196. PMID: 37594319; PMCID: PMC10444000.

³⁶ Reuters, 'Ugandan Hospital, Somali town washed away by floods,' (May 8, 2020) available at < <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus->

infrastructure, particularly roads, hampers the provision of essential emergency medical services, especially those related to sexual and reproductive health rights.³⁷ The repercussions extend to the accessibility of healthcare facilities for mothers and young girls, impeding their ability to obtain crucial services including family planning, prenatal care, and safe childbirth assistance.³⁸ Further, the combined impact of flooding and high temperatures expands the geographical distribution of disease vectors such as mosquitoes, consequently elevating the prevalence of diseases like malaria, Zika Virus, and Dengue fever.³⁹ These illnesses can have severe repercussions on reproductive health, leading to birth defects and pregnancy complications.⁴⁰

4.2. Food Insecurity and Water Scarcity

Agriculture stands out as one of the sectors highly affected by the challenges posed by the climate change crisis.⁴¹ Prolonged droughts and

africa-floods-idUSKBN22K1UC<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-africa-floods-idUSKBN22K1UC>> accessed on 30th August 2023.

³⁷ Grace K. Considering climate in studies of fertility and reproductive health in poor countries. *Nat Clim Chang.* 2017;7:479-485. doi: 10.1038/nclimate3318. Epub 2017 Jun 30. PMID: 29937922; PMCID: PMC6009846.

³⁸ Grace K. Considering climate in studies of fertility and reproductive health in poor countries. *Nat Clim Chang.* 2017;7:479-485. doi: 10.1038/nclimate3318. Epub 2017 Jun 30. PMID: 29937922; PMCID: PMC6009846.

³⁹ Bhukta, Dr. Ashok, Impact of Climate Change on Health Sector in India (October 10, 2019). *Climate Change, Agriculture and Environment, Vol.1, No. 1, Pp. 265-277.* Chapter-16, 2019, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3589504><https://ssrn.com/abstract=3589504> accessed on 1st September 2023.

⁴⁰ Bhukta, Dr. Ashok, Impact of Climate Change on Health Sector in India (October 10, 2019). *Climate Change, Agriculture and Environment, Vol.1, No. 1, Pp. 265-277.* Chapter-16, 2019, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3589504><https://ssrn.com/abstract=3589504> accessed on 1st September 2023.

⁴¹ Chang-Gil Kim, 'The Impact of Climate Change on the Agricultural Sector: Implications of the Agro-Industry for Low Carbon, Green Growth

severe floods contribute to a reduction in crop yields, consequently undermining food security.⁴² This, in turn, heightens the vulnerability to malnutrition and nutrition deficiency diseases.⁴³ The repercussions of inadequate nutrition are particularly pronounced among adolescent girls, manifesting as irregular menstruation, pregnancy-related complications, and even infertility.⁴⁴ These ramifications not only impact these young mothers but also cast a shadow on the well-being of newborns with most of them being born as underweight or before the full pregnancy period, thereby unsettling the very foundations of the society. Furthermore, the scarcity of water poses obstacles to accessing proper sanitation facilities such as clean water and washrooms, which are integral to addressing sexual and reproductive health challenges faced by young women and adolescent girls.⁴⁵

4.3. Conflicts, Displacements and Migrations

Climate change contributes to the depletion of essential resources, exacerbating the challenge of meeting increasing demands, or even mere

Strategy and Roadmap for the East Asian Region,' available at <<https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/5.%20The-Impact-of-Climate-Change-on-the-Agricultural-Sector.pdf><https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/5.%20The-Impact-of-Climate-Change-on-the-Agricultural-Sector.pdf>> accessed on 1st September 2023.

⁴² Wall, E., B. Smit, and J. Wandel. eds. 2007. *Farming in a Changing Climate: Agricultural Adaptation in Canada*. Toronto, Canada: UBC Press.

⁴³ Wall, E., B. Smit, and J. Wandel. eds. 2007. *Farming in a Changing Climate: Agricultural Adaptation in Canada*. Toronto, Canada: UBC Press.

⁴⁴ Grace K. Considering climate in studies of fertility and reproductive health in poor countries. *Nat Clim Chang.* 2017;7:479-485. doi: 10.1038/nclimate3318. Epub 2017 Jun 30. PMID: 29937922; PMCID: PMC6009846.

⁴⁵ Grace K. Considering climate in studies of fertility and reproductive health in poor countries. *Nat Clim Chang.* 2017;7:479-485. doi: 10.1038/nclimate3318. Epub 2017 Jun 30. PMID: 29937922; PMCID: PMC6009846.

basic needs.⁴⁶ This intensifies the competition for scarce commodities like water and arable land, potentially heightening pre-existing disputes or inciting new ones.⁴⁷ Consequently, this phenomenon instigates displacements and migrations in search for resources,⁴⁸ disrupting long-established traditional lifestyles and cultural norms.⁴⁹ These disruptions can subsequently reshape gender dynamics and familial structures.⁵⁰ Particularly, conflict-stricken areas often witness the neglect of sexual and reproductive health services, thereby elevating the risks of early and unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and sexually transmitted infections.⁵¹ Furthermore, the conflicts break societal frameworks hence perpetrating gender-based violence, with women and children highly

⁴⁶ Kushawaha, Jyoti & Borra, Sivaiah & Kushawaha, Abhishek & Singh, Gurudatta & Singh, Pardeep. (2021). Climate change and its impact on natural resources. 10.1016/B978-0-12-820200-5.00002-6.

⁴⁷ Michael Werz and Laura Conley, 'Climate Change, Migration, and Conflict,' available at < https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/06/climate_migration.pdf>https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/06/climate_migration.pdf> Accessed on 31st August 2023.

⁴⁸ Michael Werz and Laura Conley, 'Climate Change, Migration, and Conflict,' available at < https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/06/climate_migration.pdf>https://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/06/climate_migration.pdf> Accessed on 31st August 2023.

⁴⁹ Marie D. Hoff, 'Effects of Global Warming on Human Cultural Diversity,' available at < <https://www.eolss.net/sample-chapters/c12/E1-04-03-03.pdf>><https://www.eolss.net/sample-chapters/c12/E1-04-03-03.pdf>> accessed on 31st August 2023.

⁵⁰ Marie D. Hoff, 'Effects of Global Warming on Human Cultural Diversity,' available at < <https://www.eolss.net/sample-chapters/c12/E1-04-03-03.pdf>><https://www.eolss.net/sample-chapters/c12/E1-04-03-03.pdf>> accessed on 31st August 2023.

⁵¹ Chinkin, Christine and Yoshida, Keina, Women's Human Rights and Climate Change: State Obligations and Standards (July 16, 2020). LSE Law - Policy Briefing Paper No. 43, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3653520><https://ssrn.com/abstract=3653520>

affected.⁵² In the face of these challenges, individuals cannot exercise autonomy over their own bodies.⁵³ Equally, displaced populations often seek shelter in refugee camps and provisional accommodations, amplifying the challenges to access comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, encompassing restricted availability of contraception and maternal care among others.

4.4. Mental Health Impacts

The psychological impact of climate change-related incidents can never be underestimated. Instances of natural disasters and prolonged environmental shifts have the potential to give rise to conditions such as anxiety, depression, and trauma.⁵⁴ These mental health challenges can subsequently exert adverse effects on sexual and reproductive health, influencing elements such as libido, fertility, and general psychological welfare.⁵⁵ Furthermore, these mental health complications can exacerbate interpersonal tensions, thereby complicating conversations concerning sexual and reproductive health within familial and communal contexts.⁵⁶

⁵² UN (2020), Gender, Climate & Security Sustaining inclusive peace on the frontlines of climate change, p.46; available at: https://dppa.un.org/sites/default/files/gender_climate_and_security_report.pdf accessed on 31st August 2023.

⁵³ Murithi Antony, "Reproductive Rights: An Holistic Approach to Abortion Rights in Kenya." *Reproductive Justice, Law & Policy eJournal*, Vol. 13, No. 63: Dec 1. 2022.

⁵⁴ UN (2020), Gender, Climate & Security Sustaining inclusive peace on the frontlines of climate change, p.46; available at: https://dppa.un.org/sites/default/files/gender_climate_and_security_report.pdf accessed on 31st August 2023.

⁵⁵ UN (2020), Gender, Climate & Security Sustaining inclusive peace on the frontlines of climate change, p.46; available at: https://dppa.un.org/sites/default/files/gender_climate_and_security_report.pdf accessed on 31st August 2023.

⁵⁶ Murithi Antony, "Reproductive Rights: An Holistic Approach to Abortion Rights in Kenya." *Reproductive Justice, Law & Policy eJournal*, Vol. 13, No. 63: Dec 1. 2022.

5. Advancing Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights in the Face of the Climate Crisis

Having analyzed the intricate nexus between the climate change crisis and the vital domain of sexual and reproductive health rights, it becomes imperative to embark upon a discourse concerning the strategies by which these fundamental rights may be advanced amidst the formidable challenges posed by the climate change crisis. Several viable avenues to effectuate this advancement exist, which include but are not limited to the following as discussed in the next subtopics.

5.1. Empowering Climate-Resilient Healthcare Services:

As previously discussed, the impacts of climate change have adversely affected healthcare systems in diverse ways, including destruction of infrastructure.⁵⁷ These undermine the capacity of communities to easily access sexual and reproductive healthcare services.⁵⁸ Accordingly, it becomes imperative that, in order to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights amidst the challenges posed by climate change, a critical emphasis be placed upon fortifying healthcare infrastructure to withstand disruptions stemming from climatic exigencies such as storms and floods.⁵⁹ This will ensure that there is an uninterrupted accessibility of SRH services.⁶⁰ Moreover, the healthcare system can be suitably

⁵⁷ S. Nazrul Islam and John Winkel, 'Climate Change and Social Inequality,' DESA Working Paper No. 152, October 2017, available at <https://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2017/wp152_2017.pdf> accessed on 31st August 2023.

⁵⁸ Linda C. Giudice and Others, 'Climate change, women's health, and the role of obstetricians and gynecologists in leadership,' available at <https://www.figo.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/ijgo_13958_Climate_change_womens%20health_role_OBGYNs_leadership.pdf> Accessed on 31st August 2023.

⁵⁹ Ebi, K.L., P. Berry, D. Campbell-Lendrum, G. Cissé, J. Hess, N. Ogden, and R. Schnitter, 2019. "Health System Adaptation to Climate Variability and Change." Rotterdam and Washington, DC. Available online at www.gca.org.

⁶⁰ S. Nazrul Islam and John Winkel, 'Climate Change and Social Inequality,' DESA Working Paper No. 152, October 2017, available at <

equipped to adeptly address and manage emergent sexual and reproductive health crises that are fueled by climate crisis.⁶¹

5.2. Collaborative Partnerships and Cross-Sector Collaboration for comprehensive solutions.

The need to advance sexual and reproductive health rights necessitates a collaborative approach across sectors.⁶² This entails fostering a partnership among government institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international entities, climate change advocates, and healthcare providers.⁶³ This, when done, can help to effectively pool resources, expertise, and strategies together to counteract the detrimental ramifications of climate change on sexual and reproductive health rights and other societal dynamics.⁶⁴ This cross-sectoral collaboration, further, can act as catalysts for sustainable development.⁶⁵

https://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2017/wp152_2017.pdf> accessed on 31st August 2023.

⁶¹ S. Nazrul Islam and John Winkel, 'Climate Change and Social Inequality,' DESA Working Paper No. 152, October 2017, available at <https://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2017/wp152_2017.pdf> accessed on 31st August 2023.

⁶² NACEPT 2016 Report: Environmental Protection Belongs to the Public, A Vision for Citizen Science at EPA. ((2016, December 16). Available at <https://www.epa.gov/citizen-science/nacept2016-report-environmental-protection-belongs-public-visioncitizen-science>. Accessed on 31st August 2023.

⁶³ Sinclair, F. et al., 2019: Background Paper the Contribution of Agroecological Approaches To Realizing Climate-Resilient Agriculture. Global Commission on Adaptation, Rotterdam, Netherlands, and Washington, DC, USA, 12 pp. www.gca.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/TheContributionsOfAgroecologicalApproaches.pdf. Accessed on 31st August 2023.

⁶⁴ Beek, K., Drysdale, R., Kusen, M. *et al.* Preparing for and responding to sexual and reproductive health in disaster settings: evidence from Fiji and Tonga. *Reproductive Health* **18**, 185 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12978-021-01236-2>. accessed on 31st August 2023.

⁶⁵ Inogwabini, Bila-Isia. (2018). Climate Change and Sustainable Development. 10.1007/978-3-319-63951-2_462-1.

5.3. Strengthening Community-Based SRH Advocacy:

For a long time, the discussion on sexual and reproductive health rights has regrettably remained inexistence in various African communities,⁶⁶ despite its centrality in the foundations of the society. This has been further exacerbated by the ramifications of climate change, thereby underscoring the need to entrench sexual and reproductive health rights within the fabric of communal interactions.⁶⁷ Consequently, nurturing localized advocacy initiatives concerning sexual and reproductive health rights has the capacity to endow indigenous communities with the means to assert and safeguard their rights in the face of climate change crisis.⁶⁸ These endeavors also possess the potential to cultivate community-centric strategies for preemptive response to disasters, wherein the integration of sexual and reproductive health rights guarantees unhindered access to indispensable resources during emergencies fueled by climate change.⁶⁹ These measures can as well ameliorate issues such as gender-based violence and sexual violence

⁶⁶ Murithi Antony, “*Reproductive Rights: An Holistic Approach to Abortion Rights in Kenya.*” *Reproductive Justice, Law & Policy eJournal*, Vol. 13, No. 63: Dec 1. 2022.

⁶⁷ Zampas, Christina, *Promoting Accurate and Objective Sexuality Education* (2007). *Interights Bulletin, A Review of the International Centre for the Legal Protection of Human Rights*, 2007, Volume 15, No. 4, Available at SSRN: <<https://ssrn.com/abstract=2039720>> Accessed on 31st August 2023.

⁶⁸ Zampas, Christina, *Promoting Accurate and Objective Sexuality Education* (2007). *Interights Bulletin, A Review of the International Centre for the Legal Protection of Human Rights*, 2007, Volume 15, No. 4, Available at SSRN: <<https://ssrn.com/abstract=2039720>> accessed on 31st August 2023.

⁶⁹ Beek, K., Drysdale, R., Kusen, M. *et al.* Preparing for and responding to sexual and reproductive health in disaster settings: evidence from Fiji and Tonga. *Reprod Health* **18**, 185 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12978-021-01236-2>.. accessed on 31st August 2023.

within the community, thereby effectuating a transformative paradigm shift in these societies.⁷⁰

5.4. Sowing Legal Protection for sexual and reproductive health rights

Judicial institutions, legal practitioners and administrative bodies bear a solemn duty to safeguard and advance fundamental human rights, with essential facets like reproductive and sexual health rights included, alongside the furtherance of environmental democracy and climate justice.⁷¹ Legal practitioners, for instance, play a pivotal role in the crafting policy and legislative frameworks with the aim to augment these fundamental rights.⁷² The judiciary in its interpretation of these legal frameworks,⁷³ is entrusted to do it holistically and fostering not only the development of the law but also adhering to its letter and spirit.⁷⁴ Through the cultivation of a legal milieu that staunchly upholds these rights, a heritage of empowerment destined for the posterity is created.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, the climate change crisis has had profound impacts not only on the environment but also on fundamental facets of human life,

⁷⁰ Beek, K., Drysdale, R., Kusen, M. *et al.* Preparing for and responding to sexual and reproductive health in disaster settings: evidence from Fiji and Tonga. *Reprod Health* **18**, 185 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12978-021-01236-2>. accessed on 31st August 2023.

⁷¹ Fahed Abul-Ethem, 'The Role of the Judiciary in the Protection of Human Rights and Development: A Middle Eastern Perspective,' (Fordham International Law Journal), Volume 26, Issue 3, 2002. Available at <<https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1883&context=ilj>> accessed on 31st August 2023.

⁷² Rouhi, Ebad & Raisi, Leila & Jalali, Mahmoud. (2016). The Role of Lawyer in Establishment of Rule of Law and Protection of Human Rights. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. 7. 10.5901/mjss.2016.v7n4p28.

⁷³ Judiciary is the arm on government that interprets the laws legislated by the Parliament.

⁷⁴ Justice Michael Kirby, 'Constitutional Interpretation and Original Intent: A Form of Ancestor Worship?' (2000) 24 *Melbourne University Law Review* 1, 8.

including sexual and reproductive health rights, which are often overlooked. From the disruption of healthcare system to the exacerbation of conflicts and displacements, the adverse impacts of climate change profoundly impinge upon these fundamental aspects of human life. Although legal and policy frameworks intended to ameliorate climate change crisis exist, they have encountered formidable challenges, spanning from inadequate financial resources and technical capacity lack of proper implementation.

To propel the advancement of sexual and reproductive health rights, an imperative mandate emerges for cross-sectoral collaboration. It is imperative that all people recognize the incontrovertible reality of climate change and its all-encompassing effects on human life. Further, grassroots empowerment and advocacy initiatives addressing the intersections of climate change and sexual reproductive health rights hold the potential to significantly enhance the realization of these fundamental human rights amidst the prevailing climate crisis. By doing this, the achievement of a sustainable future is guaranteed.

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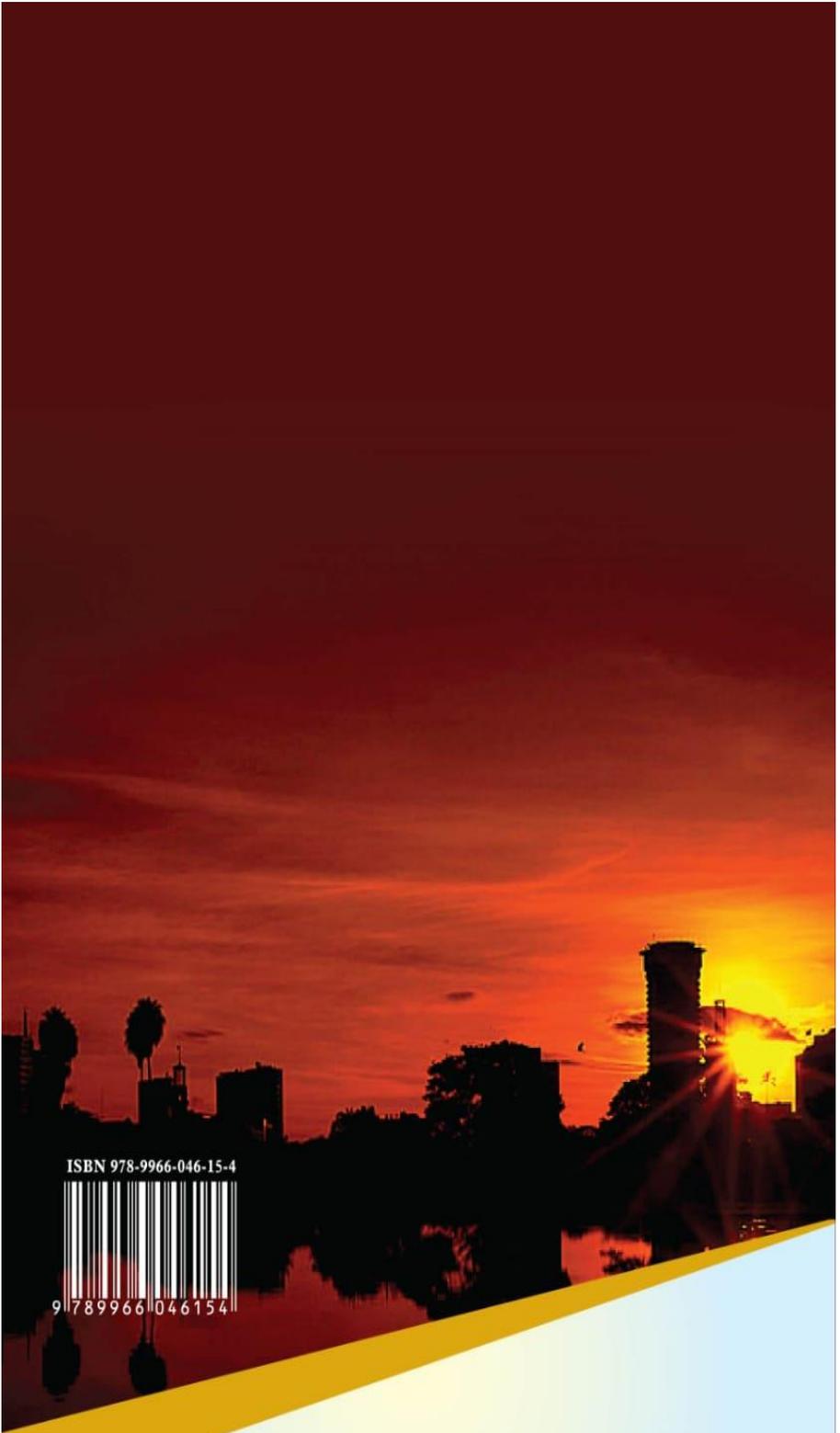
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