



Climate Resilient WASH and Disaster Management services for vulnerable children in the Central African Republic (CRDM-CAR)

Gender Assessment and Action Plan

This report has been prepared for UNICEF Central African Republic as part of work to prepare the UNICEF GCF project “Climate Resilient WASH and Disaster Management services for vulnerable children in the Central African Republic (CRDM-CAR)”

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Abbreviations

ACF	Action Contre la Faim
ASRH	Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health
AU	African Union
CAR	Context at National Level
CBOs	Community-Based Organizations
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CLTS	Community-Led Total Sanitation
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSE	Comprehensive Sexual Education
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GBVIMS	Gender-Based Violence Information Management System
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDI	Gender Development Index
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GII	Gender Inequality Index
GNI	Gross National Income

GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HDI	Human Development Index
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICCPR	International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICRW	International Center for Research on Women
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
ILO	International Labor Organization
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
IRM	Independent Redress Mechanism
MEDHR	Ministry of Energy, Development, and Hydraulic Resources
MHM	Menstrual Hygiene Management
MPI	Multidimensional Poverty Index
NAP	National Adaptation Plan
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OPHI	Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative
PPP	Purchasing Power Parity

PR	Proportional Representation
PSEA	Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SEA	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
SEA/SH	Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and Sexual Harassment (SH)
SH	Sexual Harassment
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organization
WRM	Water Resource Management

1. Introduction

The project “*Climate Resilient WASH and Disaster Management services for vulnerable children in the Central African Republic (CRDM-CAR)*” recognizes the critical importance of gender-responsive climate adaptation in a context marked by fragility, conflict, and persistent gender inequalities. Women and girls¹ in the Central African Republic (CAR) are disproportionately affected by climate-related hazards due to entrenched socio-economic disparities, restricted access to resources and decision-making, and heightened exposure to waterborne diseases and climate-induced displacement.

The Gender Assessment and the Gender Action Plan are guided by the principles of the Green Climate Fund’s Gender Policy and Action Plan², and aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals³ (notably SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 13 on climate action), the UNFCCC Gender Action Plan⁴, and CAR’s own gender and climate commitments. It uses a mixed-methods approach, drawing on quantitative indicators and qualitative insights, including stakeholder consultations, policy reviews, and the analysis of barriers and opportunities for women’s empowerment in the target sectors.

In this way, this assessment provides a foundation for ensuring that the project not only delivers climate resilience outcomes but also contributes to structural transformation by reducing gender inequality. By mainstreaming gender across institutional arrangements, beneficiary targeting, community engagement, and accountability mechanisms, the project aims to enhance the effectiveness, equity, and sustainability of adaptation efforts in CAR’s most climate-affected regions.

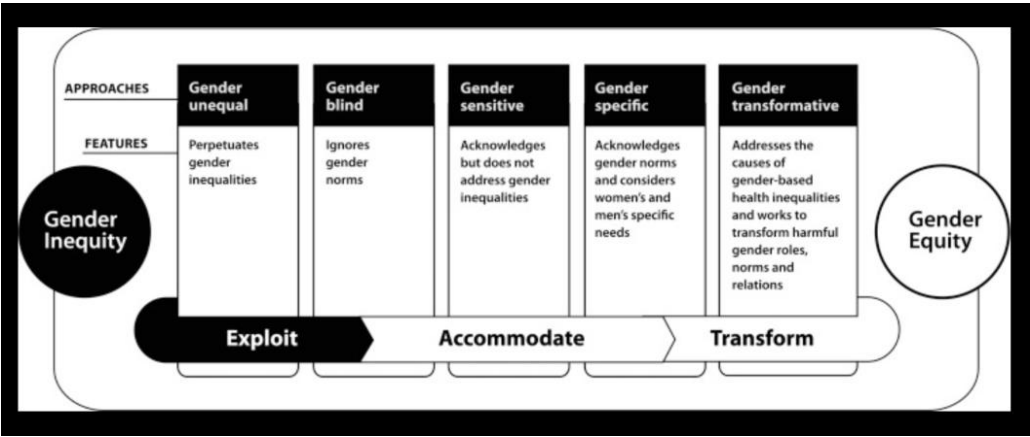


Figure 1: A continuum of approaches to action on gender and health. Inspired by remarks by Geeta Rao Gupta, Ph.D, Director, International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) during her plenary address at the XIIIth International Aids Conference, Durban, South Africa, 12 July 2000: ‘To effectively address the intersection between HIV/AIDS and gender and sexuality requires that interactions should, at the very

¹ Children are defined as human beings below the age of 18, as established by the CRC, Adolescents are defined by UNICEF as persons aged 10–19., Youth: In UNICEF practice, it refers to those aged 18–24., Young people: Those aged 10–24 (encompassing both adolescents and youth).

² Green Climate Fund. *GCF Gender Policy*. Retrieved from <https://www.greenclimate.fund/sites/default/files/document/gcf-gender-policy.pdf>

³ United Nations. *Sustainable Development Goals*. Retrieved from <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

⁴ UNFCCC. *The Gender Action Plan*. Retrieved from <https://unfccc.int/topics/gender/workstreams/the-gender-action-plan>

least, not reinforce damaging gender and sexual stereotypes' (and see also World Health Organization, 2011). Extracted from: Health Promot Int. 2014 Sep 17;30 (1):140–150. doi: 10.1093/heapro/dau083

In this sense, the Gender Assessment is a basic initial step to ensure the project is not only attentive to gendered needs but also helps to bring about transformational change. Directing it are the following objectives:

- To assess in CAR's most climate-vulnerable communities the gender-differentiated consequences of water scarcity and climate change on men, women, boys, and girls;
- To identify present legal, institutional, and sociopolitical barriers to gender equality in the fields of disaster management, water, and sanitation;
- To provide doable recommendations for mainstreaming gender across all project components—service design, delivery, capacity-building, stakeholder engagement, and monitoring and evaluation.

Along with this assessment comes a Gender Action Plan (GAP) recommending, context-specific activities to operationalize gender-responsive projects and ensure commitment to the gender objectives of the project. Using this assessment and action plan, UNICEF and partners reaffirm their commitment to ensure that efforts at climate adaptation in CAR concentrate on the rights, needs, and contributions of women and girls.

This Gender Assessment and Action Plan is developed in alignment with and serves to operationalize the commitments outlined in the UNICEF Gender Policy 2021-20303, which articulates UNICEF's bold and ambitious vision for gender equality and the empowerment of all children, adolescents girls and boys, and women. It further aligns with and contributes to the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan (GAP) 2022–2025, which specifies how UNICEF promotes gender equality across its programmes and workplaces and seeks to accelerate progress on gender equality. Advancing gender equality is recognised as essential to realizing UNICEF's mandate to uphold the rights of all children.

1.1 Background

Among the most complicated humanitarian and environmental problems worldwide is one the Central African Republic (CAR). Decades-long armed conflict, institutional instability, and economic marginalization have left the nation with a frail infrastructure and inadequate capability to adapt to either rising climate hazards or chronic poverty. A risk multiplier, climate change aggravates environmental damage, resource shortages, displacement, and conflict—all of which disproportionately impact women, girls, and children (UNDP, 2023; INFORM, 2024).

The nation ranks almost last on the Gender Inequality Index (UNDP, 2023), and more than 70% of CAR's population lives below the poverty line. According to the 2023 Africa Gender Equality Index report, CAR is among the countries with the lowest gender equality index, scoring between 0.18-0.39. This indicates that there is gender inequality in favour of men. Gender inequalities abound in livelihoods, education, and health. Women and girls underrepresent themselves in local government systems, have limited access to formal jobs or land ownership, and undertake the most unpaid care responsibilities. Crisis times accentuate these disparities. Within the framework of climate-induced disasters, such as floods, protracted droughts, and disease outbreaks, women and girls often bear more caregiving responsibilities and have increased vulnerability to gender-based violence (UN Women, 2023; CARE, 2020).

One sector that shows this susceptibility is the WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene) one. 63.5% of the population do not have access to a basic drinking water service and 69.4% do not have access to a limited sanitation service nationally. In rural and conflict-torn regions the situation is far worse. Through changed rainfall patterns, worse water quality, and higher demand,

climate variability severely strains water resources. Water-borne illness outbreaks brought on by WASH infrastructure degradation disproportionately impact children under five and pregnant women, who are more susceptible to dehydration and infection (UNICEF, 2022; WHO, 2021).

Complicating this situation is the deliberate use of water as a weapon of war. Armed organizations have purposefully attacked water sites, polluted water supplies, or restricted civilian access. Many times, women have been harmed while gathering water; whole villages have been uprooted to restrict their access to resources vital for survival (de Montclos, 2021; ICRC, 2022). These kinds of water insecurity are political and profoundly gendered rather than just structural.

CAR has battled to convert ratifying international accords such as the African Union's Maputo Protocol and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) into cogent, gender-responsive policy. Although underfunding and poor technical competence across government agencies cause the National Policy for the Promotion of Gender Equality and Equity (2017- 2021)⁵ to remain minimally implemented, it seeks to eliminate structural disparities. Furthermore, sectoral plans for water, sanitation, and climate catastrophe management seldom ever include gender issues, therefore undermining policy coherence and responsibility systems.

Women's voice in planning and resource allocation suffers from inadequate participation in local decision-making systems, disaster preparation teams, or community water committees. Nonetheless, data from comparable post-conflict and climate-vulnerable environments indicates that inclusive governance—especially the meaningful involvement of women—very much increases the efficacy and durability of adaptation projects (GWP, 2020; OECD, 2019).

Analysing the junction of gender inequality, water scarcity, and climate risk in CAR will help the project to be more suited to provide fair and transforming results. From community involvement to infrastructure design and institutional development, the accompanying Gender Action Plan will guarantee that all project components, including gender equality as a fundamental principle and operational priority, embed gender equality.

Table 1: Population breakdown of CAR

Type	Number	Source
Total population	5,440,911 (2024 estimate)	ICASEES
Female population	2,772,728 (2024 estimate)	World Bank Open Data
Male population	2,557,962 (2024 estimate)	World Bank Open Data
Population under 18	2,927,732 (2023 estimate)	UNICEF

⁵ Politique Nationale de Promotion de l'Égalité et l'Équité en Genre (2017 – 2021) retrieved from <http://www.minplan-rca.org/strategie/gouvernance/116-genre/>

Relevance of UNICEF

UNICEF, which has been present in the CAR since 1986, has five field offices, and plays a pivotal role as the lead technical and financial partner for the WASH sector in the country, actively promoting sectoral and cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms to integrate humanitarian and development programmes. In addition, UNICEF supports various technical working groups to promote the elaboration of norms and standards, monitoring and evaluation, and exchanges of experience in the fields of WASH and climate change adaptation. With an annual budget of US\$104,000,000 for 2024 across the multiple sectors of the country programme, UNICEF maintains a strong partnership with the government, supporting the Ministry of Hydraulic Resources through coordination efforts and multifaceted assistance. Since 2021, UNICEF has leveraged its own resources to initiate studies on the impacts of climate change on the WASH sector and proposed actionable solutions to mitigate these effects, including by supporting the formulation of the WASH component of the revised NDCs and the NAP. This work has elevated climate change to be recognized as a top priority within the sector, driving a shift towards more sustainable and climate-resilient programming. UNICEF's leadership in the climate agenda has not only solidified its role as a trusted partner but has also garnered recognition from key donors like the World Bank, which has utilized UNICEF's documentation to inform country reports, shape policy recommendations, and launch climate-related funding initiatives that address the needs of vulnerable populations. One of the interventions under the present project aims to scale up climate-resilient mini solar power systems, building on successful pilots UNICEF has already implemented.

2. Gender Context at National Level (CAR)

2.1 Landscape and Demographic Overview

The Central African Republic (CAR) faces deeply entrenched gender disparities across nearly all sectors of society, rooted in structural inequalities, traditional norms, and protracted insecurity. These disparities are particularly pronounced in rural and conflict-affected areas, where access to basic services and institutional protections is extremely limited. In this context, climate change acts as a threat multiplier, amplifying pre-existing gender inequalities and undermining the resilience of women, girls, and marginalized communities.

Developed by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Human Development Index (HDI) measures a nation's average accomplishments in three fundamental spheres of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge, and a reasonable quality of living. The Central African Republic (CAR) achieved an HDI of 0.404 in the 2023 Human Development Report, placing 188th out of 191 nations and territories worldwide (UNDP, 2023). This puts CAR in the poor human development category and reflects its protracted history of political unrest, violence, and humanitarian catastrophes. With a mean year of education only 4.4 years and gross national income (GNI) per capita still shockingly low at \$1,040 (2017 PPP), life expectancy at birth is among the lowest in the world at 52.3 years ⁶.

Through 10 variables, the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), jointly created by UNDP and the Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI), captures overlapping deprivations in health, education, and quality of life. With an MPI headcount ratio of 66.0%, two-thirds of the population of the Central African Republic is disadvantaged in at least one-third of

⁶ World Health Organization. (2025). *Central African Republic [Country overview]*. Retrieved from <https://data.who.int/countries/140>

the weighted indicators (OPHI & UNDP, 2023). Not yet impoverished but rather at danger of becoming so, another 18.7% of the population falls under the category of susceptible to multidimensional poverty.

Estimating the average share of deprivations suffered by the poor, or the severity of poverty, at 56.6%, the MPI value is 0.374. This is among the highest worldwide and well above the regional average for Sub-Saharan Africa, 0.257. By contrast, the MPI of Democratic Republic of the Congo is 0.351 and that of Chad is 0.337.

This extreme degree of deprivation implies that measures of monetary poverty by themselves understate the suffering individuals in CAR go through. The MPI exposes more vulnerabilities in access to clean water, nutrition, healthcare, energy, and education even if 62.1% of the population lives below the international poverty line (US\$2.15 per day, 2017 PPP). Especially 34.2% of the population suffers from extreme multidimensional poverty, a subcategory in which people are impoverished in more than half of the variables.

By means of comparison between their different HDI scores, the Gender Development Index (GDI) gauges differences in human development accomplishments between women and men. CAR falls under GDI Group 5, indicating quite extreme gender disparity. With a female HDI of 0.380 and a male HDI of 0.430, the GDI is 0.884 (UNDP, 2021). Lower female life expectancy, shorter education times, and lower GNI per capita for women cause the difference mostly. Women's predicted years of education, for example, are just 6.5 years; men's are 8.7 years (UNESCO UIS, 2022). Likewise, given restricted access to official jobs and resources, projected female income is barely 70% that of males.

Reflecting gender-based disadvantage across three dimensions, reproductive health, empowerment, and labour market participation, the Gender Inequality Index (GII). With a GII score of 0.713 (UNDP, 2023), CAR has really great inequality. Among the highest worldwide, the mother mortality rate is 692 deaths per 100,000 live births (WHO, 2023). Though somewhat high at 64.3%, women's labour force participation rate is mostly limited to the informal sector and unpaid agricultural employment; women hold only 8.6% of legislative seats.

Ranked 156th out of 163 nations, CAR is in the worst quintile worldwide in the 2023 Global Gender Gap Report (World Economic Forum, 2023). Particularly missing is political empowerment; as of 2022, no women had ministerial-level posts. Though both sexes still have poor educational levels, women especially in rural regions disproportionately suffer from this.

2.1.1 Maternal and infant mortality rates

Underlining the extreme gendered consequences of inadequate health infrastructure, systematic inequality, and climatic vulnerability, the Central African Republic (CAR) still has among of the highest mother and child death rates in the world. One of the highest rates worldwide, the maternal mortality rate in CAR is shockingly 835.3 deaths per 100,000 live births⁷. This shows a significant shortage of access to vital mother health care along with continuous war, hunger, restricted access to clean water and sanitation facilities (UN Women, 2023).

Infant and under-five mortality rates also remain alarmingly high. The infant mortality rate is estimated at 53.6 deaths per 1,000 live births for girls and even higher for boys. The under-five mortality rate is 89.9 deaths per 1,000 live births for girls and 103.4 for boys, indicating both widespread vulnerability among children and gender-related disparities in child health outcomes (UN Women, 2023).

⁷ Central African Republic - Ministry of Health and Population (2024)

These statistics underscore the crucial nexus between gender, poverty, and climate susceptibility. Inadequate WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) conditions - aggravated by climatic disturbances such as floods and droughts - disproportionately impact pregnant women, neonates, and infants, increasing their susceptibility to problems, illness, and mortality.

Table 2: Key gender indicators in CAR

Indicator	Value (per 1,000 live births)	Source
Maternal mortality rate	835.3 deaths	<u>Central African Republic - Ministry of Health and Population (2024)</u>
Infant mortality rate (girls)	53.6 deaths	<u>World Bank (2023)</u>
Infant mortality rate (boys)	66.8 deaths	<u>World Bank (2023)</u>
Under-five mortality rate (girls)	89.9 deaths	<u>UN Women (2023)</u>
Under-five mortality rate (boys)	103.4 deaths	<u>UN Women (2023)</u>

2.1.2 Adolescent sexual and reproductive health

The adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) situation in CAR is marked by significant challenges, as evidenced by key demographic and health indicators outlined by a WHO Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights report in 2021⁸. The adolescent birth rate (births per 1,000 girls aged 15-19) is notably high at 129.1, with 61% of girls being married before age 18 and 26% marrying before 15. This widespread practice of child marriage severely impacts girls' health education and autonomy.

The enabling environment for ASRH is weak. Laws require parental consent for adolescents under 14 to access SRH services. Despite policies mandating Comprehensive Sexual Education (CSE) in primary schools, actual implementation is minimal, with only 0-25% of both primary and secondary schools fully adhering to national CSE policies. This significant gap means most adolescents lack essential knowledge for informed decision making. Access to family planning services is severely limited. For girls and women aged 15-49, the demand for family planning satisfied with a modern method of contraception is low at 27.6%, resulting in a high unmet need of 37.6%. Overall, only 14.4% of girls aged 15-49 use modern contraceptive methods.

Regarding adolescent sexual health, among those aged 15-19 who had multiple partners, 46.5% of females and 34% of males reported condom use at last sex. However, correct knowledge of HIV prevention for ages 15-24 is marked as "No data" in the WHO survey, indicating a potential knowledge gap. Overall, the ASRH situation in CAR is characterised by high adolescent birth rates, widespread child marriage, limited CSE implementation and significant unmet family planning needs.

⁸ World Health Organization. (2021). *Sexual And Reproductive Health and Rights Infographic Snapshot Central African Republic 2021*. [online] Available at: <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/349363/WHO-SRH-21.53-eng.pdf>.

2.1.3 Life expectancy

Reflecting the unstable health systems, high disease burden, and structural inequalities of the country, Central African Republic (CAR) boasts among the lowest life expectancy globally. As of 2021, the average life expectancy at birth in CAR was 52.3 years (WHO, 2021), clearly with a gender disparity: 55.4 years for women compared to 49.6 years for males. These figures show firmly rooted vulnerabilities affecting both sexes, but with particular implications for the health and caregiving obligations carried by women throughout their lives, especially after a deceased partner leaves a woman as the sole provider of a household.

The marginally higher life expectancy for women obscures the dreadful reality many women live: rising maternal mortality rates, inadequate access to appropriate healthcare, and the combined effects of gender-based violence, chronic undernutrition, and unpaid care responsibilities. On the other hand, the shorter male life expectancy suggests greater violence, risky living choices, and less access to preventive healthcare treatments.

This gendered life expectancy gap highlights the need for equitable spending in healthcare, water and sanitation infrastructure, and social safety especially in view of climate-induced disruptions that further strain the health and well-being of already vulnerable people.

2.1.4 Adult literacy and educational attainment

The Central African Republic (CAR) faces significant challenges in literacy and education, with pronounced gender disparities across various indicators. Nationally, the adult literacy rate (for individuals aged 15 and above) stands at 26.2% for girls/women and 49.2% for boys/men as of 2020, revealing a substantial 23 percentage point gender gap in favour of men. This contrasts sharply with the averages for Sub-Saharan Africa (62.1% for women and 74.5% for men) and low-income countries (55.7% for women and 70.5% for men) highlighting the depth of the challenge in CAR⁹.

The gender gap persists among the youth population: in 2020, youth literacy rates (classed as individuals aged 15-24) show 29.11% for young women and 47.55% for young men, with a Gender Parity Index (GPI) of 0.61, indicating a significant disparity favouring young men¹⁰. Access to education remains a critical issue, particularly for girls. A start 50.2% of primary and lower secondary school-aged girls are out of school, compared to 33.2% of boys¹¹. This disparity continues through the education pipeline: only 8.3% of women completed lower secondary school based on 2017 data, significantly lower than the 13.5% of men. These completion rates are considerably below the regional averages for Sub-Saharan Africa (44% for women, 47% for men) and in low-income countries (38% for women and 43% for men)¹². Overall, secondary school enrolment in CAR is a mere 16%¹³.

A major barrier to education is the significant distance many children must travel to reach schools. Approximately 1 in 10 Central Africans need to walk more than one hour to reach a primary, secondary, or tertiary road. For primary-school-aged children, 50% live more than 30 minutes' walk from the nearest primary school, and a substantial 30% live more than one hour

⁹ <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/economies/central-african-republic> - using UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS)

¹⁰ <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.ADT.1524.LT.FE.ZS?locations=CF&view=map>

¹¹ <https://data.unwomen.org/country/central-african-republic>

¹² <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/economies/central-african-republic> USING <https://apiportal.uis.unesco.org/bdds> data

¹³ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/centralafricanrepublic/publication/improving-agriculture-human-capital-and-infrastructure-key-to-take-on-poverty-in-the-central-african-republic>

away. This situation is even more challenging for secondary school-aged children, with 64% living more than 30 minutes away on foot from secondary schools, and around 55% facing a walk of more than one hour¹⁴.

Despite these challenges, there are some areas where girls or women show more favourable outcomes - albeit slight. The proportion of children aged 36-59 months who are developmentally on track in at least three key domains (literacy-numeracy, physical, social-emotional, and learning) is 38.7% for girls and 33 % for boys, with a total national average of 36.2%¹⁵. However, participation in organized learning one year before official primary entry age shows a marginal gender gap, with 17.43% of girls participating compared to 19.23% of boys¹⁶.

2.1.5 Poverty

CAR is among the world's poorest nations, with a challenging economic landscape. Real GDP per capita (2015 USD) has notably declined since the 1960s (\$600 USD), falling significantly to \$320 USD around 2012 due to conflict, and standing at about \$380 USD in 2021¹⁷. CAR faces severe and widespread poverty, holding the 5th highest poverty rate globally. In 2021, the national poverty headcount ratio was 68.8%, with nearly 70% of the population living in extreme poverty on less than \$2.15 a day. Additionally, 15.3% of the population lived below 50% of the median income in 2021¹⁸. Food insecurity is critical, affecting 41% of the population with severe insecurity as of 2024. Access to electricity is minimal, with almost 9 out of 10 people lacking access¹⁹. Poverty disparities between urban and rural populations are stark: urban poverty in Bangui was 40.01% in 2023, while rural was significantly higher at 73.3% in the same year²⁰. While sex-aggregated metrics recording poverty rates are not available for CAR, it is reported that 80% women in CAR live below the poverty line ²¹.

Linking this to the situation of employment, explored below, the types of work women undertake are fundamentally different and less remunerative, directly contributing to their higher rates of poverty. As outlined by a 2023 World Bank report, women are significantly more likely to be engaged in unpaid work which offers limited pathways out of poverty ²². A particularly striking disparity lies in access to wage work. In the last seven days prior to the 2021 EHCVM data collection, a mere 2.6% of working-age women engaged in wage work, contrasting 10.9% of working-age men ²³. Women near absence from this more productive form of labour highlights that women face specific and severe constraints in CAR in accessing productive livelihoods.

¹⁴ <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstreams/4e00da74-579f-4a21-8802-f0c9bf52360c/download>

¹⁵ <https://data.unwomen.org/country/central-african-republic>

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstreams/4e00da74-579f-4a21-8802-f0c9bf52360c/download>

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/centralafricanrepublic/publication/improving-agriculture-human-capital-and-infrastructure-key-to-take-on-poverty-in-the-central-african-republic>

²⁰ <https://www.jointdatacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/CAR-Poverty-Assessment-Report.pdf>

²¹ fundsforNGOs, *Women in the Central African Republic: Confronting Gender Inequality and Challenges*, 2025, <https://news.fundsforngos.org/2025/03/10/women-in-the-central-african-republic-confronting-gender-inequality-and-challenges/>.

²² The World Bank, *CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC POVERTY ASSESSMENT 2023 A ROAD MAP TOWARDS POVERTY REDUCTION IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC*, 2023, <https://www.jointdatacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/CAR-Poverty-Assessment-Report.pdf>

²³ *ibid.*

2.1.6 Labour force participation and employment

The labour market in CAR is characterised by low participation rates, high vulnerability, and significant gender disparities. As of 2024, the labour force participation rate for the population aged 15 and above stands at 65.8% for females and 82.9% for males. These rates are lower than the world averages of 49.1% for females and 73.2% for males²⁴. A substantial proportion of employment in CAR is vulnerable: in 2023, 96.8% of employed females and 90.1% of employed males were in vulnerable employment, indicating a pervasive lack of formal and secure work²⁵.

The percentage of females in CAR's total labour force has shown a generally increasing trend from 46.692% in 2014 to 48.798% in 2023, reaching its highest recorded percentage in this period²⁶. However, unemployment remains a challenge: in 2023, the female unemployment rate was 7.19%, which is higher than its historical average of 6.51% (1991-2023) and its lowest recorded rate of 6.09% in 1991. While this indicates persistent difficulties in fully integrating women into the labour force, the 2023 rate is a slight improvement from a recent peak of 7.55% in 2021²⁷.

Despite being employed, a significant portion of the population lives below the international poverty line. In CAR, 61.7% of employed females and 60.1% of employed males (aged 15+) live below this threshold, highlighting the prevalence of working poverty²⁸. Financial inclusion is extremely low, with only 9.72% of adolescent girls and women and 18.08% of adolescent boys and men (aged 15+) having an account at a financial institution²⁹.

In addition, gender-based violence (GBV), sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment (SH) are serious and underreported threats in CAR's workplaces, particularly in informal sectors where regulatory oversight is minimal. According to a 2022 UNFPA report, approximately 23% of girls and women aged 15–49 in CAR have experienced physical or sexual violence by a partner, while many more encounter harassment in public spaces and informal economic activities such as markets or domestic work³⁰. In humanitarian contexts, where work and aid relationships often intersect, the risks of SEA/SH are elevated. A 2023 OCHA protection report warned of widespread impunity for SEA/SH perpetrators, particularly in sectors involving food distribution, agricultural labour, and caregiving roles³¹.

Children also bear the burden of household labour, with significant gender implications. Nationally, 29% of girls and 24.9% of boys are involved in economic activity or unpaid household chores, a form of invisible labour that entrenches intergenerational cycles of deprivation and limits educational attainment, particularly for girls.³² These roles often go unmonitored in labour force surveys, yet they are foundational to the survival strategies of households living in poverty and fragility.

In summary, labour force data in CAR, while important, only partially reflects the economic realities of women and girls. The prevalence of invisible and unpaid labour, the feminisation of working poverty, barriers to financial inclusion, and the risks of GBV and SEA/SH in workspaces all point to the need for a broader, intersectional approach to gender and employment policy.

²⁴ <https://liveprod.worldbank.org/en/economies/central-african-republic>

²⁵ <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/economies/central-african-republic> using <https://ilostat.ilo.org/data/>

²⁶ <https://www.dr.ceicdata.com/en/central-african-republic/labour-force/cf-labour-force-female--of-total-labour-force>

²⁷ https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Central-African-Republic/Female_unemployment/

²⁸ <https://data.unwomen.org/country/central-african-republic>

²⁹ <https://genderdata.worldbank.org/en/economies/central-african-republic>

³⁰ UNFPA (2022). Gender-Based Violence Assessment in the Central African Republic

³¹ OCHA (2023). Protection Cluster Humanitarian Needs Overview – CAR

³² <https://data.unwomen.org/country/central-african-republic>

2.1.7 Formal and informal employment by gender

While exact data on formal and informal employment disaggregated by gender for CAR is limited, valuable insights can be gained from available reports on broader trends. The landscape of employment in CAR is significantly shaped by the prevalence of the informal sector, with distinct gendered patterns observed. The informal sector of CAR serves as the bedrock of the economic landscape, functioning as its primary “lifewire” amidst decline in the formal sector³³. It represents an estimated 57% of GDP and 96.7% of employment - the highest ‘informal’ sector rate in the Central African region³⁴.

Employed within this informal sector, The World Bank Group’s 2023 Informal Sector Enterprise Surveys finds that, in 2023, the proportion of female workers among total workforce was 74% in Bangui, and 67% in Berberati³⁵. These exceptionally high rates of female employment convey a multifaceted message regarding gender dynamics in the national economy, and these statistics may reflect the fact that women in CAR often face disproportionate barriers to entering the formal workforce, including limited educational opportunities, social biases, lack of access to formal networks and discriminatory hiring practices. The flexibility of work within informal businesses may also be behind these statistics: for many women, particularly those with significant domestic and caregiving responsibilities, the informal sector offers a degree of autonomy over working hours and location that is typically unavailable in more formal settings. While high female participation in the informal economy highlights systemic inequalities, it also points to the sector’s critical role as an adaptive space where women can navigate economic survival and contribute to household incomes.

2.1.7 Political participation

Women in CAR gained the right to vote in 1986³⁶. Despite this, women’s representation and meaningful participation in political and decision-making processes remain significantly limited at both the national and local levels

As of 2024, women only hold 11.4% of seats in the national parliament. This figure is considerably lower than the Sub-Saharan African average of 26.9%, the low-income country average of 24.3%, and the world average of 27%³⁷. The ratio for female members of parliament in the Lower Chamber of Unicameral Parliament stands at 0.22, further illustrating the underrepresentation³⁸. In terms of global rankings, CAR was placed 153rd for women in the lower house by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in 2024, consistent with its 152nd ranking in 2021. This places CAR among the ten worst African countries for women’s political participation in the lower house, where women held approximately 13% of seats as per a 2023 assessment³⁹. In the Cabinet, as of May 2024, women hold only 18% of positions⁴⁰. Women’s representation in *local*

³³ International Labour Organization, United Nations Development Programme, Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, & European Union. (2022). *Baseline Study of Informal Economy in the African, Caribbean, and Pacific regions: The Case of the Central African Republic*. United Nations Development Programme. Retrieved from https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2025-06/baseline_study-car.pdf

³⁴ International Labour Organization, United Nations Development Programme, Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States, & European Union. (2023). *Baseline Study of Informal Economy in the African, Caribbean, and Pacific regions: Global Report*. United Nations Development Programme. Retrieved from https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2025-06/informal_economy-global_report.pdf

³⁵ World Bank Group. (2023, June). *INFORMAL SECTOR ENTERPRISE SURVEYS – Profile of Cities in the Central African Republic*. Retrieved from https://www.enterprisesurveys.org/content/dam/enterprisesurveys/documents/informal-enterprise-survey/Central%20African%20Republic%202023_Informal%20Sector%20Enterprise%20Surveys_Profile%20of%20Cities_English.pdf

³⁶ Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU): <https://data.ipu.org/parliament/CF/CF-LC01/elections/historical-data-on-women/>

³⁷ <https://data.unwomen.org/country/central-african-republic> (using Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU))

³⁸ <https://data.unwomen.org/country/central-african-republic>

³⁹ <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/2024-07/womens-political-participation-africa-barometer-2024.pdf> (Africa Barometer Second Edition 2024)

⁴⁰ Ibid.

government is effectively non-existent due to a lack of elections. CAR has not held local government elections, resulting in 0% elected seats held by women in deliberative bodies of local government⁴¹.

Several systematic and societal barriers hinder women's political advancement in CAR. The country's first first-past-the-post system is widely recognised internationally as a system that disadvantaged women, as it often allows for ingrained, social, cultural beliefs, and prejudices to work against female candidates. In contrast, proportional representation (PR) systems, particularly closed-list PR, tend to offer women better opportunities by enabling parties to promote female candidates with party backing and financing⁴².

Furthermore, African women, including those in CAR, face significant financial barriers. Women often have less access to financial resources, which are crucial for funding election campaigns. Their lower socioeconomic status and gender socialization roles contribute to a lack of funds, limited access to money networks, and restricted credit.

Despite these challenges, women are present in other political structures. In electoral management bodies in CAR, women constitute 36% of the members⁴³. The share of female business owners is also low, with women owning 16% of businesses compared to 84% owned by men in 2020⁴⁴.

2.2 Legal Status and Rights of Women and Girls

2.2.1 Gender equality in National Legislation

The official basis for gender equality and non-discrimination in the nation is contained in its March 2016 Constitution Article 6 says, "all human beings are equal before the law regardless of sex, origin, religion, or belief." Declaring that the government must act to eradicate all kinds of discrimination against women and advance their full participation in political, economic, and social life, Article 14 specifically guarantees equality between men and women⁴⁵.

The Family Code adopted in November 1997 and entered into force in November 1998, one notes the return of polygamy and the dowry, which exposes women to discrimination, whereas these two elements had already been prohibited by a presidential ordinance dating from 1966. Similarly, certain discriminatory provisions of the Code have been amended and are awaiting adoption by the National Assembly. For example, article 254, which gives the husband exclusive power to manage the family, has been revised in the direction of collegial management of this power by the two spouses.

Regarding statute law, the Penal Code and the Family Code (Code de la Famille) include various clauses meant to defend women's rights. While the Family Code determines the legal minimum age of marriage at 18 for both sexes, the new Penal Code criminalizes rape and other types of sexual assault. Enforcement is still poor, however, and customary law still has a

⁴¹ <https://data.unwomen.org/country/central-african-republic> (Local Government database)

⁴² IDEA International: <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/2024-07/womens-political-participation-africa-barometer-2024.pdf> (Africa Barometer Second Edition 2024, citing general evidence)

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ <https://www.worldbank.org/en/programs/entrepreneurship>

⁴⁵ Constitution de la République Centrafricaine Texte Final (2015) Available at <http://www.unesco.org/education/edurights/media/docs/4358dd0d0bd2a5c021b2bcfa03bfdff47db70a74.pdf>.

major impact especially in rural regions where early and forced marriage and gender-based violence are still common. Child marriage is still rather common, for instance; 61% of girls married before age 18 and 26% before age 15 (UNICEF, 2024).

In addition to the Constitution of the Central African Republic mentioned above, which recognizes that all citizens, men, and women alike, have equal rights and duties, the various laws, ordinances, and decrees below confirm equality between men and women in terms of employment, wages and criminal responsibility.

- Law No. 10.001 of January 6, 2010, on the Central African Penal Code;
- Law No. 10.002 of January 6, 2010, on the Central African Criminal Procedure Code;
- Law No. 09.004 of January 29, 2009, on the Labor Code of the Central African Republic;
- Law No. 99.016 of July 16, 1999, on the General Statute of the Public Service;
- Law No. 91.016 of December 27, 1991, on the Central African Code of Civil Procedure.

Law No. 10.001 of January 6, 2010, on the Central African Penal Code has taken measures against the perpetrators of violence against women and particularly that motivated by tradition and which is done to widows, such as the deprivation of meals, the confiscation of their property by the in-laws, etc.

Though implementation has been limited by insecurity, lack of institutional capacity, and general societal shame, Law No. 06.032 of 2006 ⁴⁶on the protection of women against violence offers a legislative framework to fight gender-based violence (GBV). Lack of suitable protective services and restricted access to justice help to explain low reporting and great impunity.

Although women in CAR are entitled to vote and run for office, political involvement is still somewhat rare. Women now hold only 11.4% of legislative seats ⁴⁷. To increase women's political participation, the nation has not yet implemented a gender parity legislation or electoral quota system.

In essence, while CAR's legislative structure ostensibly promotes gender equality and conforms with important international standards, there are still notable differences between law and reality. Women's rights in public and personal domains are compromised by customary legal systems, inadequate enforcement mechanisms, and ongoing instability. Advancement of gender equality depends on strengthening institutional capacity, increasing legal knowledge among women, and harmonizing customary and statutory rules.

2.2.2 Gender in International and Regional Legislation in CAR

The Central African Republic (CAR) has demonstrated its formal commitment to advancing gender equality and protecting the rights of women and girls by ratifying a broad set of international and regional legal instruments. Chief among these is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), ratified in 1991, which obliges the state to ensure women's equal rights in all areas of life, from education and health to political participation and protection from violence. Although CAR has yet to ratify the Optional Protocol to CEDAW, it has adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995), which provides a strategic framework for addressing twelve critical areas of concern including poverty, education, and gender-based violence.

⁴⁶ République Centrafricaine: Loi no. 06.032 du 2006, portant protection de la femme contre la violence en République Centrafricaine [Central African Republic] (2006) Available at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/54f821684.html>

⁴⁷ Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2025). *Central African Republic | National Assembly | Data on women*. Retrieved from <https://data.ipu.org/parliament/CF/CF-LC01/data-on-women/>

Regionally, CAR is a party to the Maputo Protocol (ratified in 2009), which expands protections for African women by guaranteeing rights to health—including reproductive health—freedom from violence, equal participation in political and public life, and protection from harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation. The country also aligns with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, both of which include key provisions for the protection and advancement of girls' rights in particular. Additionally, CAR has ratified the ILO Conventions No. 100 and 111, affirming the principles of equal pay for work of equal value and the prohibition of discrimination in employment and occupation.

CAR's gender commitments are further strengthened by its ratification of the International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), both in 1981. These treaties safeguard women's rights to equality before the law, decent work, access to health care, and participation in cultural and political life. In the realm of peace and security, CAR has taken concrete steps to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, adopting successive National Action Plans that prioritize women's participation in conflict prevention and post-conflict recovery. In humanitarian and climate-affected contexts, these instruments are particularly relevant, ensuring that women and girls are protected, consulted, and empowered throughout the design and implementation of emergency and resilience-building efforts.

CAR is also a signatory to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which embed gender equality (SDG 5) as both a standalone goal and a cross-cutting imperative across development, climate resilience, and poverty reduction strategies. The state has ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), affirming the need for inclusive gender approaches that protect the rights of women and girls with disabilities. Moreover, the ratification of the Palermo Protocol underlines CAR's recognition of the gendered dimensions of trafficking and its commitment to preventing exploitation. Collectively, these instruments provide a strong normative foundation for gender-responsive policy and programming in CAR, although critical implementation gaps remain at the institutional and local levels.

2.2.3 Practical Implications

The practical implications of the Central African Republic's ratification and endorsement of this extensive body of international and regional gender-related legislation are significant—both as legal commitments and as operational responsibilities that shape policy, funding, and programming decisions. These implications can be understood across several domains:

1. Alignment with international standards in project design: All development, humanitarian, and climate adaptation programs in CAR - particularly those funded by international donors like the Green Climate Fund (GCF), UNICEF, or UNDP - are expected to integrate gender equality as a core requirement. The ratification of CEDAW, the Maputo Protocol, and the Beijing Declaration provides a legal and normative basis for mainstreaming gender in sectoral policies, including WASH, agriculture, education, and disaster risk reduction. This means that project proposals must include gender assessments, disaggregated data, and specific actions to address gender gaps and promote women's empowerment.
2. Obligation to Establish and Strengthen National Mechanisms: Ratifying these instruments obliges CAR to institutionalize gender equality, including establishing or strengthening:
 - a. Gender focal points and gender ministries with sufficient capacity and resources;
 - b. National action plans, such as those under UNSCR 1325 or for eliminating gender-based violence;
 - c. Monitoring and reporting mechanisms, such as periodic reports to the CEDAW Committee or the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

For instance, the Maputo Protocol requires the state to prevent, investigate, and punish gender-based violence, which necessitates trained personnel, survivor services, legal aid, and access to justice—all of which must be reflected in national budgets and planning cycles.

3. Influence on Legal Reform and Policy Priorities: CAR is under an international obligation to harmonize domestic laws with its treaty commitments. This includes reforming discriminatory laws, prohibiting harmful practices (such as early marriage and FGM, and protecting reproductive rights. Failure to meet these obligations can result in reputational risk and reduced eligibility for certain forms of support.
4. Enhanced Accountability and Participation: Instruments such as UNSCR 1325 and the SDGs push for inclusive governance and women's leadership, especially in peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and climate decision-making. This translates into practical measures such as:
 - Quotas or targets for women's participation in community consultations and decision-making bodies;
 - Participatory mechanisms that prioritize voices of women, girls, and marginalized groups in project governance;
 - Gender-sensitive indicators in monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

Table 3: International gender legislation where CAR is a signatory country

Instrument	Type	Date of Ratification / Adoption	Relevance to Gender
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)	UN Treaty	21 June 1991 (ratified)	Core international treaty on gender equality; guarantees women's rights in all spheres—education, health, work, legal status, and protection from violence.
Optional Protocol to CEDAW	UN Treaty	<i>Not yet ratified</i>	Allows individuals or groups to submit complaints to the CEDAW Committee; enhances enforcement of women's rights.
Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action	UN Political Declaration	1995 (endorsed)	Strategic global framework for advancing women's rights in 12 critical areas (e.g., poverty, violence, education, political participation).

Maputo Protocol – Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa	African Union Treaty	6 March 2009 (ratified)	Comprehensive instrument for African women’s rights, including health, reproductive rights, political participation, and protection from harmful practices.
UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security	UN Security Council Resolution	2000 (adopted), with National Action Plans adopted (e.g., 2014–2016, 2019–2023)	Emphasizes women’s participation in peacebuilding, protection in conflict, and gender-sensitive humanitarian responses.
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	UN Treaty	8 May 1981 (ratified)	Protects rights to equality before the law, political participation, freedom from discrimination.
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)	UN Treaty	8 May 1981 (ratified)	Protects women’s rights to education, health, decent work, and social protection on an equal basis.
African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (Banjul Charter)	AU Treaty	26 April 1986 (ratified)	Recognizes gender equality as a fundamental human right; basis for the Maputo Protocol.
African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC)	AU Treaty	1999 (ratified)	Provides strong protections for girls, including against child marriage, exploitation, and harmful practices.
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	UN Treaty	23 April 1992 (ratified)	Mandates gender-sensitive protection, education, and health services for children, especially girls.
ILO Convention No. 100 – Equal Remuneration	ILO Convention	11 June 1962 (ratified)	Requires equal pay for work of equal value between men and women.

ILO Convention No. 111 – Discrimination (Employment and Occupation)	ILO Convention	11 June 1962 (ratified)	Prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in employment, hiring, and occupation.
Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)	UN Political Declaration	2015 (endorsed)	SDG 5 on gender equality is integrated into CAR's development strategy; relevant across WASH, education, climate, and health sectors.
Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)	UN Declaration	1948 (endorsed, non-binding)	Foundational text affirming equal rights and dignity of all people regardless of gender.
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)	UN Treaty	11 October 2016 (ratified)	Protects rights of women and girls with disabilities, including against gender-based violence and exclusion.
UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime – Palermo Protocol	UN Treaty	11 September 2008 (ratified)	Includes provisions to prevent trafficking in women and girls and protect survivors.

2.3 Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to harmful acts directed at individuals based on their gender. It encompasses physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse and is rooted in power imbalances and societal norms that perpetuate gender inequality. GBV disproportionately affects women and girls, but men and boys can also be subjected to gender-based acts of violence and attacks. GBV umbrellas many forms of violence, and include intimate partner violence (IPV), sexual assault, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM) and sexual exploitation and abuse.

In CAR, GBV is a pervasive and deeply rooted issue. According to the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS), GBV in CAR has reached endemic levels. In 2023, cases increased by 8%, and it is estimated that two individuals - primarily women and girls - experience GBV every hour ⁴⁸. The Humanitarian Needs Overview projects that 1.3 million people, nearly a quarter of the population, will require GBV-related assistance ⁴⁹. Reports from UNFPA indicate that

⁴⁸ UNFPA. (2024). *Central African Republic Situation Report #8*. ReliefWeb. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/central-african-republic-situation-report-8-august-2024>

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

96% of GBV survivors are female, and only 26% of survivors of sexual violence receive timely medical care within 72 hours due to insecurity, distance and stigma⁵⁰.

The prevalence of GBV in CAR is closely linked to entrenched gender norms and patriarchal structures that marginalise women and normalise violence against them. Women are often viewed as subordinate to men, with limited agency in decision-making at the household or community level. Harmful practices such as early and forced marriage, and economic dependence on male partners, reinforce power imbalances and expose women and girls to various forms of abuse⁵¹. These societal norms are further compounded by exacerbating factors, particularly prolonged armed conflict, political instability and recurring humanitarian crises. Since 2013, conflict related displacement, lawlessness and the proliferation of armed groups have created an environment where GBV, especially sexual violence, is used as a tactic of war⁵².

The intersection between climate change and GBV is increasingly recognised as a critical dimension of vulnerability in fragile contexts like CAR. As global temperatures rise and climate impacts intensify, so do the risks of violence against women and girls -particularly in already unstable and resource-constrained environments. In CAR, climate-related events such as flooding, droughts and extreme weather are compounding the country's ongoing humanitarian crisis. These shocks frequently lead to displacement, and the destruction of shelter and infrastructure, loss of livelihoods and food insecurity -all of which increase stress on families and communities. In this context, women and girls become more exposed to sexual violence, exploitation and abuse, especially⁵³ when forced into overcrowded and insecure displacement sites.

Within CAR, the effects are tangible. In flood-prone urban areas like Bangui, climate-related displacement has driven up protection risks⁵⁴. In rural zones, loss of crops or water scarcity increases reliance on negative coping mechanisms, including early marriage or transnational sex, putting women and girls at further risk⁵⁵.

Insights from the Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) conducted in CAR for the years 2017-2018⁵⁶ shed more light on how GBV and intimate partner violence are viewed in CAR's society. The study found percentages of girls and women, aged 15 to 49, who believe it was justified for a husband to beat his wife in different circumstances, namely [i] if she goes out without telling him; [ii] if she neglects the children; [iii] if she refuses to have sex with him; [iv] if she burns the food; [v] if she argues with him; or [vi] for any of these 5 reasons. It is important, however, to recognise that answers of agreement with any of these situations does not necessarily reflect approval of GBV but rather reflect the "degree of social acceptance of such

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ UNICEF. (2024). *A New National Strategy to End Child Marriage*. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/car/en/press-releases/new-national-strategy-end-child-marriage>

⁵² UNFPA. (2024). *Central African Republic Situation Report #8*. ReliefWeb. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/central-african-republic-situation-report-8-august-2024>

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Quinones, L. (2025). Climate crisis driving surge in gender-based violence. *UN News*. Available at: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/04/1162461>

⁵⁶ Ministère De L'économie, Du Plan Et De La Coopération (Mepc). (2021). *Générer Des Preuves Pour Des Actions En Faveurs Des Enfants MICS6-RCA Enquête par grappes à indicateurs multiples Rapport final des résultats de l'enquête*. Available at: <https://mics.unicef.org/sites/mics/files/French.pdf>

practices”⁵⁷. These answers can indicate certain societal perceptions, statuses and gender roles of women versus men in a country⁵⁸.

Across the entire sample, a significant proportion of women agree with the justification of a man beating his wife for various reasons, with the most popular being ‘for any one of these 5 reasons’ at 64.7% and for ‘if she neglects the children’ at 52.3%. Analysis from specific socio-demographic characteristics reveal that ‘place of residence’ (rural vs. urban) has a negligible effect on answers, with the highest difference between agreeance being 9.8 percentage points for the reason ‘if she refuses to have sex with him’, with rural women being 9.8 percentage points more likely to agree with this justification than urban women.

There is not a consistent linear trend with age: the youngest group (15-17) has the lowest overall acceptance rate (as observed at looking at agreeance with ‘for any of these 5 reasons’) at 57.3%, the highest acceptance rate is seen in the young-to-middle adult ranges (25-29 and 30-34) at 66.6% and 67.7%, but dips again for age ranges 40-49 - averaging 62.4%. It is striking to note that the lowest acceptance rate is still held by most girls surveyed (i.e. over 50%).

Among all the socio-demographic factors, education emerges as the most powerful mitigating force against the ‘acceptance’⁵⁹ of domestic violence. The data paints a clear picture: as a woman’s level of education increases, her justification for wife-beating general decreases. While there is a surprising slight increase in acceptance from ‘Primary or no education’ (63.5%) to ‘Fundamental 1’ (6.1%) and ‘Fundamental 2’ (66.6%), women with ‘Higher education or more’ show a significantly lower overall acceptance rate of 58.5%. This trend is even more pronounced when looking at specific justifications, such as “if she refuses to have sex with him” where only 11.5% of highly educated women agree, compared to 36.5% of those with primary or no education. This highlights the vital role education plays in challenging ingrained norms and fostering more equitable attitudes.

Looking at economic well-being, while the ‘Richest’ quintile generally shows lower acceptance for specific justifications, such as ‘if she refuses to have sex with him’ (19.4%), the overall trend is not a simple linear decline as wealth increases. Interestingly, the ‘Rich’ quintile exhibits the highest overall justification at 67.4%, surpassing ‘Poorest’ and ‘Richest’ categories. This suggests that while extreme poverty might correlate with certain vulnerabilities, increasing wealth does not automatically translate to a consistent reduction in the acceptance of domestic violence, indicating that economic factors interact with other cultural and social elements in shaping these attitudes.

The attitudes of men towards situations where it would be justified for a husband to beat his wife were also recorded and show a significant difference in attitudes towards GBV. While there exists some key similarities - for example ‘neglects the children’ is one of the most accepted specific reasons to justify wife-beating; for both genders, higher levels of education consistently correlate with lower acceptance of wife-beating; and both men and women in rural areas tend to show slightly higher acceptance of wife-beating compared to their urban counterparts - the differences are noticeable. Perhaps the most striking difference is that women show significantly higher overall acceptance for justifying wife-beating than men across all socio-demographics and corroborated by 64.7% of women justifying it for ‘any of the 5 reasons’ in comparison to only 38.1% of men. A brief look across the women’s surveys compared to the men’s survey also illuminates this, with higher percentages over most demographic groups in the women’s survey. For the men’s survey, it is commonly less than the majority (i.e. the

⁵⁷ UNICEF. (2017). Attitudes and social norms on violence. UNICEF DATA. Available at: <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/violence/attitudes-and-social-norms-on-violence/>

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Please note the use of acceptance here is used with the abovementioned acknowledgement of the disclaimer that ‘acceptance’ does not mean approval [see footnote 53].

minority of men justify wife-beating). In fact, there is not one circumstance in the men's survey that finds most men surveyed justifying wife-beating, in stark contrast to the women's survey. This suggests that there is a high degree of normalisation or internalisation of violence within the female population, possibly due to societal norms and/or power imbalances.

2.3.1 Female Genital Mutilation

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) is a harmful traditional practice involving the cutting or removal of the external female genitalia. It has existed for more than 2,000 years and is performed on girls from birth up to just before marriage and sometimes beyond. Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) is a deeply rooted harmful traditional practice with a history spanning over two millennia. This practice involves the removal or cutting of the external female genitalia and is performed on girls at various stages of life, from infancy up to and sometimes beyond the point of marriage.

FGM/C is practiced throughout all prefectures and among all ethnic groups in the Central African Republic. The areas exhibiting the greatest prevalence are in the central part of the country: Region 4 (Nana Grebizi, Kemo, Ouaka) at 60.6% and Region 5 (Haute-Kotto, Bamingui-Bangoran, Vakaga) at 65.4%. Region 2 (Sangha Mbaere, Mambere-Kadei, Nana Mambere) exhibits the lowest prevalence, recorded at 5.6%. Girls and women aged 15–49 residing in rural areas exhibit a higher prevalence of FGM/C at 27.5% compared to 11.9% in urban areas. The prevalence of FGM/C exhibits an inverse correlation with wealth levels⁶⁰ and is the highest among households led by individuals of Banda ethnicity, at 52.9% for girls and women aged 15–49, while the lowest prevalence is observed in households led by individuals of Mboum ethnicity, at 4.0%.

Law No. 06.032, enacted on 27 December 2006, addresses the protection of women against violence in the Central African Republic and includes specific provisions regarding FGM/C. Law No. 10.001, the Penal Code of the Central African Republic⁶¹, enacted on 6 January 2010, also categorically prohibits FGM/C. Nonetheless, there exists a notable absence of evidence indicating that any cases of FGM/C have been prosecuted in accordance with these laws.

⁶⁰ https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/FGMC_Lo_res_Final_26.pdf

⁶¹

[https://www.uaipit.com/uploads/legislacion/files/1406716990_2._Law_No._10.001_on_the_Central_African_Penal_Code_\(2010\)_FR.pdf](https://www.uaipit.com/uploads/legislacion/files/1406716990_2._Law_No._10.001_on_the_Central_African_Penal_Code_(2010)_FR.pdf)

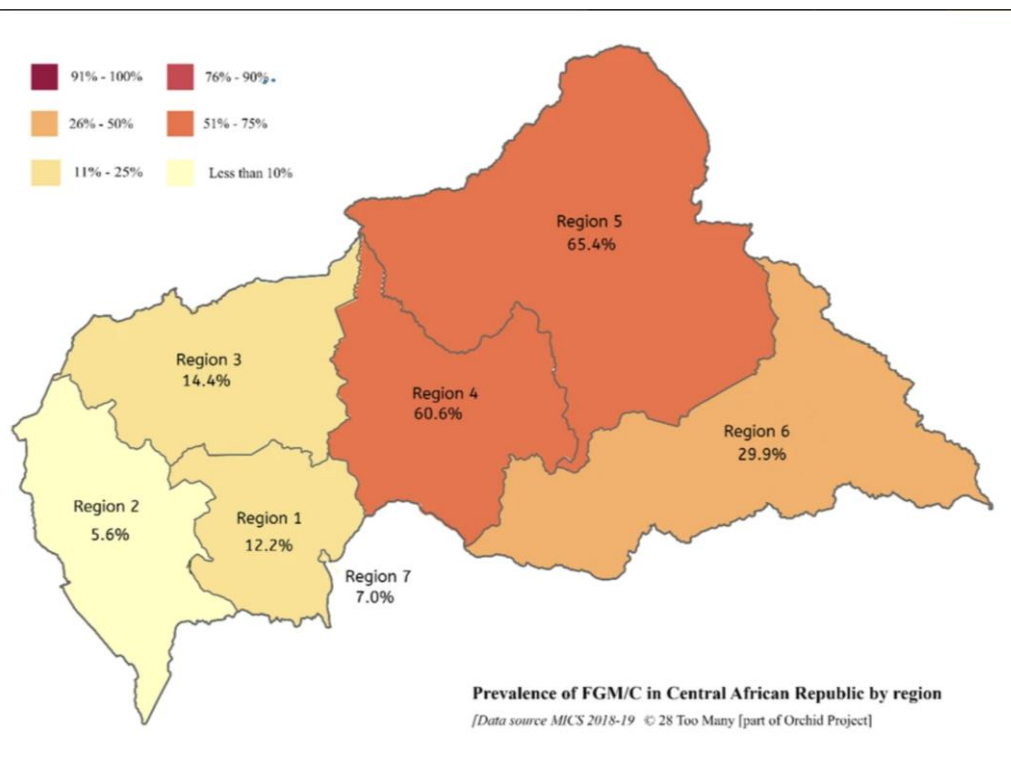


Figure 2: Distribution of FGM/C across CAR ⁶²

2.3.2 SEA/SH Analysis

Safeguarding risks, including Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment are among the most egregious and pervasive ones facing women, girls, and marginalized individuals in humanitarian and climate-vulnerable contexts. In the Central African Republic (CAR), where multiple crises converge—armed conflict, food insecurity, climate stress, weak governance, and extreme poverty—SEA/SH is both a human rights violation and a systemic barrier to equitable access to life-saving services.

Defined under the UN Secretary-General's Bulletin (ST/SGB/2003/13)⁶³, SEA/SH includes any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability or differential power for sexual purposes, including exchange of money, goods, or services for sex, and any unwelcome sexual behaviour by humanitarian or development personnel. In CAR, these dynamics are particularly acute. As highlighted by Protection Cluster reports (2023–2024), IDP camps, humanitarian assistance sites, and even school settings have been documented as high-risk environments for sexual exploitation. These incidents often go unreported due to fear, shame, impunity, and lack of functioning complaints mechanisms.

2.3.3 Structural Drivers of SEA/SH Risk in CAR

CAR's underlying conditions exacerbate SEA/SH risk at every level of aid delivery.

⁶² <https://www.fgmcni.org/country/car/>

⁶³ <https://www.refworld.org/reference/research/unsecgen/2003/en/21002>

First, gender inequality and patriarchal norms are deeply entrenched, with women's social status constrained by limited economic autonomy, legal protections, and decision-making power. Child marriage, polygamy, and gender-based violence remain widespread, while women's representation in formal governance structures is among the lowest globally (UNDP, 2023). In this context, power differentials between male humanitarian workers and female beneficiaries are stark.

Second, displacement and humanitarian dependency generate conditions of extreme vulnerability. As of 2024, over 493,000 people remain internally displaced in CAR (OCHA, 2024), the majority of whom are women and children. In IDP camps, overcrowding, lack of privacy, and inadequate infrastructure compound protection risks, particularly around WASH facilities.

Third, the delivery of aid itself can create SEA/SH opportunities when staff or contractors leverage access to essential services in exchange for sexual favours. In contexts where water, food, shelter, and healthcare are scarce, the potential for exploitation increases. Adolescents, female-headed households, and women with disabilities are especially at risk, with limited access to information about their rights or how to safely report abuse.

2.3.4 SEA/SH in the WASH Sector

The WASH sector is widely recognized as one of the most SEA/SH-prone humanitarian service areas. Water collection points, bathing facilities, and latrines—particularly when inadequately located, unlit, or non-segregated—become focal points for harassment and abuse. Women and girls are often forced to travel long distances alone, particularly in rural or insecure areas, exposing them to heightened risks of sexual violence.

Findings from the 2022 Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS) report in CAR indicate that a significant portion of sexual violence cases occur in or near water access points and sanitation facilities.

Moreover, female WASH staff and community hygiene workers themselves are not immune to SEA/SH risks. Without adequate safeguarding policies and institutional accountability, women engaged in project implementation may face harassment from colleagues, supervisors, or community members. This is particularly relevant in environments where organizational hierarchies are male-dominated, and sexual harassment is normalized or minimized.

The 2022 GBVIMS report for the Central African Republic presents alarming data on the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence, with 35% of all reported GBV cases involving sexual violence. Notably, a significant number of these incidents occurred in homes, internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, or near water collection points - precisely the locations where WASH infrastructure is most needed and most frequently accessed. These findings underscore the urgent need to consider safety, dignity, and protection as central to the design and implementation of WASH programming in CAR.⁶⁴

Latrines, bathing facilities, and water points that are poorly lit, insufficiently segregated by gender, or located far from households, place women and girls at heightened risk of harassment and assault. In humanitarian and rural settings, women and girls often walk long distances to fetch water or access sanitation services - routes that can be isolated and unmonitored. In IDP sites, overcrowding and lack of privacy increase vulnerability. Therefore, infrastructure must be designed with protection in mind: latrines and bathing areas should be fitted with solar-powered lighting, include internal locks, and be clearly

⁶⁴ AoR GBVIMS Task Force, *Rapport Annuel GBVIMS RCA 2022*, Global Protection Cluster, February 2023.

marked and segregated by gender. Locating these facilities in visible but safe areas - avoiding proximity to male-dominated gathering spaces like markets or transport hubs - is also essential.⁶⁵

2.3.5 Gaps in Prevention and Response Mechanisms

Despite growing awareness of SEA/SH, significant gaps remain in prevention, detection, and redress within CAR's WASH and climate programming. These include:

- **Absence of localized complaint systems:** Most rural communities lack safe, confidential, and anonymous channels through which survivors can report abuse or exploitation. Existing community complaint mechanisms are often male-run or untrusted, with no linkage to professional protection services.
- **Low awareness of rights:** Women and girls often do not know that sexual exploitation by aid workers is a punishable offense. Nor are they aware of the role and responsibilities of humanitarian actors under the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) commitments on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA).
- **Weak survivor referral pathways:** In CAR's fragmented protection landscape, pathways for SEA/SH survivors to access medical, psychosocial, or legal services are poorly coordinated or unknown to frontline staff. GBV prevention and WASH services are typically delivered by different actors, without protocols for joint case management or referral.
- **Limited oversight of third-party contractors:** Construction, logistics, and transport services—critical for WASH infrastructure—are often subcontracted to private actors with little oversight or SEA/SH training. These personnel may operate outside of the UN SEA Code of Conduct or reporting lines, increasing the risk of impunity.

2.3.6 Recommendations and Project Actions

To address these risks under the GCF-funded project, SEA/SH prevention and response must be systematically embedded across all activities. The following actions are recommended, aligned with UNICEF's Core Commitments for Children and the GCF Gender and Social Inclusion Policy and the Grievance Redress Mechanism which is also part of this Annex.

1. SEA and SH Safeguard Integration in Design and Planning

- Conduct a SEA/SH risk analysis during the detailed design phase, engaging women, girls, and marginalized groups.
- Include SEA/SH-specific risks in Environmental and Social Safeguards screening and mitigation plans.
- Budget for SEA/SH prevention and response actions, including training, complaints mechanisms, and survivor support services.

2. Training and Institutional Accountability

- Deliver mandatory SEA/SH training to all project personnel, including contractors and implementing partners using context-adapted materials in French and local languages.
- Ensure Codes of Conduct include clear language on SEA/SH prohibitions and are signed by all staff.

⁶⁵ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action: WASH Chapter*, 2015.

- Establish a whistleblower protection policy and integrate SEA/SH into staff performance evaluations and disciplinary systems.

3. Grievance Redress Mechanism at a community level

- Co-design the GRM with community members, ensuring multiple reporting modalities (e.g., verbal reports to trained female staff, SMS-based hotlines, confidential drop-boxes).
- Promote GRM through inclusive outreach, particularly to adolescent girls, persons with disabilities, and ethnic minorities.
- Monitor GRM functionality regularly and adapt based on feedback from users.

4. Gender-Sensitive Infrastructure

- Ensure WASH facilities are equipped with safety-enhancing features, including solar lighting, internal locks, and gender-segregated units.
- Prioritize the proximity of facilities to households, especially for adolescent girls, women with disabilities, and pregnant women.
- Avoid locating WASH infrastructure near male-dominated or high-risk zones (e.g., informal markets, transport hubs).

5. Survivor-Centered Referral Pathways

- Develop referral mechanisms in coordination with GBV and Protection actors, following survivor-centered principles (e.g., confidentiality, informed consent).
- Train WASH and community outreach staff on how to handle disclosures and refer survivors sensitively and safely.
- Map local health, psychosocial, and legal support services and ensure that CFMs are linked to these networks.

6. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning

- Include SEA/SH indicators in the project's ESMF M&E framework (e.g., # of SEA/SH complaints received, % of complaints resolved appropriately).
- Conduct periodic reviews of SEA/SH measures, including a least one third-party audit, beneficiary surveys, and annual internal review and learning workshops.
- Share learning on SEA/SH prevention across project sites and with national counterparts to build systemic capacity

2.3.7 Alignment with Global Standards

This SEA/SH framework builds on the IASC Minimum Operating Standards on PSEA, UNICEF's PSEA Policy (2022), and the GCF's Updated Gender Policy and Action Plan (2020–2023). It reflects UNICEF's zero-tolerance stance on SEA/SH and ensures that climate-resilient WASH interventions do not inadvertently create or exacerbate risks of harm.

SEA/SH prevention is not only a safeguarding obligation—it is foundational to the integrity, equity, and legitimacy of climate adaptation efforts in fragile settings. Without deliberate, sustained, and context-specific SEA/SH safeguards, adaptation investments risk further marginalizing the very populations they seek to protect.

2.4 Social Norms, Perceptions and Stereotypes

2.4.1 Gender roles and expectations

In the Central African Republic (CAR), entrenched patriarchal norms significantly shape gender roles, restrict women's autonomy, and condition the life prospects of girls. The traditional division of labour, reinforced through generations of cultural practice, attributes authority and public decision-making to men while confining women to subordinate roles within the domestic sphere. Men are typically regarded as the heads of households and primary economic providers, whereas women are expected to bear and raise children, perform unpaid domestic and agricultural labour, and maintain social cohesion through caregiving and compliance with male authority.⁶⁶

These rigid social expectations are established early in life and reinforced through family socialization, community norms, and religious instruction. Girls are socialized to internalize modesty, obedience, and domestic competence, while boys are encouraged to display leadership and autonomy. As a result, educational trajectories are often truncated for girls—especially in rural areas where household chores, sibling care responsibilities, or early marriage may take precedence over school attendance.⁶⁷

The expectation that women remain primarily responsible for caregiving also means that women are often the first to absorb the shocks of deteriorating public services, environmental degradation, and food insecurity. This reinforces a cycle of time poverty, whereby women have less opportunity to engage in paid labour, community decision-making, or training that might enhance their resilience and empowerment.

2.4.2 Cultural practices affecting women and girls

A range of customary and religious practices in CAR perpetuate gender inequalities and directly compromise the rights of women and girls. Chief among these is child, early, and forced marriage (CEFM), which remains both a social norm and a coping strategy for economically distressed families. According to the latest estimates from UNICEF, 61 % of girls in CAR are married before the age of 18, and 26 % before the age of 15.⁶⁸

These figures place the country among the highest in the world for child marriage prevalence. Early marriage is often justified by families as a means of preserving honour, reducing economic burden, or providing girls with social protection in insecure environments. However, it curtails girls' education, increases their risk of early and repeated pregnancies, and exposes them to lifelong cycles of poverty and gender-based violence (GBV).

Discriminatory customs persist, including unequal inheritance rights, the denial of land access for women, and harmful widowhood rites. Customary law often overrides statutory protections, particularly in rural areas where formal institutions have limited presence. This restricts women's control over productive assets and undermines their financial independence.

⁶⁶ UN Women, *Gender Profile: Central African Republic*, Regional Office for West and Central Africa, 2022.

⁶⁷ According to UNICEF, only 38 % of girls complete lower secondary education in CAR. UNICEF, *Child Marriage Country Profile: Central African Republic*, 2023.

⁶⁸ UNICEF, *Child Marriage Country Profile: Central African Republic*, 2023

Polygamy is legally permitted and socially normalized in many parts of CAR, contributing to intra-household inequality and the economic marginalization of women in polygamous unions.⁶⁹ Women in such relationships may have little say in household decisions or access to shared resources, particularly in cases where favouritism and male-dominated inheritance practices prevail.

GBV, including domestic violence and sexual assault, remains widespread and is often underreported due to a strong culture of silence and impunity. Survivors frequently face social stigma, fear of retaliation, or disbelief, which discourages disclosure and hinders access to justice or psychosocial support services.⁷⁰ In many communities, customary dispute resolution systems prioritize mediation and reconciliation over survivor protection, often resulting in outcomes that favour perpetrators and reinforce harmful norms.

Moreover, gender stereotypes are deeply embedded in institutional settings. Teachers may tolerate or reinforce gendered expectations in the classroom, healthcare workers may deprioritize women's or adolescent girls' health concerns, and police or justice officials may lack the training or resources to appropriately respond to GBV cases. These institutional biases perpetuate gender inequality and limit the effectiveness of service delivery, even when gender-responsive policies exist on paper.

2.5 Social inclusion and Intersectionality

2.5.1 Vulnerable sub-groups

Living with a disability

In CAR, individuals with disabilities face compounding challenges, exacerbated by both societal barriers and prolonged conflict. In 2023, it was reported that approximately 460,000 people in CAR live with a disability⁷¹. While specific comprehensive data for CAR may be limited, understanding the situation can be informed by trends across Sub-Saharan Africa. It is clear that persons with disabilities in CAR experience profound marginalisation. Their vulnerability is particularly pronounced in rural areas, where limited healthcare access and financial constraints impede treatment and support, and in conflict zones, where their ability to escape danger is compromised^{72,73}. The conflict that engulfed CAR starting in 2013 brought immense hardship, with people with disabilities frequently abandoned or left behind during armed group attacks⁷⁴. For women, pre-existing inequalities amplify their risk. Across Sub-Saharan Africa, women generally experience higher rates of disability than men, particularly related to mobility and vision⁷⁵. This disparity can stem from several factors, including shortfalls in human capital investment where families with limited resources may prioritise the health of male children, leaving

⁶⁹ Inter-Parliamentary Union, *Women in National Parliaments*, 2021, www.ipu.org.

⁷⁰ UN Women, *Gender Profile: Central African Republic*, 2022.

⁷¹ UNICEF, *Humanitarian Action for Children 2023 - Central African Republic* (New York: UNICEF, 2023), <https://www.unicef.org/media/131881/file/2023-HAC-CAR.pdf>.

⁷² Montes, J., and Swindle, R., (2021) *Poverty & Equity Notes - Who is Disabled in Sub-Saharan Africa?* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group), <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/898541620207711446/pdf/Who-is-Disabled-in-Sub-Saharan-Africa.pdf>

⁷³ Ćerimović E. At risk and overlooked: Children with disabilities and armed conflict. *International Review of the Red Cross*. 2023;105(922):192-216. doi:10.1017/S181638312200087X

⁷⁴ *ibid*.

⁷⁵ Montes, J., and Swindle, R., (2021) *Poverty & Equity Notes - Who is Disabled in Sub-Saharan Africa?* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group), <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/898541620207711446/pdf/Who-is-Disabled-in-Sub-Saharan-Africa.pdf>

girls' needs unattended and potentially leading to compounded impairments over time ⁷⁶. Additionally, pregnancy and childbirth contribute to higher prevalence due to insufficient access to adequate perinatal care⁷⁷. During the conflict in CAR, this meant women with disabilities were exceptionally vulnerable ⁷⁸.

Life in internally displaced person (IDP) camps also presents obstacles: people with disabilities face severe difficulties accessing basic necessities. Sanitation facilities are typically not designed for accessibility, forcing individuals to expose themselves to serious health risks from unsanitary conditions ^{79,80}. Beyond immediate crisis, persistent systemic barriers undermine the well-being of people with disabilities. Access to medical care is severely hampered, with clinics frequently lacking communication facilitators for deaf individuals and essential mental health services, despite the widespread trauma caused by conflict ⁸¹. The problem is compounded for women, who may face additional barriers to healthcare access, particularly for reproductive health needs. Education attainment is significantly lower for people with disabilities, a challenge that is often more pronounced for girls due to potential de-prioritisation of their health needs and educational investment ⁸². Participating in the labour market poses a major challenge, with people with disabilities reporting significantly lower rates of employment due to discrimination and a lack of suitable accommodation from employers ⁸³. Those who do not find work are often relegated to part-time roles, earn less, and are less likely to be promoted ⁸⁴. This unstable employment and insufficient financial resources often result in reliance on families or social programs for survival, increasing their vulnerability. For women with disabilities, this reliance can be particularly precarious, putting them at higher risk of abuse from caretakers, a risk potentially exacerbated by existing gender-based power imbalances ⁸⁵.

Religious Minorities

In CAR, various religious minorities are among the most vulnerable subgroups, enduring systemic violence, forced displacement and marginalisation due to decades of instability and communal violence. Muslim communities serve as a compelling example of this vulnerability. The crisis that escalated significantly from late 2012 saw the rise of predominantly Muslim Seleka forces, whose seizure of power in 2012 was marked by widespread atrocities, including killings, rape and destruction ⁸⁶. This period led to brutal reprisal attacks by largely Christian anti-balaka militias, whose actions amounted to ethnic cleansing against Muslim civilians in western CAR ⁸⁷. The anti-balaka militias explicitly stated their intent to target religious minority residents and used tactics of extreme intimidation and terror ⁸⁸. More recently, a UN report released in

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁸ Quy, B. (2019). *People With Disabilities Face Widespread Violence and Discrimination in the Central African Republic*. Global Citizen. Retrieved from <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/disabilities-in-central-african-republic/>

⁷⁹ *ibid.*

⁸⁰ Ćerimović E. At risk and overlooked: Children with disabilities and armed conflict. *International Review of the Red Cross*. 2023;105(922):192-216. doi:10.1017/S181638312200087X

⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁸² Montes, J., and Swindle, R., (2021) *Poverty & Equity Notes - Who is Disabled in Sub-Saharan Africa?* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank Group), <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/898541620207711446/pdf/Who-is-Disabled-in-Sub-Saharan-Africa.pdf>

⁸³ *ibid.*

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁶ Amnesty International. (2025). *Ethnic cleansing of Muslim communities in the Central African Republic*. Amnesty International UK. Retrieved from <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/central-african-republic-crisis-ethnic-cleansing>

⁸⁷ Ćerimović E. At risk and overlooked: Children with disabilities and armed conflict. *International Review of the Red Cross*. 2023;105(922):192-216. doi:10.1017/S181638312200087X

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

March 2025 documented ongoing grave human rights violations committed by armed groups in southeastern CAR during October 2024 and January 2025 ⁸⁹. These attacks specifically targeted Fulani pastoral communities and other religious minorities, as well as refugees and asylum-seekers ⁹⁰. Investigations found evidence of summary executions, widespread sexual violence (including the rape of at least 14 women and seven girls), torture and forced labour ⁹¹. Therefore, within the already vulnerable Muslim communities in CAR, Muslim women face intensified challenges. They are disproportionately affected by the targeting and violence, notably through widespread sexual violence⁹². Beyond direct physical harm. The experience of forced displacement and ethnic cleansing profoundly impacts women from these minority groups, especially Muslim women. Being uprooted from their homes and livelihoods forces them to navigate insecure environments, including overcrowded displacement camps where access to essential services like safe sanitation, food and healthcare is severely limited. This insecurity, paired with the trauma of conflict and targeted discrimination, places these women at a heightened risk of long-term physical and psychological suffering, intensified by the general vulnerabilities faced by women and girls in CAR’s ongoing crisis.

3. Gender Context in Project Area

The targeted prefectures of this project are Ouham, Bamingui-Bangoran, Vakaga and Bangui. The following table outlines the estimated distribution of male and female populations in these targeted areas, highlighting key demographic considerations for effective project outreach.

Table 4: Gender population breakdown of targeted prefectures in CAR

Prefecture	Male Population	Female Population	Source
Bangui	454,696	469,209	<u>City Facts</u>
Ouham	227,112	234,370	<u>City Facts</u>
Bamingui-Bangoran	26,829	27,680	<u>City Facts</u>

⁸⁹ MINUSCA & United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. (2025, March 4). *RAPPORT PUBLIC SUR LES VIOLATIONS ET ATTEINTES GRAVES AUX DROITS DE L'HOMME COMMISES PAR LES WAGNER TI AZANDÉ ET LES AZANDÉ ANI KPI GBÉ DU 1 AU 7 OCTOBRE 2024 À DEMBIA ET RAFAÏ, PRÉFECTURE DU MBOMOU*. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/countries/central-african-republic/20250304-minusca-ohchr-dembia-report.pdf>

⁹⁰ *ibid.*

⁹¹ *ibid.*

⁹² *ibid.*

3.1 Consultation Methods and Key Themes Raised by Women and Girls

The project utilized a multi-layered, adaptive, and participatory framework to ensure the meaningful engagement of women and girls at the project targeted prefectures. The methodology employed a dual-track approach featuring digital surveys (via Kobo Toolbox) and community-level focus group discussions. To capture insightful feedback and ensure cultural sensitivity, consultations were conducted using a culturally embedded facilitation model: same-gender moderators led discussions in designated safe spaces using open prompts. Additional engagement methods included community stakeholder workshops, participatory site observations, and transect walks. In total, 151 women and girls participated across 12 specific discussion groups in the target prefectures.

Key Themes Raised by Women and Girls: During the consultations, women and girls consistently highlighted how climate change and inadequate WASH infrastructure disproportionately impact their daily lives, safety, and dignity. The key themes raised include:

- **The Burden of Water Collection and Associated Safety Risks:** Women bear the almost exclusive responsibility for fetching water, a burden severely exacerbated by climate-induced droughts. Participants highlighted that long travel distances and extended waiting times at water points lead to physical exhaustion and social tensions, including 151 women spousal suspicions of infidelity. Furthermore, women and adolescent girls expressed serious concerns about their safety, noting that these journeys frequently expose them to harassment and gender-based violence (GBV).
- **Sanitation Failures and Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM):** Women and girls pointed out critical gaps in sanitation infrastructure. They noted that menstruation remains a taboo subject and that girls often lack the necessary privacy, water, soap, and appropriate facilities at school to safely manage their menstrual hygiene. They strongly requested safe, private, and menstruation-friendly facilities located closer to their homes and learning environments.
- **Exclusion from Decision-Making and Governance:** A major theme was the lack of female representation in water management. Women noted that despite being the primary managers of household water, their voices are rarely heard by predominantly male traditional authorities and management committees. Female leaders emphasized that because water is fundamentally a "women's issue," the management of water points should rightfully be handed over to them, demanding active involvement in all stages of project planning and implementation.
- **Climate Impacts on Health and Livelihoods:** Women—including those from vulnerable Indigenous pastoralist groups like the M'bororo Fulani—identified prolonged droughts and severe floods as primary threats to household health and well-being. They reported that these climate shocks lead to deteriorating hygiene, a surge in waterborne diseases, and an increased caregiving workload. In response, women expressed a strong interest in expanding their roles in income-generating activities (such as small trade and agriculture) to build their economic resilience.

3.2. Gender roles in water management and WASH services

In the WASH sector, distinct gender roles traditionally shape how water resources are managed, and services are accessed and utilised. Women are predominantly responsible for household water supply, sanitation, and health management, often acting as the primary collectors of water and promoters of hygiene practices within their homes and communities. This role means women and girls disproportionately bear the burden of inadequate or inappropriate water and sanitation facilities and

services⁹³. For instance, long distances to water sources or lack of privacy in sanitation facilities can lead to increased workloads, fatigue, health issues, and even reduced school attendance for girls⁹⁴ - a theme that is explored in the next section.

Conversely, men typically dominate the higher levels of water management and WASH service provision. They are often the key decision-makers in planning and investing in water and sanitation infrastructure, with the sector frequently perceived as a technical domain, reinforcing male dominance in roles such as technicians, engineers, and construction staff⁹⁵.

The dynamics of these roles can shift, particularly during periods of water stress or shock. During droughts, women's workload for water collection intensifies significantly due to increased distances and the necessity to provide water for both household consumption and homestead livestock, often without sufficient means of transport. In such crises, men's responsibilities also escalate, as they may undertake arduous tasks like deepening wells and excavating water pans to secure water sources. Although men may assist with household water collection during severe water scarcity, particularly if they have access to vehicles, the primary burden of ensuring household water security often remains with women and girls⁹⁶.

Despite women's critical daily engagement with water and sanitation, their concerns and practical needs are frequently overlooked in the design and siting of WASH facilities, largely due to their limited involvement in planning and decision-making processes. This underrepresentation of women's views hinders the effectiveness and sustainability of WASH programs, as community participation approaches often fail to address the diverse needs within a seemingly homogenous 'community'. The resulting disparities affect not only women but also the overall well-being of households, educational outcomes and economic development⁹⁷.

3.3 Gendered division of labour and WASH responsibilities

Time burden, mobility, and SEA/SH constraints to WASH

Water collection is a profoundly gendered task, particularly in developing countries, primarily being shouldered by women and girls. This disproportionate burden not only reflects existing societal inequalities, but also actively perpetuates cycles of poverty and limits opportunities for female empowerment. Globally, women and girls are overwhelmingly responsible for fetching water for their households. In communities where water is not available on premises, women and girls aged 15 and

⁹³ Wendland, C., Yadav M., Stock, A., & Seager, J. (2017). Gender and Sanitation Issues. In J.B. Rose & B. Jiménez-Cisneros (Eds.), *Global Water Pathogen Project: Part 1 The Health Hazards of Excreta: Theory and Control*. Michigan State University, UNESCO. Available at: <http://www.waterpathogens.org/book/gender-and-sanitation>. doi:10.14321/waterpathogens.4

⁹⁴ REACH, *Empowerment and Water Security Among Pastoralist Women in the Maasai and Samburu Communities of Northern Kenya* (Geneva: REACH, November 2018), https://www.reachwater.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/18_11_CHC-Study-Report.pdf.

⁹⁵ Wendland, C., Yadav M., Stock, A., & Seager, J. (2017). Gender and Sanitation Issues. In J.B. Rose & B. Jiménez-Cisneros (Eds.), *Global Water Pathogen Project: Part 1 The Health Hazards of Excreta: Theory and Control*. Michigan State University, UNESCO. Available at: <http://www.waterpathogens.org/book/gender-and-sanitation>. doi:10.14321/waterpathogens.4

⁹⁶ REACH, *Empowerment and Water Security Among Pastoralist Women in the Maasai and Samburu Communities of Northern Kenya* (Geneva: REACH, November 2018), https://www.reachwater.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/18_11_CHC-Study-Report.pdf.

⁹⁷ Wendland, C., Yadav M., Stock, A., & Seager, J. (2017). Gender and Sanitation Issues. In J.B. Rose & B. Jiménez-Cisneros (Eds.), *Global Water Pathogen Project: Part 1 The Health Hazards of Excreta: Theory and Control*. Michigan State University, UNESCO. Available at: <http://www.waterpathogens.org/book/gender-and-sanitation>. doi:10.14321/waterpathogens.4

older are the primary collectors in 7 out of 10 households. Girls under 15 are also nearly twice as likely as boys to bear this responsibility ⁹⁸.

This immense investment of time carries significant opportunity costs. For women, it drastically shortens the hours available for income-generating activities, thus limiting their economic independence and perpetuating cycles of poverty. It also reduces time for childcare, other household tasks, or rest and leisure activities ⁹⁹. For girls, the implications are particularly severe as water collection often takes time away from education, possibly leading to missed school days or even permanent dropout¹⁰⁰. Studies show a direct link between the time girls spend fetching water and increased school absenteeism ¹⁰¹. Beyond the loss of time and opportunities, the task of water collection exposes women and girls to health and safety risks: long journeys to water sources can lead to physical injuries from carrying heavy loads and increase vulnerability to harassment and violence, especially when traveling alone or in secluded areas ¹⁰². Further, when water is collected from unsafe sources or becomes contaminated during transport and storage, it elevates the risk of waterborne diseases like diarrhoea ¹⁰³.

In CAR, the challenges associated with water access, and the gendered burden are acutely prevalent. A staggering 89% of urban households and 98% of rural households in CAR lack water on their premises, indicating an overwhelming dependency on off-site water sources across the country ¹⁰⁴. Data from within CAR further cements that the responsibility for collecting this water falls disproportionately on women and girls: in urban areas, adult females are the primary water collectors for 67% of households, and child females for 21%. In contrast, adult males account for only 12% and child males for 1% ¹⁰⁵. In rural areas, the burden is even more pronounced, with adult females being the primary collectors for 77% of households, and child females for 12%. Adult males account for 10% and child males for 1% ¹⁰⁶. Additionally, data from 2019 reveals that women and adolescent girls (15+ years) in CAR spend approximately 28-30 minutes per day fetching water, while girls (<15 years) spend around 18-20 minutes daily. This contrasts sharply with men and adolescent boys (15+ years) who spend 0-1 minutes, and boys (<15 years) who spend 1-2 minutes on this task. Overall, women and adolescent girls are primarily responsible for water carriage in 70-75% of households, and girls (<15 years) in 20-25%. Boy and men, in their respective age groups, hold primary responsibility in only 0-5% of households. This positions CAR among countries where over half of households rely on women and girls for water collection ¹⁰⁷.

⁹⁸ WHO. (n.d.). *Women and girls bear brunt of water and sanitation crisis - New UNICEF-WHO report*. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news/item/06-07-2023-women-and-girls-bear-brunt-of-water-and-sanitation-crisis---new-unicef-who-report>

⁹⁹ Water.org. (n.d.). *How does the world water crisis affect women and girls?*. Retrieved from <https://water.org/our-impact/water-crisis/womens-crisis/>

¹⁰⁰ WHO. (n.d.). *Women and girls bear brunt of water and sanitation crisis - New UNICEF-WHO report*. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news/item/06-07-2023-women-and-girls-bear-brunt-of-water-and-sanitation-crisis---new-unicef-who-report>

¹⁰¹ Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene 2000–2022: special focus on gender. (2023). New York: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO).

¹⁰² Graham, J. P., Hirai, M., & Kim, S-S. (2016). An Analysis of Water Collection Labor among Women and Children in 24 Sub-Saharan African Countries. *PLoS ONE*, 11(6), e0155981.

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article/file?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0155981&type=printable>

¹⁰³ Water.org. (n.d.). *How does the world water crisis affect women and girls?*. Retrieved from <https://water.org/our-impact/water-crisis/womens-crisis/>

¹⁰⁴ Graham, J. P., Hirai, M., & Kim, S-S. (2016). An Analysis of Water Collection Labor among Women and Children in 24 Sub-Saharan African Countries. *PLoS ONE*, 11(6), e0155981.

¹⁰⁵ *ibid*.

¹⁰⁶ *ibid*.

¹⁰⁷ Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene 2000–2022: special focus on gender. (2023). New York: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Health Organization (WHO).

Moreover, a significant proportion of households in CAR spend considerable time on water collection. For those without water on premises, 14% in urban areas and 28% in rural areas spend 30 minutes or more collecting water. Adult females bear the brunt of this long-distance collection, making up 64% in urban areas and 79% in rural areas of those spending over 30 minutes. Children, particularly girls, also contribute significantly to this time burden, especially in rural settings ¹⁰⁸.

When compared to other African nations, CAR's statistics underscore a particularly dire situation regarding water accessibility and the gendered burden. CAR's 98% of rural households without on-premises water is among the highest in Africa, comparable to countries like Niger (93% rural) and Sierra Leone (99% rural). Additionally, the overwhelming reliance on adult females (77% in rural CAR) and child females (12% in rural CAR) for primary water collection is exceptionally high. While some countries like Niger and Ethiopia report even higher percentages of households spending over 30 minutes collecting water, CAR's rural figure of 28% is still notably high. Couples with the pervasive lack of on-premises water, CAR's combined challenges place it among the most severely impacted countries in terms of water accessibility ¹⁰⁹. The gender disparity in CAR for water collection journeys exceeding 30 minutes is particularly striking. In rural CAR, for every male primary water collector spending over 30 minutes, there are 8.6 female ones. The child ratio in rural areas is 3.6, highlighting that child girls are significantly more likely than child boys to be involved in collecting water for extended periods ¹¹⁰.

CAR faces an acute water accessibility crisis characterised by a severe lack of on-premises water and an extraordinarily disproportionate burden on women and girls for distant and time-consuming water collection. This issue not only hinders their educational and economic opportunities but also poses significant health and safety risks, positioning CAR among the countries with the most critical need for gender-responsive interventions in WASH projects.

Moreover, Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and SEA/SH constitute fundamental constraints to the access and utilization of climate-resilient WASH services in CAR. The WASH sector is recognized as one of the most SEA/SH-prone humanitarian service areas, with poorly lit, non-segregated, or remotely located water collection points, bathing facilities, and latrines frequently becoming focal points for harassment and assault. In CAR, a significant number of reported sexual violence incidents occur precisely near these critical water collection sites. ¹¹¹These protection risks are further amplified by climate change; as droughts cause water scarcity and floods contaminate existing sources, women and girls are forced to travel longer, often isolated and unmonitored distances to fetch water, which severely heightens their exposure to gender-based violence and sexual assault. Furthermore, in resource-constrained and displacement settings, the delivery of aid itself introduces SEA/SH risks, as personnel or contractors may exploit extreme vulnerabilities and power differentials by leveraging access to essential WASH services in exchange for sexual favours.

Additionally, and as explained in previous sections, women and girls are often responsible for domestic water supply, which frequently requires traveling long distances to remote or poorly lit water points. These routes often pass through areas controlled by armed groups where the risk of abduction, harassment, and sexual assault is high. This threat forces many women to limit their movements, resulting in reduced water consumption and a higher reliance on unsafe, closer water sources. Moreover, the power imbalances inherent in aid delivery and infrastructure construction can create opportunities for exploitation, which, if left unmitigated, deter vulnerable individuals from seeking essential services ¹¹².

¹⁰⁸ Graham, J. P., Hirai, M., & Kim, S-S. (2016). An Analysis of Water Collection Labor among Women and Children in 24 Sub-Saharan African Countries. *PLoS ONE*, 11(6), e0155981

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹ Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action: WASH Chapter*, 2015

¹¹² Oxfam, *Gender and WASH in Fragile Contexts: Learning Brief*, 2022.

3.4 Opportunities and constraints to women's participation in WASH governance

Equally critical to the success and sustainability of WASH initiatives is the meaningful and substantive involvement of women in all stages of WASH design, implementation, and governance. Women, by virtue of their traditional roles, are often the primary users and managers of household water and sanitation facilities. Their daily experiences provide invaluable insights into the practical challenges and specific needs related to water access, hygiene practices, and sanitation facilities. Therefore, their perspectives are not merely beneficial but absolutely crucial to ensuring that WASH services are truly responsive, effective, and culturally appropriate.

However, a significant challenge in many contexts across the Central African Republic (CAR) and similar regions is the pervasive underrepresentation of women in WASH decision-making structures. This includes vital bodies such as water user committees, community planning councils, and local government forums where critical decisions about resource allocation, infrastructure development, and service delivery are made. Even in instances where women are formally included in these structures, their participation is often superficial or symbolic. They may be present in name, but frequently lack genuine influence, adequate support, or the necessary platforms to voice their opinions effectively. This symbolic inclusion often fails to translate into tangible changes in policy or practice.¹¹³

3.5 Gender, Climate Change and community resilience planning

In the Central African Republic (CAR), climate change is a direct and compounding driver of vulnerability, especially for women, girls, and marginalized communities. As floods, droughts, and erratic rainfall increasingly affect rural livelihoods, food production, and water access, community resilience planning has emerged as a crucial adaptation strategy. However, these planning processes have historically been gender-blind, overlooking both the differentiated impacts of climate change and the essential contributions of women in strengthening household and community resilience.

Women in CAR are on the frontline of climate impacts. They are primarily responsible for securing water, producing food, and caring for children, the elderly, and the sick roles that are directly disrupted by climate stressors such as seasonal drought, failed harvests, and degraded ecosystems. These responsibilities provide women with critical environmental knowledge and practical adaptation experience, but also make them more vulnerable to workload increases, food and water scarcity, and gender-based violence during climate-induced displacement and disasters. Yet, women's voices remain largely absent from community resilience decision-making platforms, including local development councils, village water user associations, and early warning or disaster preparedness committees.

¹¹³ Oxfam, *Gender and WASH in Fragile Contexts: Learning Brief*, 2022.

4. Gender Dimensions of Climate Vulnerability and Resilience in WASH

The intersection of climate change, gender inequality, and underdeveloped water, sanitation, and hygiene systems presents severe challenges to sustainable development and human security. Women and girls - particularly those living in rural areas, informal settlements, or displacement settings - bear the brunt of climate-induced WASH vulnerabilities due to the gendered division of labour, discriminatory social norms, and limited decision-making power.

4.1 Differential Impacts of Climate Change on Women and Men

In CAR, main identified climate risks that particularly pose a significant threat to WASH systems are floods and droughts. As highlighted in the World Bank's Country Climate and Development Report¹¹⁴, climate change trends are expected to increase the risk and intensity of both flooding and aridity across the country. This intensification of extreme weather events directly jeopardises WASH infrastructure and services, with increased flooding leading to ground and surface water contamination and the spread of waterborne diseases, and droughts threatening the sustainability of water-related services due to water scarcity. These climatic challenges not only undermine environmental, social and economic stability, but also exacerbate existing vulnerabilities within the population.

Flooding significantly impacts women due to their socially constructed roles and responsibilities. Women and girls are often more physically present at home due to domestic activities, including childcare and household management, which makes them more susceptible to immediate flood risks and potential fatalities, particularly in less developed, patriarchal societies - a system that prevails in CAR - where social dynamics put women at a disadvantage^{115,116}. Floods disproportionately destroy informal jobs predominantly held by women, such as small-scale farming and firewood collection, leading to greater loss of livelihood and income sources for women compared to men. Furthermore, women face increased health vulnerabilities during and after floods, experiencing more health challenges and difficulties in maintaining hygiene due to poor sanitary conditions and limited access to menstrual products and reproductive health services. The psychological toll is also higher on women, who are more likely to suffer post-traumatic-stress disorder (PTSD) and other forms of psychological distress from having their homes flooded, often linked to concerns about family separation¹¹⁷. Post-disaster recovery is also more challenging for women, as their primary role in re-establishing households and caring for children often delays their re-entry into the labour market and prolonged unemployment.

Droughts also present distinct challenges for women. As primary caregivers and providers of household resources, women bear a disproportionate responsibility for securing water and food for their families. When droughts cause these resources to

¹¹⁴ The World Bank Group (2024). *Country Climate and Development Report*. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/e1553b3b-3ce6-4800-8f93-476e7c89d21b/content>

¹¹⁵ Olukoya, O., & Olamide, B. (2025). The differential gendered impacts of the 2022 flood in Nigeria: lessons for disaster policy and planning. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 12(1), 1-14. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s44155-025-00211-7#Sec23>

¹¹⁶ Murillo, L., & Tan, A. (2019). Gender analysis of flood risk reduction: a case study of Jakarta, Indonesia. *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, 271(1), 012026. <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1755-1315/271/1/012026/pdf>

¹¹⁷ University of York. (2021, January 4). *Women more likely than men to suffer psychological distress from having their homes flooded*. News and Events. <https://www.york.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/2021/research/women-psychological-distress-flooding/>

become scarce, women and girls must travel longer distances and expend more effort, often leading to girls being pulled out of school to assist ¹¹⁸. This increased burden can exacerbate food insecurity within female-headed households, as well as SEA/SH and GBV risks. Economically, female-headed households in rural areas face significantly greater income losses due to heat stress compared to male-headed households, widening the existing income gap ¹¹⁹. This is significant given UN evidence that nearly 1 in 2 households are female-headed in CAR ¹²⁰. Furthermore, climate-related impacts like extreme heat can affect maternal and neonatal health, increasing instances of stillbirths and the spread of vector-borne illnesses, especially where healthcare access is limited by disasters¹²¹.

Underlying these differential impacts are pre-existing gender inequalities in CAR, which the climate crisis amplifies. Women often have limited access to resources, services, and employment opportunities, as well as higher risks of SEA/SH and GBV, as above-mentioned in this report. This severely curtails their capacity to adapt to and cope with climate change impacts. The socio-economic stresses exacerbated by climate change, including those from droughts and floods, are also linked to an increase in gender-based violence, including intimate partner violence ¹²².

4.1.2 Gender and Climate-linked water insecurity

According to 'Aqueduct 4.0: Updated Decision-Relevant Global Water Risk Indicators'¹²³, CAR faces challenging hydrological conditions, characterised by a pronounced interannual and seasonal variability in water supply ¹²⁴.

These conditions can directly intensify the socio-economic pressures that drive GBV. Prolonged drought, as highlighted in broader research, exacerbates financial hardship and food insecurity, placing immense stress on households¹²⁵. In such environments, the responsibility for securing resources falls disproportionately on women, and the ensuing economic distress can lead to increased IPV, including physical and sexual abuse¹²⁶. Families may also resort to desperate strategies such as early or forced marriage for daughters, viewing it to alleviate financial burdens. Furthermore, the extreme stress and loss of

¹¹⁸ UN Women. (2025). *How gender inequality and climate change are interconnected*. UN Women.

¹¹⁹ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). (2023, September 15). *Heatwaves and floods affect rural women and men differently, widen income gap*. Newsroom. <https://www.fao.org/newsroom/detail/heatwaves-and-floods-affect-rural-women-and-men-differently-widen-income-gap/en>

¹²⁰ United Nations (2023). 1 In 2 Households Headed By Women In The Central African Republic | United Nations. [online] YouTube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLKkaJaWdzE>.

¹²¹ UN Women. (2025). *How gender inequality and climate change are interconnected*. UN Women.

¹²² *ibid*.

¹²³ Kuzma, S., Bierkens, M. F. P., Lakshman, S., Luo, T., Saccoccia, L., Sutanudjaja, E. H., & Van Beek, R. (2023). *Aqueduct 4.0: Updated decision-relevant global water risk indicators*. Technical Note. Washington, DC: World Resources Institute. Available online at: doi.org/10.46830/writn.23.00061.

¹²⁴ World Resources Institute. (2017). *Aqueduct Water Risk Atlas*. Retrieved from https://www.wri.org/applications/aqueduct/water-risk-atlas/#/?advanced=false&basemap=hydro&geoStore=0103742d088cc8b722ac444ed9163f79&indicator=w_awr_def_tot_cat&lat=8.570157714682582&lng=20.819091796875004&mapMode=analysis&month=1&opacity=0.5&ponderation=DEF&predefined=false&projection=absolute&scenario=business_as_usual&scope=baseline&threshold=6&timeScale=annual&year=baseline&zoom=6

¹²⁵ van Daalen KR, Kallesøe SS, Davey F, Dada S, Jung L, Singh L, Issa R, Emilian CA, Kuhn I, Keygnaert I, Nilsson M. *Extreme events and gender-based violence: a mixed-methods systematic review*. *Lancet Planet Health*. 2022 Jun;6(6):e504-e523. doi: 10.1016/S2542-5196(22)00088-2. PMID: 35709808; PMCID: PMC10073035.

¹²⁶ *ibid*.

control experienced by household members, particularly men who may feel unable to provide, can result in increased aggression within the home.

When floods occur, the established links between such events and GBV may be heightened. Displacement caused by flooding can force women, girls and sexual and gender minorities into crowded and unsafe emergency camps, increasing their potential exposure to harassment and various forms of violence from partners, strangers and even those who provide aid¹²⁷. The disruption to daily life and loss of homes contribute to immense psychological stress, which, as previously mentioned, disproportionately affects women and can escalate IPV¹²⁸. Additionally, damaged infrastructure and loss of privacy in communal settings can create ‘enabling environments’ for perpetrators, making women and girls more vulnerable to physical and sexual assault¹²⁹.

4.2 Differential vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities

Women in CAR often exhibit different, and often lower, adaptive capacities to climate change impacts, due to a combination of deeply entrenched gender inequalities. These disparities stem from unequal access to crucial resources, such as land, finance, and technology, which limits their ability to invest in adaptive measures or recover from shocks. Further, their gendered roles often entail increased workloads related to securing household necessities, which become more arduous during extreme weather events¹³⁰ and leave less time for adaptation to income diversification. Women also face limited participation and decision-making power at both household and community levels, meaning their unique vulnerabilities and adaptive strategies are often overlooked in climate planning¹³¹. Finally, prevailing socio-cultural norms and increased health and safety risks, including gender-based violence, further hinder their ability to respond effectively and recover from climate-induced disasters.

4.2.1 Impact of climate change on people with disabilities

Climate change significantly amplifies existing vulnerabilities for people with disabilities, leading to a disproportionate impact on their lives, particularly in already vulnerable regions, such as CAR. Pre-existing barriers to mobility, access to information and essential services are exacerbated by climate-related events¹³². For example, individuals with limited mobility with reliance on assistive devices face a heightened risk of injury and death during extreme weather events¹³³. The climate crisis also disrupts healthcare and social services due to infrastructure damage and resource limitation, making it difficult for people with disabilities to access medications and temporary health facilities. This disruption, along with displacement and loss of livelihood, can lead to severe mental health challenges and deepened social isolation.

¹²⁷ van Daalen KR, Kallesøe SS, Davey F, Dada S, Jung L, Singh L, Issa R, Emilian CA, Kuhn I, Keygnaert I, Nilsson M. *Extreme events and gender-based violence: a mixed-methods systematic review*. Lancet Planet Health. 2022 Jun;6(6):e504-e523. doi: 10.1016/S2542-5196(22)00088-2. PMID: 35709808; PMCID: PMC10073035.

¹²⁸ *ibid.*

¹²⁹ *ibid.*

¹³⁰ Carr, R., Kotz, M., Pichler, PP. et al. Climate change to exacerbate the burden of water collection on women’s welfare globally. Nat. Clim. Chang. 14, 700–706 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-024-02037-8>

¹³¹ <https://data.unwomen.org/country/central-african-republic>

¹³² Nogning Armelle. (n.d.). *The Experience of Persons with Disabilities and Climate Change in Sub-Saharan Africa*. [online] Available at: https://www.bezev.de/media/1_the_experience_of_persons_with_disabilities_and_climate_change_in_sub-saharan-africa_nogning_armelle_aimerique.pdf.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

Furthermore, the impact extends to fundamental aspects of daily life. Climate disruptions to agriculture severely affect food security, leading to higher rates of malnutrition among people with disabilities ¹³⁴. Extreme weather events limit access to safe water, forcing many, especially those with mobility impairments, to rely on unsafe sources for drinking and hygiene ¹³⁵. Education is also severely disrupted: children with disabilities are more likely to be out of school and without access to safe spaces during climate emergencies ¹³⁶. Economically, adverse weather conditions reduce work capacity and crop yields, deepening financial instability for people with disabilities who often face additional barriers to engaging in climate-smart livelihoods or accessing social protection systems. Housing is another critical area, with damaged homes and inadequate access to resilient and accessible housing severely compounding living standards.

Turning to the experiences of women and girls living with disabilities, they experience a particularly disadvantaged position, facing intersecting forms of discrimination based on both gender and disability. Encountering harassment and violence while accessing public sanitation facilities and clean water is not uncommon ¹³⁷. Climate change intensifies these risks and access to maternal health services becomes even more challenging for women with disabilities, despite high temperatures and poor air quality having severe impacts on perinatal and maternal health ¹³⁸.

Traditional gender roles often burden women with disabilities with household chores, childcare and the responsibilities of finding food and water, regardless of their impairments ¹³⁹. The increased distances required to procure water due to climate change become “dreadful” journeys for them ¹⁴⁰. Cultural and attitudinal barriers frequently prevent women with disabilities from marrying, inheriting land, or owning property, leaving them without the security and support that marriage or land ownership might offer. This can force them into begging or leave them more vulnerable to displacement and poverty after climate-related disasters¹⁴¹. During evacuation and humanitarian responses, women with disabilities are among the most vulnerable to discrimination and have less access to essential services, including accessible toilets, menstrual hygiene products and protection from gender-based violence and sexual abuse¹⁴².

4.3 Gendered impacts of climate change on WASH

Given the existing burden of water collection on women and girls, the escalating impacts of climate change are poised to exacerbate this challenge significantly. Climate change is a critical driver of increasing water scarcity across the globe, a phenomenon that directly intensifies the gendered task of water collection.

¹³⁴ Bond and International Disability and Development Consortium. (2025). *UNEQUAL CLIMATE JUSTICE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES*. [online] Available at: https://www.bond.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/2508_BOND-Disability_final_web.pdf.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ International Disability Alliance. (2023). *The Impact of Climate Change on Indigenous Peoples with Disabilities in Baringo County, Kenya*. [online] Available at: https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/sites/default/files/documents/ida_baringoreport_final.pdf.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Bond and International Disability and Development Consortium. (2025). *UNEQUAL CLIMATE JUSTICE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES*. [online] Available at: https://www.bond.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/2508_BOND-Disability_final_web.pdf.

For rural households lacking on-premises water access, where women are predominantly responsible for water collection, the consequences of climate change are particularly severe. Rising global temperatures and altered precipitation patterns directly translate into longer and more arduous daily journeys to secure water. Research analysing the effect of climate conditions on self-reported water collection times across 347 subnational regions from 1990 to 2019 reveals a concerning trend: historically, a 1°C increase in temperature has been associated with an additional 4 minutes in daily water collection times¹⁴³. Similarly, diminished rainfall has historically extended water collection efforts, with the most significant impacts observed in regions already experiencing low precipitation or where fewer women were employed, indicating a heightened vulnerability in these contexts¹⁴⁴.

Projections indicate a grim future under high-emissions scenarios. By 2050, the amount of time women without household water access spend daily on water collection could increase by an alarming 30% globally¹⁴⁵. This intensification of the water collection burden underscores a profound gendered dimension of climate impacts. As climate change continues to intensify water scarcity, it will disproportionately affect women and girls, undermining their well-being, perpetuating time poverty, and further entrenching existing inequalities.

Beyond the direct burden on water collection, climate change also profoundly impacts sanitation and hygiene services in various direct and indirect ways. Directly, extreme weather events, which are increasing in intensity and frequency, pose significant threats. For instance, decreased precipitation and droughts lead to a reduction in raw water availability for drinking, diminished river flow, and a higher concentration of pollutants in remaining water, making hygiene practices challenging. Conversely, increases in precipitation and severe weather, resulting in flooding, can pollute and inundate wells, make water sources inaccessible, flood latrines, damage infrastructure, and cause landslides, all of which compromise sanitation and hygiene behaviours and lead to waterborne diseases. Similarly, rising temperatures and heatwaves can damage infrastructure and increase pathogens in water, elevating the risk of disease. Long-term direct impacts include sea-level rise, causing flooding and saline intrusion into freshwater aquifers, which reduces drinking water availability and significantly impacts quality. These long-term changes also lead to displacement of populations whose sanitation needs must then be met in new, often overwhelmed locations^{146,147}. Indirectly, climate change disrupts livelihoods, such as smallholder farming and fishing, impacting communities' financial capacity to invest in improved sanitation or afford existing services¹⁴⁸. The interplay of climate impacts with pre-existing issues like poor water supply and environmental degradation makes it challenging to pinpoint climate change as the sole cause, but it acts as a significant risk multiplier, exacerbating existing inequalities in access to water and sanitation¹⁴⁹.

¹⁴³ Carr, R., Kotz, M., Pichler, PP. et al. Climate change to exacerbate the burden of water collection on women's welfare globally. *Nat. Clim. Chang.* 14, 700–706 (2024). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41558-024-02037-8>

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Kohlitz, J. (2021). *How does climate change affect sanitation?* [online] YouTube. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=onfG-jnG6VI>.

¹⁴⁷ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe & World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe. (2022). *Climate change threatens access to water and sanitation, warns UNECE & WHO/Europe, urging reinforced measures under Protocol to boost resilience*. United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. Retrieved from <https://unece.org/climate-change/press/climate-change-threatens-access-water-and-sanitation-warn-unece-who-europe>

¹⁴⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Arrojo Agudo, P. (2021). *The impacts of climate change on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation of groups and populations in situations of vulnerability (Special Thematic Report 2)*. United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/climate-change-2-friendlyversion.pdf>.

These climate-induced challenges to sanitation disproportionately affect women and girls. Globally, women and girls typically bear the primary responsibility for collecting household water and caring for sick family members^{150,151} - and this role is reflected starkly in CAR, as above-mentioned when looking at the time burden faced by women in the WASH sector. When climate change reduces water availability due to droughts or contaminates sources through flooding and pollution, they are forced to travel longer distances, often in unsafe conditions, to find water, exposing them to increased risks of violence and sexual assault¹⁵². This extended burden can also detract from girls' opportunities to attend school¹⁵³ - reinforcing the already existing gender disparity in education facing CAR¹⁵⁴.

Further, the destruction of sanitation infrastructure or forced migration due to extreme weather events critically undermines the ability of women and girls to manage their menstrual hygiene safely, privately, and with dignity¹⁵⁵. Contaminated water sources, exacerbated by flooding and increased pathogens from heatwaves, lead to higher rates of waterborne diseases, placing an additional caregiving burden on women who tend to the sick¹⁵⁶. Climate impacts on water quality, such as salinisation from sea-level rise, can also have adverse health outcomes, including increased rates of preterm births and maternal and perinatal deaths¹⁵⁷. The persistent marginalisation of women in decision-making processes, particularly within water governance and climate policy, further limits the effectiveness of adaptation measures in addressing their specific water and sanitation needs and disproportionate impacts.

4.4 Barriers to information and services

Women and girls navigate a complex and often perilous environment shaped by overlapping humanitarian, climate, and gender-related crises in the Central African Republic. These multiple forms of vulnerability interact to create deeply entrenched barriers to accessing life-saving information, protective services, and climate adaptation resources. As the frequency and intensity of climate-induced disasters—particularly flooding, drought, and displacement—increase, the urgency to confront these barriers grows. However, despite global commitments to gender equality and inclusive climate action, structural gaps in access to information and services persist and are often overlooked in policy design and emergency planning.

One of the most critical—and least addressed—barriers is the gendered asymmetry in climate information access. In rural and remote regions of CAR, early warning systems for floods, storms, or crop failure are rarely designed with women's communication needs in mind. Formal alerts often rely on channels such as community chiefs, religious leaders, or radio broadcasts—platforms typically dominated by men and inaccessible to many women, particularly those who are illiterate, do

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Haves, E. (2021). *Urban water and sanitation in developing countries: impact of climate change*. House of Lords Library. Retrieved from <https://lordslibrary.parliament.uk/urban-water-and-sanitation-in-developing-countries-impact-of-climate-change/>.

¹⁵² Arrojo Agudo, P. (2021). *The impacts of climate change on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation of groups and populations in situations of vulnerability (Special Thematic Report 2)*. United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. Retrieved from <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/climate-change-2-friendlyversion.pdf>.

¹⁵³ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ <https://data.unwomen.org/country/central-african-republic>

¹⁵⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe & World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe. (2022). *Climate change threatens access to water and sanitation, warn UNECE & WHO/Europe, urging reinforced measures under Protocol to boost resilience*. United Nations Economic Commission for Europe. Retrieved from <https://unece.org/climate-change/press/climate-change-threatens-access-water-and-sanitation-warn-unece-who/europe>

¹⁵⁷ Ha, S. (2022). *The changing climate and pregnancy health*. *Current Environmental Health Reports*, 9(2), 153–159. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40572-022-00345-9>

not speak French or Sango fluently, or live in isolated areas without reliable energy or mobile coverage. These women may remain unaware of impending climate risks or available humanitarian services until it is too late to respond effectively.

Moreover, language, literacy, and social status create additional filters. Many women, especially older ones or those from Indigenous and ethnic minority groups (e.g., the Ba'Aka), are excluded from male-led community meetings where crucial climate-related updates or risk advisories are shared.¹⁵⁸ Women's limited access to mobile phones, radios, or other technologies further marginalizes them in early warning and decision-making systems. In contexts where ownership of technology is mediated by men—such as in households where only the male head of family has a radio or mobile device—information access is gender-gated.¹⁵⁹

These asymmetries also extend to accessing services after climate shocks occur. Despite being disproportionately affected by climate-related events, women face multiple obstacles to receiving humanitarian relief, healthcare, GBV services, and adaptation support. A major barrier is the lack of documentation, which is often needed to access aid. Displaced women—particularly widows, unmarried mothers, or adolescent girls—frequently lack identity cards, land titles, or proof of household affiliation, especially if they have fled conflict or flooding on short notice. Without formal documentation, they may be excluded from needs assessments, cash transfers, or land recovery schemes following disasters.

Even when services are available, cultural norms and fears of stigma prevent women and girls from seeking them. This is especially true for survivors of GBV in the context of climate displacement. Fear of reprisal from family or community, combined with a lack of female personnel and confidentiality in service provision, can lead women to remain silent, further entrenching cycles of vulnerability and marginalization. For adolescent girls and women with disabilities, these challenges are multiplied by isolation, immobility, and the near-total absence of targeted outreach.

These compounded barriers mean that women and girls are less likely to access early recovery assistance, health care, or legal redress, and are thus more exposed to cascading risks. In CAR's humanitarian response, GBV and WASH services are often provided in parallel but not in coordination, making it difficult for affected women to navigate fragmented service landscapes. Reports from the WASH and Protection Clusters in CAR indicate that many community-based referral systems are not functional, particularly outside of capital cities, and that many female community members are unaware of even the most basic services available to them during and after climate-related crises.¹⁶⁰

5. Strategic Context

5.1 Policy Frameworks on Gender and Climate

The Central African Republic has made formal commitments to integrating gender into national policy and climate planning, but the degree of implementation remains limited. The principal national framework guiding gender equality is the *Politique Nationale Genre* (2017–2021), which articulates the government's intent to mainstream gender across all policy domains, including those related to environmental sustainability, disaster risk reduction, and climate adaptation. Although this policy has technically lapsed, it remains the primary reference for national gender actions and continues to inform sectoral strategies (République Centrafricaine, 2017).

¹⁵⁸ CARE International, *Women and Girls in Crisis: Climate and Conflict in the Central African Republic*, Geneva: CARE, 2022.

¹⁵⁹ FAO, *Gender and Access to Information and Communication Technologies in Rural Africa*, Rome: FAO, 2021.

¹⁶⁰ UN Women, *THE CLIMATE-CARE NEXUS: ADDRESSING THE LINKAGES BETWEEN CLIMATE CHANGE AND WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' UNPAID CARE, DOMESTIC AND COMMUNAL WORK*, 2023. (pages 18-22)

CAR is also a signatory to several international frameworks that affirm the country's commitment to gender-responsive climate action. These include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). However, these commitments are yet to be comprehensively translated into operational national plans and budgets.

In its 2021 Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), CAR acknowledges women and girls as among the most vulnerable populations to climate change impacts—particularly in the sectors of water, health, and agriculture. The NDC recognizes the importance of addressing these vulnerabilities through inclusive policy measures. However, the document falls short of providing concrete gender-responsive targets, budget allocations, or mechanisms for monitoring gender impacts. It also lacks sex-disaggregated data, a crucial element for evidence-based policy planning and evaluation (République Centrafricaine, 2021).

The development of a National Adaptation Plan (NAP) presents a timely opportunity to strengthen gender integration into national climate governance¹⁶¹. The GCF Readiness Programme supports the design of CAR's NAP¹⁶², with guidance to ensure participatory planning, institutional coordination, and the mainstreaming of social inclusion measures. If gender dimensions are adequately addressed, the NAP could become the first climate policy instrument in CAR to institutionalize gender-responsive planning processes. This includes conducting gender-disaggregated vulnerability assessments, engaging women's organizations in decision-making processes, and developing gender-specific indicators to measure resilience outcomes (GCF, 2023).

Despite these policy intentions and opportunities, the current policy environment is fragmented. Many climate-related strategies reference gender only in generic terms, without the backing of financial resources, institutional mandates, or enforcement mechanisms. This limits the effectiveness of national efforts and underscores the need for better integration between gender, climate, and sectoral strategies such as those for WASH, health, and rural development.

5.2 Gender in National Adaptation Policies (NAP, NDC) and WASH Strategies

There has been a rising, but inconsistent, push to include gender in WASH programs in the Central African Republic. This has mostly been led by humanitarian organizations, sectoral ministries, and new climate policy frameworks. The state is still weak, and women and girls are quite vulnerable in both urban and rural regions, especially when they are displaced. This has led to multi-actor solutions to make sure that gender issues are considered in WASH planning, service delivery, and risk reduction.

UNICEF is a key player in making sure that CAR's WASH programs are gender sensitive. They do this by concentrating on menstrual hygiene management (MHM), reaching out to the community, and setting up separate bathrooms for boys and girls in schools and camps. Giving out dignity kits and teaching women about hygiene guided by professional female facilitators is another way to make this stronger. The work UNICEF does is part of its Country Programme for 2023–2027.

The Ministry of Gender, Child Protection, and Humanitarian Action helps with strategic coordination by pushing for women's participation in WASH governance structures and making sure that gender-based violence risk reduction is built into WASH

¹⁶¹ <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/CAR-NAP-FR-web.pdf>

¹⁶² https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cp2023_08a01.pdf

protocols, especially in camps for internally displaced people (IDPs). But it frequently has trouble carrying out its plans since it doesn't have enough resources and the institutions don't work together well.

The Ministry of Water, Forests, Hunting, and Fishing has made some headway in making rural water access projects more gender-sensitive, with help from outside groups. More and more, women have been asked where to put water points and latrines to make them safer and make their lives easier.

The WASH Cluster, which is co-led by UNICEF and the Ministry of Energy Development and Hydraulic Resources, has included gender risk mitigation to all of its humanitarian WASH recommendations at the coordination level. This involves using the IASC GBV Guidelines, naming gender focal points in local WASH committees, and regularly collecting data that is broken down by sex and age.

UNFPA has played a key role in connecting reproductive health with gender and WASH by adding MHM supplies to emergency health kits and making sure that maternity facilities have safe, dignified access to water and sanitation.

NGOs like Action Contre la Faim (ACF), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), and Oxfam have done localized work that encourages women to chair WASH committees, teaches people how to fix pumps, and does needs assessments that take gender into account. These programs not only help women get better WASH results, but they also provide them more power and protection.

The CAR Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), which is run by OCHA, is in charge of coordinating gender integration across sectors via Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessments (MSNAs) and cooperative planning among the WASH, GBV, and Protection Clusters.

The 2021 Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) recognizes that women are more likely to be affected by climate change, but it doesn't include any gender-specific goals or indicators in the WASH sector. Still, it makes it possible to align with current national gender and WASH frameworks. The National Adaptation Plan (NAP) is still being worked on, but the Green Climate Fund is helping with the design phase. This is a great time to make sure that gender-sensitive indicators, gender-responsive planning units, and gender-disaggregated vulnerability assessments are all part of water and sanitation adaptation measures

Table 5: Gender adaptation strategies in WASH in project related policies and guidelines.

Organization / Actor	Gender Adaptation Strategies in WASH	References
Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) – CAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General reference to women as part of vulnerable groups affected by climate impacts. - No specific gender-disaggregated data or targets, but opportunity for future integration. - Alignment recommended with national gender policies and WASH strategies for coherence. 	République Centrafricaine. Contribution Déterminée au niveau National (2021).

National Adaptation Plan (NAP) – CAR (in development)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NAP process underway with Readiness support; gender integration not yet formalized. - Opportunity to include gender-disaggregated vulnerability assessments in water and sanitation. - Inclusion of gender-responsive planning units and indicators strongly recommended. 	Green Climate Fund Readiness Project Profile – CAR NAP; UNFCCC NAP Central Database (2024).
Ministry of Gender, Child Protection and Humanitarian Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of gender equity priorities in coordination with WASH actors. - Oversight of GBV-WASH coordination protocols in IDP camps. - Promotion of women’s participation in WASH decision-making structures through gender units in local governance. 	Politique Nationale Genre (2017–2021); GIZ Gender Brief CAR (2023)
Ministry of Water, Forests, Hunting and Fishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incorporation of gender needs into rural water access planning. - Community water point construction with women’s input on location and safety features. - Joint technical training programs for women on pump maintenance and WASH service delivery. 	Stratégie sectorielle eau et assainissement (draft); WASH Cluster Reports (2023)
WASH Cluster CAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adoption of IASC GBV Guidelines in WASH programming (latrine lighting, locks, location). - Collection of sex- and age-disaggregated data on WASH access and needs. - Gender focal points in local WASH committees. - Coordination of gender risk mitigation in latrine and bathing site placement in displacement settings. 	WASH Cluster Strategy (2022–2024); IASC Guidelines on GBV in WASH (2015)
UNICEF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distribution of dignity kits (menstrual pads, soap, underwear) to adolescent girls and women in humanitarian contexts. - Deployment of gender-segregated latrines in schools and IDP camps. - Integration of MHM (Menstrual Hygiene Management) education into school hygiene programs. - Community-based WASH promotion through trained female hygiene educators. 	UNICEF CAR Humanitarian Situation Reports (2022–2024); UNICEF WASH Country Programme 2023–2027; UNICEF (2021)

UNFPA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusion of menstrual hygiene products in Minimum Initial Service Packages (MISP). - Support for dignity-preserving WASH access in maternity and health units. - Collaboration with WASH actors for gender-sensitive distribution of hygiene kits in conflict zones. 	UNFPA CAR Humanitarian Reports (2022–2023); UNFPA (2021)
Action Contre la Faim (ACF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women-led WASH awareness campaigns. - Engagement of women in infrastructure maintenance, including pumps and community toilets. - Participatory gender mapping in WASH needs assessments. 	ACF Reports on CAR (2021–2023)
Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender-segregated WASH facilities in IDP camps. - Design of WASH programs integrating protection indicators (safe access, SEA/SH prevention). 	NRC (2023); OCHA CAR Humanitarian Response Plan (2023)
Oxfam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women's leadership in water user associations. - Training on gender, water governance and protection risks. - Community-based conflict resolution on WASH resource use. 	Oxfam WASH and Gender Briefs (2022)
CAR Humanitarian Country Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender-sensitive indicators in multi-sectoral needs assessments (MSNA). - Inter-cluster collaboration on WASH, GBV, and Protection. - Support for integrated WASH-protection planning. 	OCHA HCT CAR Strategy (2023); HNO/HRP CAR (2023–2024)
National Adaptation Plan (NAP) – CAR (in development)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NAP process underway with Readiness support; gender integration not yet formalized. - Opportunity to include gender-disaggregated vulnerability assessments in water and sanitation. - Inclusion of gender-responsive planning units and indicators strongly recommended. 	Green Climate Fund Readiness Project Profile – CAR NAP; UNFCCC NAP Central Database (2024).

6. Gender Action Plan

The Gender Action Plan (GAP) is designed as a direct response to the structural and situational inequalities identified in the National and Project Area assessments. Specifically, the severe time poverty and safety risks documented during female consultations—where women bear the primary burden of off-site water collection—are addressed through the strategic placement of climate-resilient water systems near households and the installation of solar-lighted, gender-segregated facilities. Furthermore, the identified exclusion of women from WASH governance is countered by mandatory 35% to 50%

female representation targets in local committees and their active leadership in co-designing community resilience plans. By aligning these specific socio-economic barriers with targeted technical and institutional actions, the GAP ensures that climate adaptation outcomes are both equitable and transformative for the most vulnerable populations in CAR.

Impact Statement

The project's long-term gender transformative impact is to enhance WASH-related equity and safety for girls in climate-vulnerable communities. By integrating climate-resilient, gender-responsive WASH facilities and hygiene education in schools, the project will directly address critical barriers (including the time burden of water collection, inadequate menstrual hygiene management (MHM), and the pervasive risk of gender-based violence) that affect women and girls' safety, security, well-being, and empowerment, and force girls out of school. This project will foster safer, more inclusive living and learning environments, leading to improved gender equality, and contributing to a generational shift in women and girls' empowerment, health, and community leadership.

Outcome-Level Framework

The Gender Action Plan can be divided into four outcome-level categories: Participation and Agency, Equitable Access, Safety, and Empowerment. The plan to achieve these outcomes is detailed below.

Outcome 1: Enhanced Participation and Agency of Women in Climate-Resilient WASH and DRR Governance

This outcome focuses on ensuring women are not just consulted but are active participants and decision-makers in planning and managing climate-resilient WASH and DRR solutions.

- **Influencing National Policy:** Women and female experts will be actively involved in the revision of key national WASH and DRR policies to ensure their needs and strategic priorities are reflected. (from Activity 1.1.1)
- **Participatory Planning and Design:** The project will promote female representation in water user associations, local sanitation committees, and CR-WASH, WRM and DRR planning meetings (typically 50% or more), while keeping membership and participation voluntary. Women will be engaged to co-design community-led resilience plans/interventions, ensuring their local and traditional knowledge on water management is integrated into adaptation solutions. (from Activities 1.2.1, 2.1.2, 2.1.4, 2.3.1.1, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.3)
- **Monitoring and Feedback:** Women and girls will participate in biannual sustainability and resilience checks through gender-specific focus group discussions, providing direct feedback on the safety, functionality and inclusivity of CR-WASH infrastructure and services. (from Activity 1.2.2.2)
- **Knowledge Sharing:** A dedicated Community of Practice will serve as a platform to elevate the voices of women, gather and disseminate their specific experience and feedback, allowing them to share their needs and successful adaptation strategies with a wider audience. (from Activity 1.2.2.4)

Outcome 2: Improved and Equitable Access for Women and Girls to Climate-Resilient WASH Services and Information

This outcome focuses on ensuring that the infrastructure, services, and information provided by the project are physically, socially, and culturally accessible to women and girls.

- **Gender-Responsive Infrastructure:** All new and rehabilitated sanitation facilities in schools and healthcare centres will be gender-separated and equipped with features to support Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM), such as private shower blocks and safe disposal mechanisms. This directly addresses a key barrier to females' hygiene, school attendance, privacy, and well-being.
- **Community-Led Sanitation (CLTS) and Awareness:** Using Social and Behaviour Change (SBC) and Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) approaches, it will work with communities and girls to generate demand, ensure safe access, and address social norms and cultural taboos through a community-wide, community-led approach, thereby enhancing girls' agency over their own health and education. (from Activity 2.1.2)
- **Access to Early Warning Information:** The project will co-design gender-responsive communication strategies, messages, and materials with women's groups to ensure that early warning messages for floods and droughts are relevant, timely, and delivered through channels accessible to women and girls. (from Activity 1.2.3)

Outcome 3: Increased Safety and Reduced Risk of GBV for Women and Girls in Climate-Affected WASH Contexts

This outcome focuses on mitigating the risks of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Sexual Exploitation, and Harassment (SEA/SH) that are often exacerbated in insecure WASH environments and during climate-related disasters.

- **Safe Infrastructure Design:** Water systems will be located as close to houses as possible. Defecation in open areas around communities will be eradicated through the CLTS approach, making sanitation accessible and safe. WASH facilities in schools and healthcare centres will be strategically designed and located to enhance safety. Features will include solar lighting, internal locks, and secure access paths, reducing the risk of harassment and assault. (from Activity 2.1.3.3 & 2.1.3.4)
- **GBV Risk Mitigation in Disaster Planning:** Disaster preparedness plans and simulation exercises will explicitly integrate measures to mitigate GBV risks. This includes establishing protocols for safe evacuation routes and secure shelters, and mapping referral pathways for GBV survivors in disaster contexts. (from Activity 1.2.3)

Outcome 4: Strengthened Capacity and Empowerment of Women and Girls to Lead Climate Adaptation

This outcome focuses on building the skills, knowledge, and confidence of women and girls, and on shifting social norms to support their leadership in climate action.

- **Targeted Capacity Building:** The project will ensure that women are provided with equal opportunities and access to in WASH and climate adaptation trainings and support. It will also identify and address the specific social and logistical barriers that prevent women from participating in such training and monitor women participation. (from Activities 1.3.1, 2.1.4, 2.3.1, and 2.3.2)
- **Promoting Women's Leadership:** The project will promote women in leadership or decision-making roles and their transition from participants to leaders. (from Activity 1.3.1)
- **Engaging Men and Boys:** Training programs will include modules on men's positive engagement in gender equality and climate action. This transformative approach aims to address harmful gender norms that limit women's empowerment and community resilience. (from Activity 2.3.1.1)

Activity-Level Framework

This project's Gender Action Plan is tailored to all activities where gender-related risks were identified, and the activity-level breakdown of risk mitigation measures is detailed in the table below. Note that under the indicators, targets, and timeline column, all indicator baselines are 0 unless otherwise specified.

Project Activity	Potential Risks	Gender/SEA/SH-specific mitigation actions/measures	Indicators, Targets and Timeline	Responsible	Budget
Project Management and Governance		PMU includes Gender, IPP and Social Inclusion Officer to implement and monitor GAP and coordinate gender mainstreaming across project activities. The specialist will also act as the SEA/SH prevention focal point, and will be hired to design the project's Code of Conduct, oversee the GRM, and be responsible for SEA/SH awareness raising across.	Target: 1 Gender, IPP, and Social Inclusion Officer hired as part of the PMU with demonstrable experience in gender and social inclusion.	Lead: PMU and Gender, IPP, and Social Inclusion Officer. Collaboration of all project entities.	Included in PMU
SEA/SH prevention and mitigation across components	SEA/SH specific risks are detailed in the project's ESS assessments and ESMP and include: Exploitation by Personnel and Contractors Harassment of Female Workers WASH Infrastructure-Related Exacerbation of SEA/SH risks in Displacement Settings	The UN SEA Code of Conduct (applies for personnel of all UN entities and all implementing partners/ sub-contractors) is socialized with all project related stakeholders and implemented across activities. SEA/SH-specific trainings for internal team and project affiliated staff will be developed, including the SEA Code of Conduct, SEA/SH prevention and attention protocols, and project's GRM. All project-related procurement mechanisms will include a SEA/SH zero-tolerance clause in accordance with UNICEF's	A) 1 UN SEA code of conduct for the project staff, implementing partners, and sub-contractors and beneficiaries socialized, and implemented across activities. b) 1 annual SEA/SH specific training for project staff c) 100% of project procurement instruments integrate zero-tolerance SEA/SH clauses.	Gender, IPP, and Social Inclusion Officer	Included in PMU

		<p>policy.</p> <p>A GRM is in place and socialized with all project relevant stakeholders, including specific channels for SEA/SH attention.</p> <p>At the sub-project level, SEA/SH risks will be systematically assessed and managed through dedicated safeguarding procedures aligned with UNICEF policies. Relevant prevention and response measures will be applied in accordance with UNICEF safeguarding procedures..</p>	<p>d) 1 GRM in place and socialized</p> <p>e) 100% of sub-projects undergo SEA/SH risk screening and apply relevant prevention and response measures in accordance with UNICEF safeguarding procedures.</p>		
<p>1.1.1 Update/develop key national policies, strategies, technical standards and regulations to better integrate climate adaptation, WASH, WRM, and DRR</p>	<p>Policies may remain gender-blind, failing to address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of women and girls. Women's groups may be excluded from consultation processes, leading to policies that do not reflect their lived realities.</p>	<p>Ensure policies explicitly address menstrual hygiene management (MHM), gender-equitable access to water, and safety for women/girls, with consultations involving women's and girls' groups.</p> <p>Ensure female groups / representatives and consultants are actively involved in the revision processes, and that their inputs are reflected in the final drafts of the new WASH Norms and Guidelines, the CLTS Practical Guide, and WASH in healthcare facilities sector strategies.</p>	<p>3 policies revised with MHM and gender-equitable provisions by Year 3.</p>	<p>UNICEF (along with respective governmental institutions and other stakeholders)</p>	<p>USD 60000of dedicated budget, integrated to Activity 1.1.1.</p>
<p>1.2.2.2 Carrying out biannual resilience and sustainability checks for the WASH sector</p>	<p>Data collection may not be sex-disaggregated, masking critical issues faced by women regarding access, safety, and functionality. Checks may focus on technical</p>	<p>Ensure data collection for the biannual checks includes sex-disaggregated data on service usage and women satisfaction.</p>	<p>A) 3 sustainability checks with gender-specific indicators, findings, and</p>	<p>Ministry of Energy Development and Hydraulic Resources,</p>	<p>USD 60000of dedicated budget, integrated to</p>

	aspects and overlook social risks like GBV at water points.	Conduct gender-specific focus group discussions with women and girls to gather their unique perspectives on the resilience and safety of WASH infrastructure.	recommendations by project end. b) Improved safety of WASH infrastructure as confirmed by a summary report of women's perceptions during focus group discussions.	UNICEF, Consultants	Activity 1.2.2.
1.2.2.4 Generating, sharing, and using knowledge for sector-wide and intersectoral learning and improved adaptation effectiveness	Knowledge-sharing platforms may be dominated by male voices, and case studies may overlook the contributions and innovations of women in climate-resilient WASH.	Seek out and promote case studies, best practices and lessons learned from women-led initiatives and about women and girls specific needs and feedback on climate-resilient WASH. Ensure that the Community of Practice and its website serve as a platform for women to share their experiences and contribute to collective learning	A) At least 3 case studies published by project end addressing gender, women initiatives, needs, and voices. B) Increased awareness of women's traditional water management expertise, as confirmed by Community of Practice Reports	Ministry of Energy Development and Hydraulic Resources, Ministry of Environment and national Climate Coordination Committee, NGOs and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), UNICEF	USD 60000of dedicated budget, integrated to Activity 1.2.2.
1.2.1 Support the government to strengthen climate-resilient DRR and water planning through disaster preparedness plans and integrated WRM plans	Risk assessments may fail to identify the differentiated impacts of climate change on women and girls. Planning committees may be male dominated, resulting in plans that do not address women's needs or heightened GBV risks during disasters.	Facilitate gender-sensitive climate risk assessments and vulnerability mapping at national and regional levels to ensure plans adequately address the specific issues of and differentiated impacts on women/girls and other vulnerable groups. (e.g., safe evacuation routes, protection measures, back-up solutions for fetching water and defecation), Ensure the assessment and planning processes for	Gender-sensitive DRR and WRM plans developed for the three prefectures by end of Year 4.	UNICEF, IPs	USD 60000of dedicated budget, integrated to Activity 1.2.1.

		WRM, DRR, and WASH planning includes women and women's organizations.			
1.2.3. Improve hydrological data systems and impact scenarios for flood and drought risks to inform early warning systems and adaptive planning in the three prefectures of Ouham, Bamingui-Bangoran, and Vakaga	Early warning messages may not reach women due to inaccessible communication channels. Disaster plans may not account for women's limited mobility due to caregiving roles or the increased risk of SEA/SH in evacuation shelters.	Co-design a gender-responsive communication strategy and materials with women representatives to ensure messages are relevant to women's needs and vulnerabilities. Ensure EW and early action and disaster simulation exercises explicitly include women and measures to mitigate the specific risks they face in disaster and emergency contexts.	Awareness raising, information campaign, contingency planning, and preparedness measures are designed and rolled out with specific considerations for females by project end.	General directorates of Meteorology, Civil Protection, Humanitarian Action, Environment, Water Resources, and Health, UNICEF, Women's Associations	USD 60000of dedicated budget, integrated to Activity 1.2.3.
1.3.1 Strengthen national institutional capacities on climate across the WASH and adjacent sectors	Training opportunities may favour male staff, reinforcing gender imbalances in technical and decision-making roles (there are few women in the WASH sector in CAR). Women who are trained may not be given opportunities for leadership or influence on decision-making.	Develop and deliver training modules ensuring appropriate female participation at the adequate hierarchical level. Promote equal opportunities for women's participation and leadership in training.	Baseline: Existing sector staffing (approx. <10%) Target: Women participation in all trainings is promoted, aiming for 20% or more.	UNICEF, Ministry of Energy and Hydraulic Resource, other participating institutions	USD 20,000 of dedicated budget, integrated to Activity 1.3.1.
2.1.2 Promote CR-WASH and sanitation through climate-adapted community-led total sanitation (CLTS) and nationwide awareness-raising	Campaigns may not address women's and girls' specific needs (e.g., MHM). CLTS processes may be dominated by men, leading to sanitation solutions that are unsafe or impractical for women and girls.	Design campaigns addressing women's and girls' needs (e.g., safe and accessible water supplies, hygiene) and involve women/girls in community-led total sanitation (CLTS) activities.	70,000 women/girls reached by CLTS interventions by project end.	Ministry of Health, Ministry of Women Empowerment , NGOs/CSOs, UNICEF	USD 30,000 of dedicated budget, integrated to Output 2.1 budget, includes CLTS demand-creation.

2.1.3. Constructing, rehabilitating, and adapting climate-resilient sanitation in 100 climate-affected primary schools and 100 healthcare facilities	<p>Construction can increase SEA/SH risks. Facilities may lack critical features for women and girls (e.g., privacy, lighting, MHM disposal). Social norms may prevent girls from participating in hygiene clubs.</p>	<p>Build gender-separated facilities with MHM-specific features (e.g., shower blocks, safe access) in schools and health centres, prioritizing women's and girls' safety.</p>	<p>a) 100% of target schools equipped WASH infrastructure with MHM-specific features by project end.</p> <p>B) 100% water systems built or rehabilitated taking females' specific needs into consideration</p>	<p>UNICEF, Awarded Private Companies, Ministry of Energy and Hydraulic Resource, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Local NGOs, UNICEF</p>	<p>USD 30,000 of dedicated budget, integrated to Output 2.1.</p>
2.1.4 Develop capacities of local governments, communities, water operators, and the private sector to design, operate, maintain, and monitor CR-WASH services	<p>Social norms, time, poverty, and lack of confidence may prevent women from participating in capacity-building activities, reinforcing their exclusion from technical and management roles.</p>	<p>Ensure gender-balanced participation in trainings</p> <p>Maintain adequate female representation in local WASH committees and school clubs</p> <p>Include MHM education to empower girls in facility utilization and maintenance.</p>	<p>A) Women participation in all local sanitation committees, water user associations, and school clubs is promoted, with the aim to achieve 35% (50% in school clubs) representation or more.</p> <p>B) School clubs and healthcare personnel in 100 schools and 100 healthcare facilities trained on MHM and CR-WASH by project end.</p>	<p>UNICEF, IPs, Private Sector</p>	<p>USD 10,000 of dedicated budget, integrated to Output 2.1.</p>
2.3.1. Engage and train local stakeholders in climate risk assessment, conflict-sensitive resilience	<p>Women and their traditional knowledge may be excluded from the assessment process, their specific experience and needs not</p>	<p>Actively involve women, girls, and women-led organizations in the assessment, training, and solution finding and implementation processes,</p>	<p>a) 100% of plans and implemented solutions reflecting gender-</p>	<p>Ministry of Environment, UNICEF, IPs, community groups and</p>	<p>USD 90,000 of dedicated budget, integrated to Output 2.3.</p>

<p>planning, and disaster preparedness</p> <p>2.3.3. Support community-led design and implementation of WRM and DRR solutions</p>	<p>considered in decisions-making, planning, and implementation.</p> <p>Discussing harmful gender norms and the specific conditions and needs of females could be met with cultural resistance if not managed sensitively.</p> <p>Men may dominate decision-making, leading to solutions that do not meet women's needs. Women may be relegated to supportive roles (e.g., cooking) rather than active implementation and leadership.</p>	<p>recognizing their critical role in household water management and their unique perspectives on water scarcity and flood impacts.</p> <p>Co-designing local solutions to reflect their needs and traditional knowledge.</p> <p>Encourage/provide platforms for women to share their traditional and local knowledge related to water management and climate resilience</p> <p>Address harmful gender norms in training modules.</p>	<p>specific needs by project end.</p> <p>b) Increased women influence in decision-making, measured by the percentage of community-led WRM/DRR solutions that were proposed or significantly modified by women members.</p>	<p>CSOs, MEDHR</p>	
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7. Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM)

A grievance is a concern or complaint raised by beneficiaries, affected communities, or stakeholders related to the perceived or actual impacts of the project activities. The objectives of establishing an effective GRM are to:

- Provide stakeholders with a clear and accessible process for raising grievances and concerns, including the option to do so anonymously;
- Structure and manage the handling of comments, responses, and grievances in a timely, fair, and transparent manner, in accordance with local and national regulations;
- Ensure that grievances are addressed in a way that strengthens accountability to project beneficiaries and upholds human rights principles.

To operationalize these objectives, the GRM is based on the following principles:

- **Legitimacy:** Trusted by stakeholders and accountable for fair grievance processing.
- **Accessibility and Cultural Appropriateness:** Widely known and easy to use, with adequate support for stakeholders facing barriers such as language or mobility constraints. The mechanism is gender- and age-inclusive, ensuring protection for marginalized groups and persons with disabilities. It is also publicized in local languages through culturally relevant means.
- **Anonymity and Protection from Retaliation:** The mechanism provides dedicated channels for stakeholders to submit grievances anonymously. To protect against retaliation, UNICEF and its partners will ensure that the identity of the complainant is kept confidential throughout the process, particularly in instances where the complainant expresses fear of reprisal.
- **Predictability:** Provides clear procedures, indicative timeframes for resolution, and transparency on process outcomes.
- **Equitability:** Ensures equal access to grievance processes, providing information, advice, and support so all stakeholders can engage fairly.
- **Transparency:** Maintains open communication channels, keeps complainants informed, and records all grievance responses.
- **Rights-compatibility:** Aligns with internationally recognized human rights and does not prevent access to judicial or administrative remedies. When necessary, it supplements existing formal or informal mechanisms to ensure human rights compliance.
- **Continuous Learning:** Identifies lessons to enhance the mechanism, prevent future grievances, and improve project implementation.
- **Confidentiality:** Prioritizes complainant safety during reporting and investigation. The mechanism incorporates secure, confidential reporting channels and data storage, particularly for cases involving gender-based violence (GBV) or abuse.

By adhering to these principles, the GRM ensures that grievances are handled fairly, efficiently, and in alignment with international best practices, ultimately strengthening trust and engagement with project stakeholders.

The GRM will function as a critical feedback loop to inform project implementation, enhance performance, and identify risks early—particularly in relation to environmental and social safeguards. In situations where movement restrictions or insecurity are present, UNICEF will ensure that staff responsible for managing grievances have remote access to necessary systems, allowing processes to remain operational.

7.1 Project Grievance Redress Mechanisms

This project will operate a single project-level grievance redress mechanism implemented through UNICEF’s Complaints and Feedback Management approach. Other mechanisms that may also be available to stakeholders, including existing inter-agency humanitarian feedback channels and the GCF’s Independent Redress Mechanism, are described below for information only and do not replace the project grievance mechanism.

7.2 UNICEF’s Complaints and Feedback Management (CFM) Procedure

This project will apply UNICEF’s Procedure on Complaints and Feedback Management as its project-level grievance redress mechanism. The mechanism is designed to receive and manage complaints and feedback from programme stakeholders in a timely, safe and confidential manner, while protecting personal data and supporting programme effectiveness and risk management.

Framework and Categorization

The Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) is structured to receive, record, act upon, and analyse all complaints and feedback in a timely and confidential manner. To ensure a consistent and appropriate response, all submissions are classified into one of four standard categories:

- Category 1: Requests, Observations, and Grievances: Includes requests for information or assistance, suggestions, and general expressions of dissatisfaction.
- Category 2: Concerns: Pertains to potential contraventions of UNICEF’s safeguarding or environmental and social standards that pose a risk of harm.
- Category 3: Incidents: Refers to confirmed occurrences or events that have resulted in safeguarding, environmental, or social harm.
- Category 4: Fraud and Corruption, and Aid Diversion: Encompasses fraudulent or corrupt practices as well as the misappropriation of aid resources by external actors.

Procedural Workflow and Timelines

The procedure outlines a clear, multi-stage process for managing complaints, with strict timelines to ensure swift action, particularly for high-risk issues.

Acknowledgement and Closure Timelines

Category	Acknowledgement	Closure
1. Requests, Observations, & Grievances	Within 2 working days	Within 31 days (or 90 days for Data Subject Requests)
2. Concerns	Within 2 working days	Within 15 days
3. Incidents	Within 12 hours	Within 48 hours

4. Fraud & Corruption, and Aid Diversion

Within 2 working days

Within 31 days

Assignment and Initial Follow-up

Each recorded complaint is assigned to a designated focal point based on its category:

- Requests, Observations and Grievances and Concerns records are assigned to the relevant Programme Focal Point(s). More serious Incident records are assigned to the relevant Chief of Programme Section, while records of Fraud and Corruption, and Aid Diversion are assigned to the Head of Operations.
- For serious cases (Incidents and Fraud/Corruption), an initial follow-up is conducted to confirm necessary information and ensure immediate support, such as victim/survivor assistance, is initiated. This process is not an investigation and must not interfere with one.

Review and Decision-Making

If a complainant is not satisfied with the resolution proposed by the Country Office the mechanism does not prevent access to judicial or administrative remedies available under the laws of the Central African Republic

The final decision on the recommended course of action for these cases rests with the Representative. A record is formally closed upon resolution, implementation of an agreed course of action, or referral to OIAI.

If a complainant is not satisfied with the resolution proposed by the Country Office Representative, the mechanism does not prevent access to judicial or administrative remedies available under the laws of the Central African Republic

Management of Outstanding Records

The procedure includes a clear escalation pathway for records that are not closed within their specified timelines or where the complainant is not satisfied. Outstanding requests or concerns are transferred to the Chief of the Programme Section for resolution and can be escalated to the Deputy Representative if needed. More serious outstanding incidents or fraud and corruption records are immediately escalated to the Representative, who convenes senior staff to determine a final course of action.

Management of Anonymous Grievances

The project grievance mechanism will allow anonymous submissions through available feedback channels, where feasible. Anonymous complaints will be reviewed and acted upon to the extent possible based on the information provided. To appeal anonymously, a Unique Tracking ID will be used to assign a code to the grievance and communicate its resolution anonymously through established channels Stakeholders will be informed that anonymous submissions may limit UNICEF's ability to seek clarification, provide direct feedback, or undertake a full follow-up where essential information is missing. Any information received will be handled with due regard to confidentiality, safety, security and personal data protection.

Accountability and Oversight

Clear lines of responsibility ensure accountability at all levels.

- Country Office: The Representative is ultimately responsible and accountable for the effective implementation and strategic oversight of the procedure. Programme and Operations Focal Points manage the day-to-day handling of records, while Specialized Focal Points provide technical guidance.

- Oversight: Cases involving potential misconduct by UNICEF personnel or partners, such as sexual exploitation and abuse or significant fraud, are promptly referred to the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations (OIAI), which is the independent office authorized to conduct such investigations.
- Analysis and Learning: Complaints and feedback data are regularly analysed to identify systemic trends, risks, and issues, which are then used to inform and improve programme effectiveness and strengthen risk management.

Requirements for Implementing Partners

Implementing partners and vendors involved in the project will be required to promote the project grievance channels and ensure that communities are informed about how to use them. Complaints and feedback received through their own channels in relation to project activities will be reported to UNICEF in line with agreed reporting arrangements. Any concern, incident, or allegation of fraud and corruption will be referred to UNICEF immediately and confidentially for handling under the applicable process.

7.3 The CAR Standard Operating Procedures for Collective Feedback Mechanisms

In some project areas, communities may also use existing inter-agency humanitarian feedback channels, including community information and feedback structures and mobile feedback arrangements where these are operational. These channels are not the project grievance mechanism, but they may serve as entry points for project-related feedback and grievances. Where project-related matters are received through such channels, they will be referred to UNICEF for handling through the project grievance mechanism, subject to appropriate confidentiality and data protection safeguards.

10.1.3 The GCF's Independent Redress Mechanism (IRM)

Paragraph 69 of the GCF's Governing Instrument mandates the establishment of an IRM, which reports directly to the GCF Board. The IRM is tasked with:

- Reviewing requests for reconsideration of projects or programmes denied funding by the GCF Board;
- Addressing complaints or grievances from persons or communities who may be adversely affected by GCF-funded activities through problem solving and/or compliance review;
- Initiating investigations independently where warranted;
- Monitoring implementation of Board decisions and agreements reached through the grievance process;
- Recommending policy or procedural changes to the Board based on observed trends or international best practices;
- Supporting capacity-building for grievance mechanisms of Direct Access Entities (DAEs); and
- Providing education and outreach on grievance redress to GCF stakeholders and the public.

Requests may be submitted to the IRM in any of the six official UN languages via: <https://irm.greenclimate.fund/case-register/file-complaint>. For CAR, the French version of the request will take precedence in case of any discrepancy.

Stakeholders do not need to exhaust the project-level GRM or UNICEF's CFM before contacting the GCF IRM. Information on how to access the IRM will be clearly communicated during all stakeholder engagement sessions and through simplified brochures distributed in Fulani communities.

Terms of disclosure and access to the IRM are to be negotiated with the GCF.

IRM Contact Information:

Green Climate Fund

175, Art center-daero, Yeonsu-gu, Incheon 22004, Republic of Korea

Email: irm@gcfund.org

Website: <https://irm.greenclimate.fund>

7.4 Grievances Related to Safeguarding, inclusive of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and Sexual Harassment (SH)

In line with UNICEF's zero-tolerance policy, all allegations of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and Sexual Harassment (SH) will be handled with the utmost seriousness, urgency, and confidentiality. Such allegations are classified as Category 3: Incidents under the UNICEF CFM Procedure and are managed through a specialized, fast-tracked process separate from the general GRM to ensure the safety and dignity of the survivor. The project will follow a strict survivor-centred approach, adhering to both the humanitarian procedures in CAR and the official UNICEF CFM Procedure.

Core Principles

The handling of all Incident records is guided by the following principles:

- **Safety and Do-No-Harm:** The survivor's physical and psychological safety is the highest priority. Measures will be taken to prevent re-traumatization and mitigate risks of retaliation.
- **Confidentiality and Privacy:** Case details will only be disclosed with the survivor's informed consent and on a strict need-to-know basis to protect them from further harm.
- **Respect and Non-discrimination:** Survivors will be treated with dignity, respect, and empathy, without blame or prejudice.
- **Choice and Agency:** Survivors have the right to determine how they wish to proceed and can withdraw consent at any point. The goal is to empower them in the reporting and response process.
- **Access to Services:** The project will facilitate timely access to comprehensive, survivor-centred assistance, including medical, psychosocial, legal, and safety support.
- **No Investigations:** Project staff will not investigate allegations. Their role is strictly to receive the report safely and make a confidential referral to the appropriate internal channels or designated investigation bodies.

Roles and Contacts

UNICEF will rely on the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations (OIAI) Hotline (Integrity1@unicef.org) for reports of wrongdoing and/or misconduct.

For issues not falling under OIAI's remit, the relevant reporting channel will be provided at the proposal stage.

Process and Timelines (for Managing Incident Records Category 3)

1. Confidential Intake and Acknowledgement (0-12 hours)

Any project staff or partner who receives an allegation will listen with empathy, ensure the survivor's immediate safety, and inform them of their rights and available support options. They will not ask for details beyond what is necessary to obtain informed consent for a referral. An acknowledgement of the complaint will be provided to the survivor within 12 hours of UNICEF becoming aware of the record.

2. Assignment and Initial Follow-up (within 12 hours)

Once recorded, the complaint is assigned to the relevant Chief of Programme Section. A designated Programme Focal Point, working in coordination with a Specialized (PSEA/Safeguarding) Focal Point, immediately conducts an Initial Follow-up. This is not an investigation; its purpose is to ensure a survivor-centred response is activated, including timely referral for medical, psychosocial, legal, and other assistance based on the survivor's needs and wishes.

3. Review, Referral, and Decision (within 24 hours)

A decision on the course of action is made swiftly:

If the allegation involves a UNICEF staff member, affiliate personnel, implementing partner, , or vendor, it falls under the mandate of the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations (OIAI). The UNICEF Representative must refer the matter to OIAI within 24 hours of being notified.

If the matter does not fall under OIAI's mandate, the Incident Review Team (IRT) is convened to review the case and recommend a course of action to the Representative for a final decision.

4. Record Closure and Parallel Case Management (Closure within 48 hours)

The official CFM record for the incident is formally closed within 48 hours of UNICEF becoming aware of it, once the matter has been referred to OIAI or a course of action has been decided by the Representative. It is critical to note that this procedural closure does not mean that support for the survivor ends. Survivor-centred case management is a parallel process that continues in coordination with specialized GBV partners for as long as needed, always respecting the survivor's wishes and consent.

Data Protection

All information is handled on a strict need-to-know basis. Survivors decide what information may be shared. The following rules apply:

- Data Collection: Collect the minimum data needed for a safe referral. Do not record graphic details.
- Consent: Record if the survivor/complainant consented to referral and to anonymized reporting.
- Storage: Keep records in an encrypted file with role-based access. Retain for 24 months, then delete securely (unless there is a legal hold).
- Reporting: Only anonymized data appear on dashboards or routine reports.

Community Information & GRM Interface

Safe reporting options (including hotlines and named focal points) will be clearly posted in project areas in French and local languages. Incident records involving SEA/SH/GBV bypass the standard GRM steps and are managed directly through this specialized procedure. The main GRM log will only contain an anonymized entry confirming a referral was completed to maintain confidentiality.

Monitoring

The PMU will report the following anonymized metrics quarterly:

- Number of reports received
- Percentage of cases referred within 24 hours
- Percentage of survivors accessing services within 72 hours
- Average case-closure time
- Optional survivor-satisfaction feedback (with consent)

7.5 Fulani-Specific Measures

Consultations with Fulani communities in different project locations highlighted context-specific preferences for how project-related complaints and feedback can be raised safely and effectively. The project will therefore apply additional culturally appropriate access measures and Traditional Dispute Resolution Systems (TDR) to ensure that Fulani communities can use the overall project grievance mechanism in ways that reflect local communication practices and trusted entry points. Depending on the local context, these measures may include engagement through recognized community or religious leaders, direct contact with designated UNICEF or partner staff, and communication in relevant local languages. These arrangements will serve as entry points to the overall project grievance mechanism and will not replace it. Confidentiality, safety, and voluntary use of available channels will be maintained, including for anonymous submissions where feasible.

7.5.1 Fulani-Specific Grievance Channels and Resolution Pathways

Based on the consultations, the following entry points and TDRs structures are formally recognized for this project and will be publicized for Fulani communities:

- **Bangui (Traditional/Religious Leadership):** In Bangui, grievances will be channelled through traditional leadership structures, specifically clan chiefs or religious leaders (imams), and may be resolved through mediation led by them. The project PMU will document the outcomes of these traditional sessions to ensure alignment with GCF human rights standards.
- **In Bossangoa,** the community can raise concerns via a direct phone call or via mobile community feedback and complaint collectors .
- **In Ndélé,** a hierarchical channel is preferred, where the community informs their customary chief, who then escalates the issue to the Sultan Mayor of the town of Ndélé. Concerns reported to the Sultan Mayor may be resolved through the Sultanate's customary court. UNICEF will maintain a liaison role to ensure the process remains inclusive of women and youth. Same mechanism will apply for Vakaga Prefecture.
- In all locations, the project will maintain an alternative confidential route that can be used directly by women, adolescent girls, young people and others who may face barriers to raising concerns through traditional leadership structures. This is important to ensure that culturally appropriate engagement does not unintentionally exclude some voices
- **Agreement on Usage:** Complainants have the right to choose between the TDR or the standard UNICEF CFM at any time. If a person wants anonymity, they must use the UNICEF channel rather than the TDR channel. In cases where an anonymous grievance alleges corruption or SEAH, the investigation will be led by the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations (OIAI).

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