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**Gendered Impacts of Environmental Displacement in the MENA
Region: A Case Study on Morocco**

Master's Thesis

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by

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Introduction

Climate change is one of the undeniable and inevitable security threats of our time. In practically every part of the world, environmental challenges and gender discriminations have a variety of economic, social, and political repercussions, despite being distinct problem areas. In his speech at the UN Security Council in 2021, Secretary-General António Guterres emphasized the climate crisis as the defining issue of our time, highlighting its multiplier character that impacts ecosystems, political, economic, and social stability, and the increased risk of conflict due to water scarcity, declining agricultural productivity, damaging infrastructure, and population displacement.¹

Middle East and North Africa (MENA) is one of the regions where these issue areas affect the fields that have a broad impact on peoples' lives. Today, climate change influences almost all environmental, social, economic and political problems in the world and displacement emerges as a major consequence. MENA is a significant region where climate change affects vulnerable communities through forced displacement. There is a growing body of scholarly work on the intersection of climate change and migration, especially in the most vulnerable regions such as sub-Saharan Africa and Pacific Islands. Despite the rapidly growing literature on migration in the MENA region, climate change is still often overlooked as a driver of security challenges when it comes to regional dynamics. Furthermore, there is lack of global interest where different genders, as in many domains, experience social phenomena such as displacement, in different ways due to emerging social, political, economic and cultural inequalities from patriarchal

¹ António Guterres, remarks to the United Nations Security Council, in United Nations, *Calling Climate Change Direct Threat, Multiplier of Many Others at Every Level, Secretary-General Tells Security Council*, Press Release SG/SM/18470, January 24, 2017, <https://press.un.org/en/2017/sgsm18470.doc.htm>.

system. The key point is that displacement is often a result of climate change, although we are still unfamiliar with the gendered aspects of this occurrence.

There is a lack of research and policy actions on the gendered impacts of environmental displacement. Much of the existing literature on environmental displacement focuses on environmental determinism, state-centric security approaches, or neoliberal migration theories. They argue that environmental displacement and gender factors are mostly individual factors and should be addressed through local adaptation strategies. However, they often fail to adequately address the broader and multifaceted systemic forces and structural inequalities related to gender dimensions that are intertwined with social, economic, political, environmental, and cultural factors when interpreting concerns related to environmental displacement. This thesis, built on structural approaches such as the theory of unequal exchange and feminist political economy, examines how environmental displacement in the MENA region has been shaped by historical dependencies and their effects on women's daily lives, thereby establishing a multifaceted research framework that addresses the underlying structural conditions of gender-based environmental displacement. It argues that environmental displacement, a major consequence of climate change, disproportionately affects women and girls in social, political and economic spheres due to patriarchal and unequal social structures in MENA as one of the most effected regions.

As an example from the MENA region, Morocco has committed to reforms and participated in international instruments and is one of the most active regional actors addressing sustainable development goals, gender equality, environmental displacement and climate change. In this context, however, the gendered impacts of environmental displacement are ignored at the implementation level, even if sustained at the policy level.

This thesis advocates for more inclusive and consistent gender-sensitive approaches in both implementation and policy levels to advance the climate justice discourse in the MENA region. It will analyze the gendered impacts of environmental displacement in the MENA region by identifying its causes and consequences and gendered factors that intersect with it through a case study on Morocco. The findings will bridge the gap between gender, environment and migration studies in MENA, bringing a new interactive layer and helping to develop opportunities for gender and environment-specific interventions in migration to the international community on MENA, by analyzing a governmental report from Morocco as a good and pioneer example.

The thesis is structured in three chapters. Following the introduction, Chapter I provides a review on environmental displacement in the MENA region, identifying why and how climate change leads to displacement, why MENA is a climate-sensitive region, and framing environmental displacement in MENA in three sections. Chapter II outlines the gendered impacts of environmental displacement in MENA, the risks and challenges for genders in displacement, the gendered impacts of climate change, the cultural and social background of MENA, and the gendered risks of environmental displacement in MENA in four sections. Chapter III focuses on Morocco as a case study in four sections, examining the relevance of Morocco as a case study, defining the national climatic and gendered situation in Morocco and summarizing the Report of the Kingdom of Morocco – 66th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women written in March 2022. Finally, discussions and analysis of the report will conclude the thesis by addressing the gendered impacts of environmental displacement and the status of policy and practice on the ground and its implications for regional sustainability through analysis of the case of Morocco.

Chapter I: Environmental Displacement in MENA region

Climate Change as a Driver of Displacement

Long-term variations in temperature and weather brought on by human activity are referred to as climate change. Extreme and unpredictable weather patterns and an increase in the average global temperature are the most prevalent signs of changes in the climate.² At first glance, these threats may be seen as purely environmental issues, but it is a huge mistake to ignore the broader socio-economic and political dimensions that unfold in the long term. It results in a variety of security threats such as conflict over resources, political, economic and social instability that humanity must confront. Environmental displacement is only one of the consequences of climate change and has a multiplier effect on other security challenges that states and societies must deal with.

This is an undeniable phenomenon, and a problem caused by climate change in certain regions. Today global agencies are recognizing the climate change as the primary reason behind the environmental threats that have been challenging living forms and their well-being. According to World Health Organization (WHO), climate change is widely acknowledged as the main cause of environmental hazards that negatively impact the health of all living things and humanitarian crises, such as heat waves, wildfires, floods, tropical storms, and hurricanes, are becoming more frequent and severe due to climate change and it is increasingly impacting human security around the globe.³

Climate change is an environmental threat commonly referred to be a threat multiplier since it intensifies resource shortages and pre-existing social, economic, and environmental

² K. R. Shivanna, "Climate Change and Its Impact on Biodiversity and Human Welfare," *Proceedings of the Indian National Science Academy* 88, no. 2 (2022): 160–171, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43538-022-00073-6>.

³ World Health Organization, "Climate Change and Health," accessed January 21, 2025, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health>.

issues. Climate events such as droughts, floods, rising sea levels and wildfires result in environmental degradation and loss of livelihood and resources, which results in competition over the resources and conflicts about the distribution of wealth. According to UN reports on Climate Change, competition for food and water can be sparked by unpredictable rainfall and extreme weather events; a large portion of the population may lose their income due to declining agricultural output; and each year, more than 20 million people are already relocating to other parts of their countries due to droughts, floods, storms, and sea level rise.⁴

The problems posed by climate change often causes complex security vulnerabilities in the regions where climate change is strongest. Most of them are interconnected and multilayered. Due to environmental, social, political, and economic insecurity, including health risks, food and water insecurity, loss of livelihoods, social and cultural erosion, economic inequality, radicalization, social unrest, and more, displacement is one of the main issues that climate change and climate-induced struggles may exacerbate. While those problems may be regional based, they also tended to spill-over to neighboring geographies and communities through migration, cross-border tensions, radicalization and create geopolitical instability.

The diagram below (figure 1) illustrates how displacement caused by climate change is not the product of a single source, but rather a series of interconnected crises affecting various sectors.⁵ As a root cause, the climate crisis leads to ecosystem crises, such as sea level rise, unpredictable weather patterns, the spread of disease and the destruction of plant and animal habitats, which puts pressure on natural resources and increasing depletion, food and water

⁴ United Nations, "Climate Issues: Human Security," *United Nations Climate Change*, accessed January 21, 2025, <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/climate-issues/human-security>.

⁵ Adapted from Othering & Belonging Institute, *Climate Refugees: The Climate Crisis and Rights Denied* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley, 2021), <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/climate-refugees-21>.

insecurity and species extinction.⁶ This chain of resource degradation causes multiple disruptions in social and economic systems, intensifying poverty, unsustainable growth and the collapse of social safety nets by increasing inequality, threatening social peace and destroying cultural heritage. The multifaceted nature of systemic disruptions also leads to political system failures and prioritizes security measures over humanitarian responses, making climate-induced displacement unpredictable and irreversible. Overall, climate factors interact with multiple governance failures, social and economic instability, and fuel internal and external displacement over time.⁷

⁶ Figure **Error! Main Document Only.**:Multicausality of Climate-Induced Displacement. Adapted from Othering & Belonging Institute, *Climate Refugees: The Climate Crisis and Rights Denied* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley, (2021), <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/climate-refugee>

⁷ World Bank, "Social Dimensions of Climate Change," last updated April 9, 2025, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/social-dimensions-of-climate-change>.

Multicausality of Climate-Induced Displacement

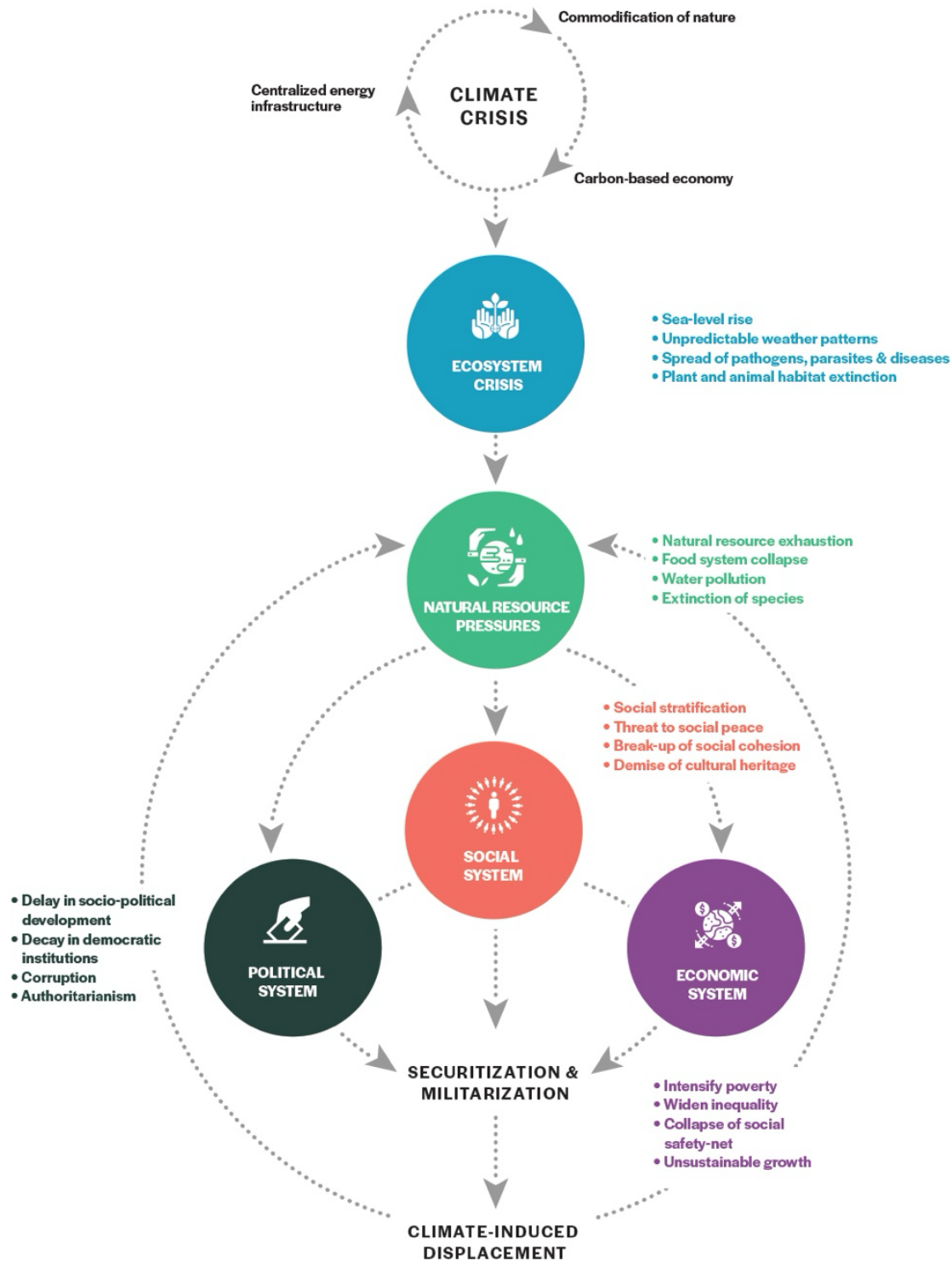


Figure 1. Multicausality of Climate-Induced Displacement.
Adapted from Othering & Belonging Institute, *Climate Refugees: The Climate Crisis and Rights Denied* (Berkeley, CA: University of California, Berkeley, 2021), <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/climate-refugees-21>.

Climate-induced displacement affects all societal demographics with its cultural, political and economic aspects resulting in mass movements. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) indicates that climate-induced mobility often involves a complex interplay of factors, including conflict, resource scarcity, and the extensive risks associated with climate change, such as prolonged drought periods and these factors can combine in ways that are difficult to disentangle, leading to both individual and mass movements.⁸ Mass movements are often caused by security problems and major changes in people's living habitats. These can be political, economic, environmental, humanitarian and demographic disruptions. Environmental events, such as natural disasters, droughts, floods, water scarcity, sea level changes, extreme weather events increase material and intangible losses and explicitly threaten human life.

On the other hand, environmental threats can arise from some other reasons. While some environmental threats are driven by militaristic or political objectives such as in the case of Palestine,⁹ Syria,¹⁰ most are due to climate change as experienced by the world. The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) of the Norwegian Refugee Council reports that 28 million people were internally displaced in 2018 as a result of conflict, violence, and natural

⁸ International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Climate Change, Environmental Displacement, and Migration*, accessed January 21, 2025, <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdll1411/files/documents/2023-11/10996.pdf>.

⁹ The harm done to the environment by the continuous conflict in Gaza, especially the devastation of infrastructure related to water and sanitation. The local population is forced to drink tainted water due to Gaza's environmental disaster, which is made worse by political and military acts. This puts them at serious risk for diseases like cholera and typhoid. the wider effects of environmental deterioration, which lead to displacement since many people are compelled to leave dangerous neighborhoods in quest of safer living arrangements. For detailed explanation, please see: "War Has Poisoned Gaza's Land and Water, Peace Will Require Environmental Justice," *The Century Foundation*, accessed January 21, 2025, https://tcf.org/content/commentary/war-has-poisoned-gazas-land-and-water-peace-will-require-environmental-justice/?utm_source=chatgpt.com.

¹⁰ The extensive environmental harm caused by Syria's protracted conflict, including deforestation, soil erosion, and water and air pollutants. The destruction of infrastructure and the misuse of natural resources have exacerbated the displacement issue and caused millions of Syrians to flee both internally and outside. The already serious humanitarian situation in the area is made worse by these environmental problems. For detailed explanation, please see: "The Environmental Impact of Syria's Conflict: A Preliminary Survey of Issues," *Arab Reform Initiative*, accessed January 21, 2025, https://www.arab-reform.net/publication/the-environmental-impact-of-syrias-conflict-a-preliminary-survey-of-issues/?utm_source=chatgpt.com."

disasters. The majority of the new displacements (17.2 million) were caused by weather-related hazards; 9.3 million were caused by storms and tropical cyclones, and 5.4 million were caused by floods. The IDMC estimates that between 2008 and 2018, natural catastrophes displaced about 253.7 million people, three to ten times as many people as conflict and war combined.¹¹ Additionally, according to the World Bank Groundswell research on internal migration, slow-onset climate consequences like water scarcity, decreased crop productivity, and sea level rise might cause up to 216 million people to migrate within and out of their countries by 2050.¹²

Environmentally induced forced displacement is a secondary but significant security threat. This situation, which stems from climate change, can increase social, political, and economic instability at both the individual and national levels, pose a significant problem for migrant and host communities, and create new security challenges. Recently, UNHCR announces that a sizable portion of stateless and forcibly displaced people reside in the world's most climate-vulnerable areas, where they, along with their host communities, lack resistance to the effects of climate change and access to environmentally sustainable resources. Due to prevailing roles, obligations, and cultural norms, women, girls, and other groups with particular needs frequently face additional risks and costs from the effects of climate change.¹³ In this manner climate change should not be seen only as an environmental problem facing a small, localized part of the world, but as a global social, political and economic problem with major impacts on all aspects of humanity.

¹¹ Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2019* (Geneva, Switzerland: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2019), <http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-report/grid2019/>.

¹² Viviane Clement et al., *Groundswell Part 2: Acting on Internal Climate Migration* (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2021), <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/36248>.

¹³ UNHCR. "Climate Change and Disaster Displacement." Accessed January 26, 2025. <https://www.unhcr.org/us/what-we-do/build-better-futures/environment-disasters-and-climate-change/climate-change-and>.

Legal and illegal migration from North Africa to Europe is a notable example. In addition to the political instability triggered since the Arab Spring,¹⁴ climate change has also been a significant driver of migration in the region. Climate-driven migration from North Africa to Europe has increased over the last fifteen years and there is a certain parallel correlation between increasing environmental threats and migration rates and the socio-economic and political challenges facing the continent.¹⁵ Environmental threats such as desertification and drought in agricultural areas, water scarcity, rising sea levels, and extreme weather conditions are drivers of migration. On the other hand, as Europe experiences a large influx of migrants, they face resource shortages, border tensions, governance issues, social integration challenges, rising radicalism and economic exhaustion as just some of the socio-economic and political challenges.

MENA as a Climate-vulnerable Region

What makes the MENA region specifically vulnerable in terms of climate change and forced displacement, as a secondary outcome? To answer this question, approaching the facts from a theory that explains global inequality is crucial. Throughout history, the Global South—in this case, MENA—has faced distinct economic, political, environmental, and social challenges in comparison to the Global North, or Europe.

¹⁴ Large-scale migration and relocation were sparked by the Arab Spring, which started in late 2010 and caused severe political unrest throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) area. The revolutions turned into civil wars in places like Libya and Syria, which caused widespread internal and external displacement. An average of 2.9 million new internal displacements each year, or one-third of the global total, were caused by these conflicts between 2010 and 2019. For detailed explanation, please see: Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. *A Decade of Displacement in the Middle East and North Africa*. Geneva: IDMC, 2021.

¹⁵ Leo Goff, Hilary Zarin, and Sherri Goodman, "Climate-Induced Migration from Northern Africa to Europe: Security Challenges and Opportunities," *The Brown Journal of World Affairs* 18, no. 2 (2012): 195–213, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24590873>.

With its roots in economic systems, the theory of unequal exchange¹⁶ emphasizes how historical colonization, exploitation, and imperialism resulted in long-lasting social, political, and environmental disparities. It presents global inequality as a systematic phenomenon, with the rise of industrialized Western Europe linked to the exploitation of labor and resources during settler colonialism, which is supported by free trade and meritocracy. The Global South's continued reliance on the North, even after colonialism ended, sustains inequality in modern liberal frameworks. This unequal transfer, according to the theory's originator, Arghiri Emmanuel,¹⁷ is a colonial legacy ingrained in the contemporary international system. As a result of unequal distribution of wealth and unsustainability of development, Emmanuel argues that resource exploitation prevails as a result of the Global South forced to supply raw materials at an environmental cost. Most of the regional economies in MENA are mining and agricultural based, producing raw materials for export which over time has led to over usage of natural resources and increased susceptibility to deforestation and droughts due to the high level of water consumption.¹⁸ While during the process of production, the need for energy and its protection also mostly fulfilled by the cheapest and mostly harmful methods such as burning

¹⁶ The theory of "unequal exchange" is a macroeconomic theory built by French economist Arghiri Emmanuel, which describes a transfer of value between nations in which one party gains more than the other, frequently because of differences in productivity and working conditions, leading to economic inequality. In ecologic framework, unequal exchange is a concept that explains the disproportionate transfer of natural resources and environmental costs from less developed to more developed countries through global trade. This transfer exacerbates environmental degradation and socio-economic vulnerability in the peripheral countries, often leading to social inequality and long-term sustainability challenges. For a detailed explanation, see: Christian Dorninger et al., "Global Patterns of Ecologically Unequal Exchange: Implications for Sustainability in the 21st Century," *Ecological Economics* 179 (2021): 106824, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2020.106824>.

¹⁷ Arghiri Emmanuel, a Greek-born French Marxian economist, was known for his theory of unequal exchange. He studied economics and law at the University of Athens and worked in commerce in Athens and the Belgian Congo. Emmanuel's seminal work, *L'Échange inégal*, critiques international trade dynamics, highlighting wage disparities and exploitation of peripheral nations. For detailed explanation, please see: "Who Was Arghiri Emmanuel?" *Unequal Exchange*, accessed April 22, 2025, <https://unequalexchange.org/who-was-arghiri-emmanuel/>.

¹⁸ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), *Environmental Challenges in the Middle East and North Africa Region* (Nairobi: UNEP, 2020), <https://www.unep.org/resources/publication/environmental-challenges-middle-east-and-north-africa-region-paper>.

fossil fuels, using outdated equipment, or releasing unresolved emissions into the atmosphere which are tended to be used to achieve a short-term efficiency, however, they usually result in a long-term pollution and environmental casualties such as water and soil degradation, loss of biodiversity and health impacts. Additionally, the raw material supply chain also reflects the trade inequality where global commercial system locks the Global South into the role of primary producers. While the Global North is responsible for the excessive use of global resources, the Global South is experiencing climate change at disproportionate levels. The countries with the fewest resources will likely be the most affected in terms of fatalities and the associated impacts on investment and the economy.¹⁹ The World Bank estimates that although the seventy-four lowest-income countries only contribute a tenth of global greenhouse gas emissions, they will be the most affected by the effects of climate change. They have already experienced around eight times as many natural disasters in the past ten years as they did in the 1980s.²⁰

This situation leaves the MENA region, which is part of the Global South and where most countries lack the capacity or expertise to act alone, facing a high-level environmental crisis that is difficult to manage without global joint action and expertise. The environmental relationship of unequal exchange and development processes locks in the Global South into a ground of global exploitation and irreversible environmental loss. The core's take away of ecological resources from the periphery has been essential to comprehending the continuation of unequal exchange, which connects environmental and economic exploitation.²¹

¹⁹ World Economic Forum, "Climate Crisis: Why Poor Countries Will Bear the Brunt," January 2023, <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2023/01/climate-crisis-poor-davos2023>.

²⁰ World Bank, "Rapid, Climate-Informed Development Needed to Keep Climate Change from Pushing More than 100 Million People into Poverty by 2030," November 8, 2015, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2015/11/08/rapid-climate-informed-development-needed-to-keep-climate-change-from-pushing-more-than-100-million-people-into-poverty-by-2030>.

²¹ John Brolin, *The Bias of the World: Theories of Unequal Exchange in History* (PhD diss., Lund University, 2003), <https://portal.research.lu.se/en/publications/the-bias-of-the-world-theories-of-unequal-exchange-in-history>.

Environmental Displacement in MENA

Climate change intensifies existing environmental, economic and social vulnerabilities and often results in displacement, as is the case around the world. MENA, Sub-Saharan Africa, Small Island Developing States (SIDS), South Asia, Arctic Region, Southeast Asia, Central America and Caribbean and Andean Region are the most climate vulnerable regions in the world.²² Figure 2 and Figure 3 below indicates the Land & Ocean Temperature Departure from Average in January from the years 2014 and 2024, respectively.²³ The increase in the temperature departure from average shows the temperature swings in degrees (°C) on average based on seasonal normal that calculated in specific areas. Global temperature anomalies occur all throughout the world, as the figures illustrate, although they are most noticeable in the areas closest to the equator, polar axis, MENA, and central Asia from the years 2014 to 2024. MENA is one of the fastest warming regions with rising temperatures, water scarcity, drought and desertification. As the region becomes increasingly uninhabitable, water scarcity threatens agriculture and food security by increasing the use of groundwater.

²² Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. *Climate Change 2022: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*. Edited by H.-O. Pörtner, D. C. Roberts, M. Tignor, et al. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022. <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg2/>.

²³ Figure 2: NOAA National Climatic Data Center, *Land & Ocean Temperature Departure from Average, January 2014*, based on GHCN-M version 3.2.2 and ERSST version 3b, February 12, 2014. Robinson projection. Gray areas represent missing data;

Figure 3: NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information, *Land & Ocean Temperature Departure from Average, January 2024*, based on NOAA Global Temp v6.0.0-20240208. Robinson projection. Gray areas represent missing data.

Land & Ocean Temperature Departure from Average Jan 2014 (with respect to a 1981–2010 base period)

Data Source: GHCN–M version 3.2.2 & ERSST version 3b

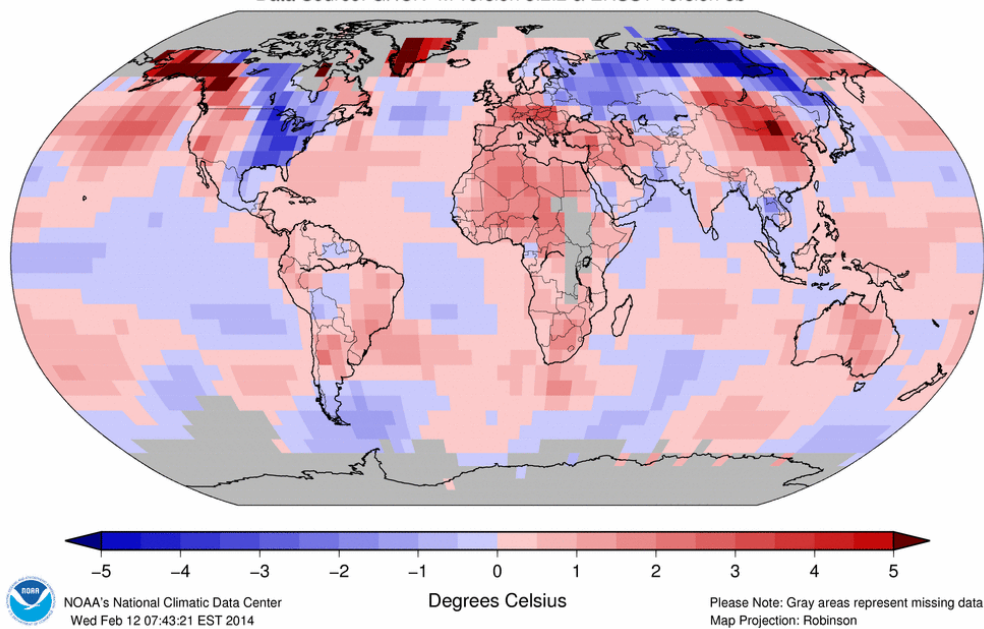


Figure 2. Land & Ocean Temperature Departure from Average Jan 2014 (with respect to a 1981-2010 base period).

Land & Ocean Temperature Departure from Average Jan 2024 (with respect to a 1991–2020 base period)

Data Source: NOAA GlobalTemp v6.0.0–20240208

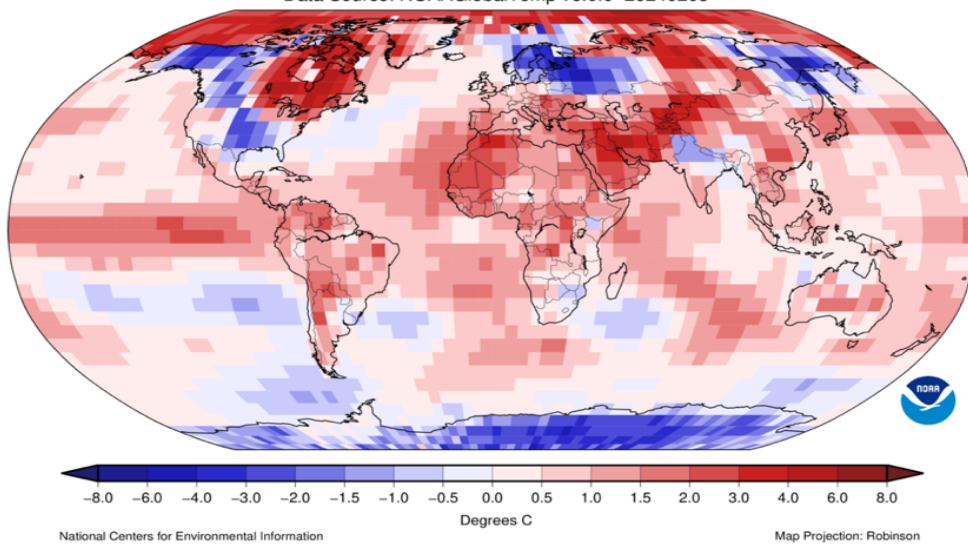


Figure 3. Land & Ocean Temperature Departure from Average Jan 2024 (with respect to a 1991-2020 base period.)

The percentage of people in the MENA area who work in agriculture varies greatly between nations. The average employment in agriculture was 9.61% in 2022, with Bahrain having the lowest percentage at 0.9%, while Morocco had the highest at 30.75% of its workers working in agriculture.²⁴ The percentage of average employment in agriculture and temperature anomalies are higher in North Africa region, which makes the area more climate vulnerable. As a result, extreme weather events such as floods, sandstorms and heat waves affect livelihoods, damage infrastructure and hence worsen the economy because a significant proportion of the population is employed in the agricultural sector. In addition, coastal cities such as Alexandria, Casablanca, Tunis and Beirut where water is already scarce and endangered, face the risks of flooding and salinization of freshwater resources due to sea level rise.²⁵

As a result of weather anomalies, displacement can be both a short-term and long-term consequence of environmental crises. According to the World Resources Institute, Libya is experiencing serious water stress in North Africa, meaning that it uses more than 80% of its water resources each year, while Tunisia, Algeria, and Morocco are experiencing moderate water stress, meaning that they use more than 20% to 40% of their water resources each year.²⁶ Desertification and soil degradation that arise from water stress also reduce agricultural productivity and push rural populations to abandon farming and migrate to cities or other regions. Prolonged droughts in Morocco and Tunisia have led to crop failures, while rising sea levels and floods are driving out populations away from coastlines. The North Africa region's

²⁴ TheGlobalEconomy.com, "Agricultural Employment in MENA," accessed January 28, 2025, https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/employment_in_agriculture/MENA/.

²⁵ Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, "The Looming Climate and Water Crisis in the Middle East and North Africa," last modified April 2024, accessed January 28, 2025, <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/04/the-looming-climate-and-water-crisis-in-the-middle-east-and-north-africa>.

²⁶ Samantha Kuzma, Liz Saccoccia, and Marlena Chertock, "25 Countries, Housing One-Quarter of the Population, Face Extremely High Water Stress," World Resources Institute, August 16, 2023, <https://www.wri.org/insights/highest-water-stressed-countries>.

rain-fed agriculture faces severe climate threats, including declining water resources and heat extremes. These challenges may worsen food insecurity, drive urban migration, increase import dependency, and heighten political instability.²⁷

As a secondary effect, environmental displacement and urban migration lead to overcrowding of cities and overloading of infrastructure, reducing living conditions and increasing secondary displacement from urban to abroad. In North Africa, there is an internal migration flow from rural and mountainous areas to urban coastal cities, increasing pressure on infrastructure and livelihoods and causing resource scarcity. In Tunisia, for example, water scarcity has affected the capital Tunis and led to water shortages across the city. On the other hand, cities in the coastal regions host around 45% of Morocco's total urban population and are experiencing high levels of inefficient and inadequate urbanization, exacerbated by internal migration.²⁸ These problems are paralleled by a decline in agricultural employment and an increase in urban unemployment, triggering economic difficulties in coastal areas. This can often lead to conflicts over scarce resources, and other accompanying problems of social-cultural cohesion, housing and infrastructure inadequacy.²⁹ Additionally, according to the research by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), many of the new displacement movements in an array of Arab nations, such as Morocco and Tunisia, are secondary or tertiary in nature, particularly in

²⁷ Katharina Waha et al., "Climate Change Impacts in the Middle East and Northern Africa (MENA) Region and Their Implications for Vulnerable Population Groups," *Regional Environmental Change* 17 (2017): 1623–1638.

²⁸ Achref Chibani, "Confronting Water Scarcity in North Africa," Arab Center Washington DC, August 31, 2022, <https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/confronting-water-scarcity-in-north-africa/>.

²⁹ Gabriela Nagle Alverio, Jeannie Sowers, and Erika Weinthal, *Displaced to Cities: Conflict, Climate Change, and Rural-to-Urban Migration*, Peaceworks No. 189 (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2023), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/371940420_DISPLACED_TO_CITIES_CONFLICT_CLIMATE_CHANGE_AND_RURAL-TO-URBAN_MIGRATION United States Institute of Peace USIP Peaceworks Report.

urban areas due to the limited infrastructure and resources, frequent internal displacement that results in secondary displacements.³⁰

Overall, climate change is at the center of many of the environmental threats, it has a multiplier effect in climate-affected regions, leading to a range of economic, social and political challenges, with displacement being one of the key consequences.

³⁰ United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR), *Regional Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction in the Arab Region 2021*, updated 2022, <https://www.undrr.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/RAR%20on%20disaster%20risk%20reduction%20in%20the%20Arab%20region%202021-Updated%202022-EN.pdf>.

Chapter II: Gendered impacts of Environmental Displacement in MENA

Gender and Displacement: Risks and Challenges

Gender is defined as the socially constructed roles, conventions, attitudes, and qualities that are associated with individuals of different sexes as well as the relationships that exist within and among these various groups.³¹ Gender inequality is defined as a social process in which individuals, particularly women, are treated differently and less favorably in relation to men, based on a range of cultural, social, economic and political factors, structures and institutions.³² The lack of social and legal protection frequently leads to a variety of oppressive conditions that women encounter, including discrimination on the basis of their gender, race, ethnicity, religion, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, ability, and country/community of origin.³³ Gender inequality is often overlooked, and not adequately prioritized across social and political issues. Similarly, most of the empirical studies on climate change and conflict have largely ignored gender-related variables.³⁴

Gendered Impacts of Climate Change

The climate crisis is not gender neutral, and certainly many of the social issues and consequences associated with climate change, such as displacement, are gendered and require

³¹ Tobias Ide, Marisa O. Ensor, Virginie Le Masson, and Susanne Kozak, "Gender in the Climate-Conflict Nexus: 'Forgotten' Variables, Alternative Securities, and Hidden Power Dimensions," *Politics and Governance* 9, no. 4 (2021): 43–52, <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v9i4.4275>.

³² "Gender Inequality," *Oxford Reference*, accessed February 4, 2025, <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095846609>.

³³ Jasmin Lilian Diab and Chiara Scissa, "Gender, Migration and Environment in the MENA: Vulnerabilities, Frameworks and Ways Forward," *Journal of Migration Affairs* 5, no. 1–2 (2023): 11–20, <https://migrationaffairs.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2-jasmin-lilian-diab-scissa-commentary-migration-affairs-march-2023.pdf>.

³⁴ Tobias Ide, Marisa O. Ensor, Virginie Le Masson, and Susanne Kozak, "Gender in the Climate-Conflict Nexus: 'Forgotten' Variables, Alternative Securities, and Hidden Power Dimensions," *Politics and Governance* 9, no. 4 (2021): 43–52, <https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.v9i4.4275>.

greater attention. Climate change is a major contributor to the various types of violence against women and girls.³⁵ In many regions, women bear a disproportionate responsibility for securing food, water, and fuel.³⁶ The cultural roles assigned to women and girls in the family, domestic, social, economic and religious spheres often increase the burden of women's responsibilities and make them more vulnerable in society.³⁷ They experience the greatest impacts of climate change, which amplifies existing gender inequalities and poses unique threats to their livelihoods, health, and safety. Across the world, women depend more on, yet have less access to, natural resources.

The gendered impacts of climate change can be reviewed under three categories which are socioeconomic vulnerabilities, health and safety risks and exclusion from political life.

Traditional roles assigned to women vary in relation to socioeconomic factors. While most women have less access to natural resources. In many societies they are responsible for earning money and providing for the household, while at the same time protecting and managing resources.³⁸

In low- and lower-middle-income countries, agriculture is the primary employment sector for women. Environmental stability is the primary driver of well-being under the complex interrelationships of land and crop management, as well as water collection and coordination, which women are often responsible for. The UNCC underscores that the effects of climate

³⁵ UN Women, *Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls in the Context of Climate Change* (New York: UN Women, 2022), <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/Tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-in-the-context-of-climate-change-en.pdf>.

³⁶ UN Women, “Explainer: How Gender Inequality and Climate Change Are Interconnected,” UN Women, February 2022, <https://www.unwomen.org/en/articles/explainer/how-gender-inequality-and-climate-change-are-interconnected>.

³⁷ UN Women, *Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls in the Context of Climate Change* (New York: UN Women, 2022), <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/Tackling-violence-against-women-and-girls-in-the-context-of-climate-change-en.pdf>.

³⁸ Lauren Clingan, “Defining Women’s Incomes: Household Disruptions and Gendered Resolutions,” *Social Forces* 103, no. 2 (December 2024): 595–614, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soae098>.

change on agricultural output aggravate poverty and food insecurity, especially for women who are involved in agriculture and family food provision.³⁹ Climate change-induced threats such as water scarcity, droughts, floods and heat waves reduce agricultural productivity and cause economic instability in agricultural sectors, while exacerbating water and food insecurity due to resource scarcity, becoming a challenge for women, who are often in charge of feeding and caring for their families in the household as well. It appears that girls from low-income households are particularly impacted; research shows that girls take on substantially more responsibilities at home, which leaves them with far less time and family resources to engage in other essential developmental activities such as educational, social, physical, psychological and career focused accomplishments.⁴⁰ Girls often drop out of school to earn an income and help with household chores, such as prepare food, collect water and participate in household agricultural work. The impact of climate change at the micro household level hinders girls and leads to an endless cycle of gender inequality that continues for generations.⁴¹

Another climate change-related risk that women and girls must face are health and security threats, specifically water scarcity. As discussed earlier, women and girls bear the brunt of responsibilities at home, therefore, climate-sensitive fluctuations related to water and food shortages, create vulnerabilities related to disease outbreaks and maternal and reproductive health complications.⁴² While these are not directly human-induced security threats, women face

³⁹ UNCC:Learn, *Climate Change and Women in Agriculture: Issues and Solutions*, https://www.uncclearn.org/wp-content/uploads/library/02-issue-brief_climate-change-and-women-in-agriculture.pdf.

⁴⁰ Georgetown University, "Indispensable but Overlooked: A Research Review of Girls' Involvement in Childcare and Household Work," Georgetown University Initiative on Gender Justice and Opportunity, 2022, https://genderjusticeandopportunity.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/22_COPI_INDISPENSABLE_REPORT_FINAL.pdf.

⁴¹ UNICEF, *Tackling Gender Inequality in a Climate-Changed World*, May 22, 2024, <https://www.unicef.org/blog/tackling-gender-inequality-climate-changed-world>.

⁴² Cate Owren, *Understanding and Addressing Gender-Based Violence as Part of the Climate Emergency*, Expert Paper prepared for the 66th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW66) Expert Group Meeting

gender-based violence due to resource scarcity and displacement, which expands the scale of domestic abuse, lack of reproductive support and sexual exploitation in many areas.

Violence against women and girls is also being made worse by slow-onset climate events like longer droughts and higher rainfall, which cause more crop failure, livestock losses, and food poverty.⁴³ In addition to increasing the risk of sexual violence in public and/or isolated settings, women and girls who travel farther and more frequently to get food or water may also experience increased stress in the home because they have less time to finish other household duties.⁴⁴

Due to women's roles as caregivers and providers in society, they deal with high levels of stress and mental health issues, along with a lack of mental support. As an outcome of societal, cultural, and economic factors, women's health is more vulnerable to the effects of climate change, particularly in low- and middle-income nations.⁴⁵ According to a survey from the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas, women in the MENA region possess fewer than 5% of the agricultural land.⁴⁶ In addition to the absence of enforcement of current legislation, patriarchal gender norms that frequently discriminate against women further limit women's land rights by creating barriers to their acquisition and retention of land.⁴⁷ This makes women's access to and participation in land ownership, management and decision-making

(New York: UN Women, September 2021), <https://wrd.unwomen.org/practice/resources/understanding-and-addressing-gender-based-violence-part-climate-emergency>.

⁴³ Anik Gevers, Tina Musuya, and Paul Bukuluki, "Why Climate Change Fuels Violence Against Women," *United Nations Development Programme*, January 28, 2020, <https://www.undp.org/blog/why-climate-change-fuels-violence-against-women>.

⁴⁴ Anik Gevers, Tina Musuya, and Paul Bukuluki, "Why Climate Change Fuels Violence Against Women," *United Nations Development Programme*, January 28, 2020, <https://www.undp.org/blog/why-climate-change-fuels-violence-against-women>.

⁴⁵ Bhavna H. Desai et al., "Climate Change and Women's Health: A Scoping Review," *GeoHealth* 5, no. 6 (2021): e2021GH000386, <https://doi.org/10.1029/2021GH000386>.

⁴⁶ "Research Priorities to Strengthen Women's Roles in Climate-Resilient Agriculture in the Middle East and North Africa," International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA), March 7, 2023, <https://www.icarda.org/media/news/research-priorities-empower-women-agriculture>.

⁴⁷ Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), *Women and Land Rights* (2023), <https://cdn.sida.se/publications/files/-women-and-land-rights.pdf>.

is limited, preventing them from using their traditional knowledge of resource management to assist in climate change mitigation and resilience processes to create an appropriate recovery plan. Women are often excluded from climate adaptation and disaster response planning at local, national and global levels, as in every other area.⁴⁸

Gender in MENA: Cultural and Social Background

The MENA is one of the regions facing the most significant challenges in achieving gender equality. Yet it is important to note that the gendered structures of societies are complex and multi-layered, and that the background and data used in this part is a broad and comprehensive view of the entire region.

The World Economic Forum's 2024 Global Gender Gap Report states that, with a gender parity score of 61.7%, the MENA area comes in last out of all regions.⁴⁹ The notable gender discrepancies in empowerment, development, and legal and social rights in the MENA region are frequently brought to light. The Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) assert that "addressing gender issues is increasingly important for the MENA, where sizable gender inequality remains and undermines development potential."⁵⁰

⁴⁸ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Gender, Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction: Policy Brief 2* (New York: UNDP, 2016), <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/publications/UNDP%20Gender%2C%20Adaptation%20and%20DRR%20Policy%20Brief%202-WEB.pdf>.

⁴⁹ World Economic Forum, *Global Gender Gap Report 2024* (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2024), <https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2024/digest/>.

⁵⁰ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, *Arab Human Development Report 2002: Creating Opportunities for Future Generations* (New York: UNDP, 2002), 23, <https://www.undp.org/arab-states/publications/arab-human-development-report-2002>.

The various reasons, roles and dynamics behind gender discrimination in social, economic and political life are fundamentally rooted in cultural paradigms.⁵¹ The centrality of the family as the smallest unit in society and the familial value attributed to the preservation of the traditional core is the first and foremost determinant of women's roles in society. Often the value of the family unit becomes a justification for all gender inequalities based on cultural norms. In MENA's family and social norms, men are seen as the breadwinner of the family and the guardian of honor and dignity, while women are often seen as homemakers, caregivers and in the ultimate modest role of securing social traditions in their interactions with men.⁵² The basic rules attributed to women are believed to be inherited and form the basis of unchanging family related gendered laws.

This inherited role is often reflected in other areas of society and affects women's social, economic, legal and political position in society. In a society where men are the breadwinners and income providers, women are less likely to participate in the workforce.⁵³ Women's rights are nevertheless restricted in several states in the region by cultural norms and customs, which also limit their access to empowerment programs and education. Women who depart from established social norms—such as living without a male guardian—are frequently marginalized in this setting.⁵⁴ If a woman has no family or husband, she is dependent on her family. Even in the opposite case, they face marginalization in society, associated with unattended or unchaste

⁵¹ Nezahat Doğan, "Gender Inequality in Muslim Majority Countries: Myths versus Facts," *Acta Oeconomica* 66, no. 2 (2016): 213–231, <https://doi.org/10.1556/032.2016.66.2.2>.

⁵² Suad Joseph, ed., *Gender and Citizenship in the Middle East* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 17.

⁵³ Seema Jayachandran, "Social Norms as a Barrier to Women's Employment in Developing Countries," *IMF Economic Review* 69 (2021): 576–595, <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41308-021-00140-w>.

⁵⁴ UNICEF, "Situational Analysis of Women and Girls in the Middle East and North Africa," 2019, <https://www.unicef.org/mena/reports/situational-analysis-women-and-girls-middle-east-and-north-africa>.

behavior. According to social norms in most MENA cultures, women should stay with a family or a male guardian even if widowed.⁵⁵

At another level, inherited traditions in MENA societies prevent women from participating in political life, leading to an endless cycle of gender inequality that makes it impossible for women to be equally active in political life. Moreover, women's social and political integration, participation, ownership, and decision-making are restricted throughout the MENA region due to the lack of gender-neutral constitutions and legal frameworks.⁵⁶ When all these elements build on each other, the lack of gender-neutral policies and laws persists. All these social gender norms result in an explicit patriarchal social structure that disproportionately makes women more vulnerable in the various social, economic, judicial and political fields.

However, in some MENA countries there are suggested initiatives to change these ongoing dynamics. The OECD report on *Changing the Laws and Breaking Barriers for Women's Economic Empowerment in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia* argue that encouraging women's economic empowerment is one of the cornerstones to accelerating economic progress and creating more stable, open societies in the MENA with an 47% increase in GDP with women's involvement in the workforce on an equal basis.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Human Rights Watch, *Trapped: How Male Guardianship Policies Restrict Women's Travel and Mobility in the Middle East and North Africa* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2023), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2023/07/18/trapped/how-male-guardianship-policies-restrict-womens-travel-and-mobility-middle>.

⁵⁶ Yara Sleiman and Aliaa Fakhry, "The Gender Gap in Political Participation: Evidence from the MENA Region," Economic Research Forum (ERF), 2021, https://erf.org.eg/app/uploads/2021/05/1620239407_413_480816_120alifakih_yarasleiman.pdf.

⁵⁷ OECD, *Changing Laws and Breaking Barriers for Women's Economic Empowerment in Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.1787/ac780735-en>.

Gendered Risks in Environmental Displacement in MENA

Persecution, conflict, widespread violence, or human rights abuses drive people to flee their homes or areas of habitual habitation.⁵⁸ Gender-based risks come along with this inevitable relocation search, also known as forced displacement, where people are compelled to look for alternate places to live and where environmental threats from climate change are also significant driving factors. As in many areas of concern to society, gender-specific risks arise in the process of displacement and differ according to social norms and roles. Whether internal or external, different genders are exposed to different security problems during displacement. Women are more exposed to risks such as abuse, discrimination, exploitation, and gender-based violence, including trafficking in person, and face challenges in accessing sanitation, and sexual, and reproductive and mental health services.⁵⁹

Under these circumstances, women tend to face gender-differentiated risks such as gender-based violence, trafficking, care burden and exclusion from decision-making processes. The fracture of family structures after displacement frequently results in women feeling alone, which increases their vulnerability to forced labor, exploitation, and sexual abuse.⁶⁰ In addition, The exploitation of women is made worse by the commodification of their bodies in trafficking, which reflects and perpetuates the idea that women are commodities to be exchanged.⁶¹ Women

⁵⁸ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *Thematic Paper on Forced Displacement and Sustaining Peace*, 2020, https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/unhcr_thematic_paper_on_forced_displacement_and_sustaining_peace_200117_0.pdf.

⁵⁹ International Organization for Migration (IOM), "Gender, Migration, Environment and Climate Change," *Environmental Migration Portal*, accessed February 13, 2025, <https://environmentalmigration.iom.int/gender-migration-environment-and-climate-change>

⁶⁰ UN Women, *Progress of the World's Women 2019–2020: Families in a Changing World* (New York: UN Women, 2019),

74, <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2019/Progress-of-the-worlds-women-2019-2020-en.pdf>.

⁶¹ Liliana Acero, "The Commodification of Women's Bodies in Trafficking for Prostitution," *International Journal of Feminist Approaches to Bioethics* 2, no. 1 (2009): 25–32, <https://doi.org/10.3138/ijfab.2.1.25>.

are further challenged by limited access to reproductive health and prenatal services, menstrual hygiene and baby products, for which many are responsible. Additionally, families are frequently split up during displacement, livelihoods and possessions are lost or disturbed, and discrimination, legal restrictions, and linguistic hurdles may appear. Women and men may experience these effects, obstacles, and opportunities differently. However, these gendered aspects and inequalities are frequently overlooked in the formulation of development policies and programs, which also frequently neglect to track the differences in results and impacts between men and women, girls and boys.⁶²

The patriarchal structure of the MENA societies and the general gender-related background provided earlier helps us reflect on the gendered dimensions of climate change and climate induced displacement processes. During the process of displacement, genders experience the diverse security threats disproportionately due to the social norms, legal frameworks, economic and political structure originated from the patriarchal social norms in MENA. The gendered vulnerability can arise in every stage of displacement. As a matter of fact, migration is unavoidably gendered, and individuals of all genders typically experience rather diverse migration cycles. Risk perception, prioritization, migrate methods, destination/route choices, options for employment, and access to integration and long-term solutions are also different for each gender.⁶³

The patriarchal social system's limitation of women in decision-making and mobility processes restricts women's mobilization when displacement is necessary. The family as the

⁶² World Bank, *Key Challenges for Refugee Policies and Programs: A Gender Perspective*, 2022, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/447911643215960323/pdf/Key-Challenges-for-Refugee-Policies-and-Programs-A-Gender-Perspective.pdf>.

⁶³ Jasmin Lilian Diab and Chiara Scissa, "Gender, Migration and Environment in the MENA: Vulnerabilities, Frameworks and Ways Forward," *Journal of Migration Affairs* 5, no. 1–2 (2023): 11–20, <https://migrationaffairs.com/gender-migration-and-environment-in-the-mena-vulnerabilities-frameworks-and-ways-forward/>.

primary unit of society and the leadership role of men in the household often limits women, despite their capacity to mobilize in displacement processes. In the case of security threats, whether due to an environmental crisis or for any other reason, the man of the house is responsible for the family's next move.⁶⁴ While this often varies depending on age and experience, if there is no one to take on the role of father, the eldest male child is often the decision-maker in terms of evacuation or seeking safety. Women's independent decision-making and action is often limited. Furthermore, due to women's role in care and domestic work, they are not in the labor force and are economically dependent. In other situations where women do not have a family to care for and are economically independent, they are still seen as emotional and irrational to act in a socially appropriate way in a crisis.⁶⁵ Whatever the case, women need male protectors, sometimes on constitutional grounds, but more often based on social norms. In the process of displacement, gender-specific threats also arise due to gender-based violence, health and hygiene barriers, and legal and bureaucratic restrictions. Extreme stress, property and communal loss, and scarcity of food and water, and displacement often leads to heightened risks of violence, including gender-based violence.⁶⁶ Many women and girls, especially those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, or those without guardians, face risks of sexual violence, harassment and trafficking.

⁶⁴ UN Women, "Understanding Masculinities: Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) – Middle East and North Africa," 2017, <https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2017/IMAGES-MENA-Multi-Country-Report-EN.pdf>.

⁶⁵ OECD, "Women's Economic Empowerment in Selected MENA Countries," 2017, https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2017/09/women-s-economic-empowerment-in-selected-mena-countries_g1g7e27a/9789264279322-en.pdf.

⁶⁶ International Organization for Migration (IOM), "Effects of Climate Mobility on Women and Girls in the MENA Region," 2022, <https://mena.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1686/files/documents/2024-01/climate-mobility-women-girls-mena.pdf>.

The physical and mental health of women and girls is severely strained, and their livelihoods and families are constrained, due to factors such as a lack of access to basic health and sanitation, maternal and reproductive health, and a rise in gender-based violence.⁶⁷ Limited access to reproductive and menstrual hygiene products also threatens women's health conditions and exacerbates health problems and diseases. In addition, due to limited legal and economic dependency, bureaucratic processes at the time of displacement exacerbate the difficulties women must cope with. With varied laws on topics like marriage, inheritance, and freedom of travel, as well as little to no legal protection from domestic abuse, women in the MENA area face more legal discrimination than women elsewhere. For displaced women, these legal restrictions exacerbate social inequity and economic hardship.⁶⁸ Even after crossing borders or internal displacement, displaced women often face risks of gender-based social marginalization and economic inequality. In addition, women often face discriminatory legal and social structures in host countries with cultures similar to their own culture. The Amnesty International overview of Human Rights in Middle East and North Africa: Regional Overview states that discrimination against women and girls occurs throughout the region in both law and practice, resulting in limitations on their freedom of expression, employment, and travel.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Wilson Center, "Forced Displacement in MENA and Its Gendered Impacts," June 2021, <https://gbv.wilsoncenter.org/event/forced-displacement-mena-and-its-gendered-impacts>.

⁶⁸ Congressional Research Service, "Women in the Middle East and North Africa: Issues for Congress," 2020, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R46423/8>.

⁶⁹ Amnesty International, *The State of the World's Human Rights 2024/25*, "Middle East and North Africa Regional Overview," April 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/report-middle-east-and-north-africa/>.

Chapter III: Case Study on Morocco

Morocco's relevance as a Case Study

After the ascendance of King Mohammad VI in the year 1999, Moroccan development plans accelerated, and multiple policies have been launched under diverse sectors such as urban development, green energy, education, health and social protection, agriculture, industry and investment, tourism and most importantly human development. Initially, economic and infrastructural initiatives started in the early 2000's, followed by social and environmental reforms after the year 2011. These latter reforms arguably are a result of the aftermath of the Arab Springs movement.⁷⁰

The Arab Spring refers to a series of anti-government protests, uprisings and armed revolts across much of the Arab world in early 2010s. It began in Tunisia in response to corruption and economic stagnation and spread to other states in the region, including Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Syria and Bahrain. The desire to replace authoritarianism, crony capitalism, and corruption with an accountable, transparent system that allowed for public engagement was the driving force for the uprisings in the early 2010s. As the forces of counter-revolution sought to preserve the normative political and economic order, most countries became embroiled in a number of other conflicts rather than bringing about the extensive reforms that the people were demanding.⁷¹

However, the demonstrations were also a sign of power of a collective civil action, having an impact on regional politics. In addition, other states such as Gulf States, Morocco and Jordan

⁷⁰ Eve Sandberg and Seth Binder, *Mohammed VI's Strategies for Moroccan Economic Development* (New York: Routledge, 2020)

⁷¹ Talmiz Ahmad, "The Enduring 'Arab Spring,'" *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal* 15, no. 2 (April–June 2020): 91–107, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48630168>.

weathered the political turmoil by undertaking democratic and developmental reforms at the state level to maintain internal stability and regime control.

Social, economic, and political instability, especially as a result of climate change and environmental stressors in the MENA region, was one of the major factors in the Arab Spring.⁷² The region's geography and arid climate have led to environmental pollution, reduced water resources, soil erosion, and desertification, causing economic hardship and resource scarcity. Following the Arab Spring, a new wave of environmental movement named the "Green Spring" emerged, involving civil society organizations addressing pollution, resource mismanagement, and climate change. In addition to addressing more general concerns about human rights, governance change, and economic justice, this movement brought attention to the region's inadequate environmental institutions and legal frameworks.⁷³

In this context, the Arab Spring was one of the most impactful regional political struggles that drove the Moroccan government to litigate more equal social, environmental, political, and economic based reforms. The immediate, reform strategy made Morocco and King Mohammad VI a success story in the aftermath of the Arab Spring, in comparison to other states.⁷⁴ Today, while Morocco still has issues with regional inequality and unemployment, its economic and infrastructure developments have made it one of North Africa's fastest-growing economies.⁷⁵ It

⁷² Giulia Soffiantini, "Food Insecurity and Political Instability During the Arab Spring," *Global Food Security* 26 (September 2020): 100400, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gfs.2020.100400>.

⁷³ International Development Research Centre (IDRC), "A Green Spring? Environmental Activism as a Catalyst for Social Change in the MENA Region," accessed April 3, 2025, <https://idrc-crdd.ca/en/what-we-do/projects-we-support/project/green-spring-environmental-activism-catalyst-social-change>.

⁷⁴ Bruce Maddy-Weitzman and Daniel Zisenwine, eds., *Contemporary Morocco: State, Politics and Society under Mohammed VI* (London: Routledge, 2013)

⁷⁵ World Bank, "Labor Market in Morocco: Summary Note," 2019, <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/477441523251051211/pdf/125041-WP-ENGLISH-PUBLIC-Summary-labor-market-note.pdf>.

also plays an active role in sustainable planning and the promotion of social justice.⁷⁶ This is evidenced by the numerous national action plans created by the Moroccan government over the years for both environmental justice and gender equality. Moreover, as a country globally recognized as a climate hotspot and experiencing high levels of environmental displacement, its efforts to tackle and avoid such challenges makes Morocco a good example in the region.⁷⁷

After two decades of structural reforms, the Moroccan government formally launched a new model which accelerates their development process by challenging recent social, environmental, economic and political problems in 2021. As a result, the New Development Model (NDM) was created, establishing challenging development goals with a 2035 timeline. The nation now faces a number of interconnected and compounding challenges in putting this vision into practice: increased susceptibility to climate change, as demonstrated by the recent string of severe droughts (three in the last four years); the pressing need to expedite structural reforms in order to put the nation's development on a more stable, equitable, and sustainable path; and accomplishing all of this within a limited budget.⁷⁸ In this manner, their efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change plays a significant role due to its threat multiplier character that impacts their development process and further social dimensions, and Morocco is willing to take a comprehensive action.

⁷⁶ Kingdom of Morocco, *Nationally Determined Contribution under the UNFCCC*, submitted June 2015, <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/NDC/2022-06/Morocco%20First%20NDC-English.pdf>.

⁷⁷ Andrew Woodmansee, Mohamed Aakairi, Bernard Gérard, et al., "Characterizing Rural Livelihoods in a Changing Environment: A Case Study in the High Atlas Mountains of Morocco," *Discover Sustainability* 6 (2025): 31, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43621-025-00791-z>.

⁷⁸ World Bank. *Morocco Country Climate and Development Report*. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2022. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/morocco/publication/morocco-country-climate-and-development-report>.

Moroccan National Climatic Situation

Morocco is highly vulnerable to climate change, particularly in terms of water scarcity, desertification, and rising temperatures. The climate is diverse, with the southern part of the Atlas Mountains being arid and desert, while the northern part is semi-arid, with the climate pattern becoming increasingly arid from north to south. Extreme temperatures and rainfalls change this climate pattern, affecting human life, as well as causing water scarcity, desertification, biodiversity loss and environmental devastation. Prolonged droughts and water scarcity, erratic rainfall patterns and floods, rising temperatures, sea level rise and coastal erosion are recent and the most severe climatic challenges that trigger broader security challenges in geography. Most recently, the severe flood disaster in southern Morocco in September 2024, which resulted in the loss of 18 lives, is one of the most significant examples of regions situation. The flood destroyed 56 homes, rendered 110 roads impassable, and damaged electricity, water, and telephone networks. The heavy rains, which hit regions that had been battling drought for at least six years, caused reservoir water levels to drop below 28% of their capacity by the end of August.⁷⁹ The region, which has been suffering from severe water shortages following six consecutive years of drought, is now facing a series of disasters exacerbated by flooding, highlighting the urgency of the need to combat climate change. Additionally, according to a report by The Guardian, this has led to unprecedented flood disasters in the Sahara Desert, one of the driest places on Earth, and as a result, the Iriqui Lake, which had been dry for fifty years, has

⁷⁹ Arab News, “Morocco Floods Death Toll Rises to 18, Authorities Say,” *Arab News*, September 9, 2024, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2570616/middle-east>.

refilled, serving as one of the most striking examples highlighting the region's climate vulnerability, the severity of the situation, and its urgency.⁸⁰

The country's economic dependence on agriculture and its water sensitivity makes it particularly susceptible to shifts in the climate and over the past decades, many rural communities have been forced to migrate to urban centers, leading to overcrowding and strained infrastructure in cities.⁸¹

Droughts and water scarcity in Morocco is the initial effects of climate change and significantly impact socioeconomic development, by increasing and causing macroeconomic volatility and food security threats. Climate change could reduce GDP by up to 6.5% due to reduced water availability and crop yields. Rainfed agriculture, which employs most of the agricultural workforce, is particularly vulnerable to droughts and water scarcity. World Bank estimates that by 2050, climate-induced changes could lead to 1.9 million Moroccans out-migrating to urban areas, affecting about 5.4% of the total population.⁸² Despite increasing water mobilization capacity by building over dams and expanding drip irrigation as an infrastructural progress, these investments have not eliminated the pressure on water resources and overexploitation of underground resources. Investment in infrastructure is necessary but not sufficient for coping with water scarcity without a new paradigm to enhance the water demanding management and policies. On the other hand, erratic rainfall patterns and rising sea

⁸⁰ Arthur Neslen, "Dramatic Images Show the First Floods in the Sahara in Half a Century," *The Guardian*, October 11, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2024/oct/11/dramatic-images-show-the-first-floods-in-the-sahara-in-half-a-century>.

⁸¹ International Organization for Migration (IOM), *The Link Between Migration, Environment, and Climate Change in Morocco*, accessed April 2025, <https://www.iom.int/project/link-between-migration-environment-and-climate-change-morocco>.

⁸² World Bank. *Morocco Country Climate and Development Report*. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2022. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/morocco/publication/morocco-country-climate-and-development-report>.

levels result in high level flood risks that pose a threat to development, as they are the most frequent climate-related natural hazards in Morocco, causing direct losses and displacement.⁸³

To deal with all these problems and engage climate adaptation measures, the Moroccan government constituted a National Strategic Adaptation Plan (PNSA) 2030 aligned with Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC's) under the Paris Agreement⁸⁴ and included sectoral transformation strategies such as Green Morocco Plan (Plan Vert du Maroc) that aims at decarbonizing the Moroccan economy gradually.⁸⁵ By 2030, they want to eliminate subsidies for fossil fuels, provide green jobs, concentrate on managing ocean resources, maintain aquifers, and generate more than half of their energy from renewable sources.⁸⁶ National adaptation plans and strategies describe ways to integrate adaptation measures into all stages of development planning and lessen vulnerability to the effects of climate change. The strategies aim to increase resilience in communities most impacted by climate change, which subtly addresses displacement issues even as it concentrates on areas like urban planning, agriculture, and water management. While this comprehensive adaptation plans include and target strengthening infrastructure and human settlements, reducing climate-related health risks, protecting ecosystems and biodiversity, and

⁸³ World Bank. *Morocco Country Climate and Development Report*. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2022. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/morocco/publication/morocco-country-climate-and-development-report>.

⁸⁴ Paris Agreement is a legally binding international treaty on climate change, adopted by 196 parties at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris, France, on 12 December 2015. It entered into force on 4 November 2016. Its overarching goal is to hold “the increase in the global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels” and pursue efforts “to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. The Paris Agreement is a landmark in the multilateral climate change process because, for the first time, a binding agreement brings all nations together to combat climate change and adapt to its effects. For detailed explanation, please see: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), *Paris Agreement*, adopted December 12, 2015, entered into force November 4, 2016, https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf.

⁸⁵ Initiative for Climate Action Transparency (ICAT), *Development and Application of a Methodology on Climate Finance as Part of Morocco’s Transparency Framework: Scoping Report for Morocco*, February 5, 2024, <https://climateactiontransparency.org/resources/morocco-scoping-report-climate-finance/>.

⁸⁶ Kingdom of Morocco, *Plan National d'Adaptation aux Changements Climatiques (PNA) 2020-2030*, 2020, https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/PNSA_Morocco_Fr.pdf.

preserving cultural heritage, it also demonstrates Morocco's motivation and determination to achieve climate adaptation as efficiently as possible.⁸⁷

Moroccan National Gendered Situation

Gender discrimination in the MENA region is rooted in cultural paradigms, mostly based on Islamic law, with the family unit being the primary determinant of women's roles. The inherited traditional patriarchal norms form the basis of unchanging family-related gendered laws, which affect women's social, economic, legal, and political positions in society.⁸⁸ These inherited rules are often reflected in other areas of society and affects women's overall well-being. Women's rights and gender equality in Morocco have been governed by Islamic code and shaped with significant reforms over the years in the religious, political, social and economic spheres. After Moroccan independence in 1956, the codification of Islamic family law, named as Moudawana, was the fundamental law that shaped gender roles over decades covering laws of marriage, divorce, child custody and guardianship, inheritance and women's rights and protections.⁸⁹

While the first Moudawana draft codified polygamy, male superiority, inheritance and guardianship over women, minor legal reforms have been made related to divorce and polygamy limitations in marriage rights throughout 70s and 80s. However, until the King Mohammed VI took the throne, male authority remained unchanged. The major reforms that prioritized women's

⁸⁷ Vincent Ongoma, Fadoua Driouech, Yassine Brouziyne, et al., "Morocco's Climate Change Impacts, Adaptation and Mitigation—A Stocktake," *Regional Environmental Change* 24, no. 14 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10113-023-02176-2>.

⁸⁸ Ilyass Bouzghaia, "Whose Gender Equality? On the Boundaries of Islam and Feminism in the MENA Region," in *Double-Edged Politics on Women's Rights in the MENA Region*, eds. Hanane Darhour and Drude Dahlerup (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 71–93, https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-27735-2_3.

⁸⁹ Leila Hanafi, "Moudawana and Women's Rights in Morocco: Balancing National and International Law," *ILSA Journal of International & Comparative Law* 18, no. 2 (2012): 345–365, <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/ilsajournal/vol18/iss2/10>.

rights took place in 2004, five years after King Mohammed VI's throned. Despite the weak enforcement in judiciary, key progressive changes to the legal marriage age, polygamy, female requested divorce and rights on child custody were introduced in 2004. The most recent legal reforms have been made in December 2024, strengthening women's rights over guardianship, polygamy restrictions, age of marriage , however laws that perpetuate inheritance inequality and the weak enforcement of legal protections are remaining.⁹⁰ While all new legal measures proposed a progression in both women's political and financial empowerment, it is also underscoring Morocco's commitment to gender equality and advanced Morocco's developmental international recognition.⁹¹

While Morocco has made progress in advancing women's rights, gender inequalities persist, particularly in rural areas.⁹² Women's participation in the labor market remains low, and legal barriers continue to limit their economic and social opportunities. Nevertheless, Morocco is highly motivated to take legal action that covers the comprehensive developmental goals towards gender equality.

The Report of the Kingdom of Morocco - 66th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a key intergovernmental body within the UN, and sets international standards for women's political, economic and social rights. The CSW

⁹⁰ Mihiri Wijetunge, "Moudawana Reform in Morocco: The Long Feminist Struggle," *Gender in Geopolitics Institute*, 2023, <https://igg-geo.org/?p=18280&lang=en>.

⁹¹ Paul Scott Prettitore, "Family Law Reform, Gender Equality, and Underage Marriage: A View from Morocco and Jordan," *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 13, no. 3 (2015): 32–40, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15570274.2015.1075758>.

⁹² Freedom House, "Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa 2010 - Morocco," March 3, 2010, <https://www.refworld.org/reference/countryrep/freehou/2010/en/72318> [accessed April 4, 2025].

annual meetings are important for global policy direction, government accountability, civil society engagement and legal and social processes at both national and international levels. In March 2022, the 66th Commission met under the priority theme “Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls in the context of climate change, environment and disaster risk reduction policies and programs”. At the CSW, climate change, environmental degradation and disasters were recognized as major obstacles to gender equality. It called for increased funding for women-led climate solutions and gender-sensitive disaster risk reduction. The know-how of indigenous women was highlighted and women's equal participation in climate and environmental decision-making was emphasized.

The State of Morocco's report for the 66th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women,⁹³ held in March 2022 in response to King Mohammed VI's call for urgent climate action, highlights the link between gender equality and disaster risk reduction, climate change and sustainable development in Morocco. This comprehensive analysis describes the states' recent approaches and progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),⁹⁴ while advocating for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls within these frameworks. It also reviews Morocco's progress in several areas, notably in improving children's nutrition and health care and reducing the poverty rate among women from 14.4% in 2007 to

⁹³ The report consists of six chapters with different themes, such as achieving sustainable development goals on gender equality, gender-based policies and programs on climate change, environment and disaster risk reduction, empowerment of all women in the context of climate and environmental change, their impact on gender-based violence, migration and displacement, women's participation in public life and environmental decision-making, and the challenges, risks and prospects of economic and development models, including the evolution of existing policies and regulatory laws. For detailed explanation, please see: Kingdom of Morocco, *Report of the Kingdom of Morocco: 66th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women*, March 2022, <https://social.gov.ma/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/CSW66-Report-of-the-Kingdom-of-Morocco-66th-session-of-the-Commission-on-the-Status-of-Women-1.pdf>.

⁹⁴ The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) are a set of 17 global goals that aim to end poverty, protect the environment and ensure peace and prosperity, adopted by United Nations Member States in 2015 for 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. For detailed explanation, please see: United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2016* (New York: United Nations, 2016), <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2016/>.

2.9% in 2018.⁹⁵ The report shows that Morocco's policies on climate change integrate gender perspectives and increase women's participation in environmental governance by promoting equal representation in public life. It also highlights Morocco's proactive efforts to tackle climate-related social concerns.

To ensure equitable access to resources and socioeconomic opportunities, the implementation of gender-responsive economic policies that formalize gender budgeting, labor force and women's economic participation has been emphasized. The formulation of the “no one left behind” progress can also be observed in the recommendations outlined at the end of the report for future actions to strengthen the integration of gender equality into climate policies. These recommendations advocate for systemic changes that improve social and environmental sustainability.⁹⁶ This strong framework demonstrates Morocco's commitment to empower women as active participants in environmental management and sustainable development in the face of ongoing climate challenges.

While many of the gendered impacts of environmental challenges and climate change are well organized and detailed in the report from a multi-layered perspective, the report falls short on the impact of environmental displacement on women. The fourth section, which only collects data and draws a roadmap for “the impacts of climate, environment and disasters on gender-based violence, migration and displacement” shows how the Moroccan government is motivated to tackle the multiplier effects of environmental problems on a gender basis. In the section, the report highlights policies and programs specific to migration and asylum in Morocco and the

⁹⁵ Ministry of Solidarity, Social Integration, and Family. "Report of the Kingdom of Morocco: 66th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women." March 2022. <https://social.gov.ma/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/CSW66-Report-of-the-Kingdom-of-Morocco-66th-session-of-the-Commission-on-the-Status-of-Women-1.pdf>.

⁹⁶ Ministry of Solidarity, Social Integration, and Family, "Report of the Kingdom of Morocco: 66th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women," March 2022, <https://social.gov.ma/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/CSW66-Report-of-the-Kingdom-of-Morocco-66th-session-of-the-Commission-on-the-Status-of-Women-1.pdf>.

complex nature of disasters, environmental degradation and migration. However, while the topic has been addressed headline-wise, the content has not sufficiently examined environmental displacement and its impacts on women.⁹⁷

The report clearly shows that the Moroccan government is actively working to achieve Goal Five of the Sustainable Development Goals, which includes achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. This has been achieved through the review of discriminatory laws, institutional and legal reforms, and the adoption of public policies to increase women's representation in humanitarian affairs. The ratification of the National Charter on Environment and Sustainable Development and the publication of a report on advanced regionalization aim to ensure integrated and sustainable development at the economic, social, cultural and environmental levels. The promulgation of framework law 12-99 on the National Charter on Environment and Sustainable Development demonstrates the government's awareness of the growing impacts of climate change on women and promotes equality and independence.⁹⁸ The Government has also taken measures to manage natural hazards, including the inclusion of a gender approach to disaster risk reduction and the identification of groups living in precarious conditions in disaster management.⁹⁹ They emphasized their vision to combat violence against women by focusing on women's access to economic opportunities, strengthening their capacities in education and training, and implementing a zero-tolerance policy approach to violence against women. These measures include minimizing regional and social disparities, ensuring equality,

⁹⁷ Democratic Association of Moroccan Women (ADFM) and Partner NGOs, *CEDAW Shadow Report from Moroccan NGO Coalition*, 2020, <https://learningpartnership.org/resource/cedaw-shadow-report-from-moroccan-ngo-coalition-document-french>.

⁹⁸ Ministry of Solidarity, Social Integration, and Family, "Report of the Kingdom of Morocco: 66th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women," March 2022, <https://social.gov.ma/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/CSW66-Report-of-the-Kingdom-of-Morocco-66th-session-of-the-Commission-on-the-Status-of-Women-1.pdf>.

⁹⁹ World Bank, "Building Morocco's Resilience to Natural and Climate-Related Disasters," World Bank, April 18, 2024, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2024/04/18/from-disasters-to-opportunities-building-a-resilient-future-in-morocco>.

providing good public services, increasing women's participation, adopting a comprehensive approach to access, opportunities and resources, strengthening legal frameworks and adopting a multidimensional approach based on prevention, protection and care.¹⁰⁰ The National Plan also mentions the implementation of specific policies and programs for migration and asylum, but while the report points to gender-based issues that need to be addressed as a consequence of climate change, the multi-layered and intersecting nature of climate change and gender-based impacts, and displacement as a consequence, is barely mentioned in the report.

Discussion & Analysis

The Moroccan government's report to the 66th session of the CSW is an important testament to Morocco's efforts to integrate sustainable development goals, environmental policies and gender equality into climate action and adaptation policies in the social, political and economic spheres. This well-designed and organized report on Morocco's environmental policies and climate action has managed to address the gendered dimensions of climate change by highlighting the climate vulnerability of women in all major environmental issues. As an agriculture-based economy and identified as a global hotspot where extreme heat, droughts and floods, i.e. climate change, are a reality, Morocco is ready to act on environmental issues and is aware that the green transformation cannot be achieved without gender equality policy and women's participation in decision-making processes. In addition to the report, the fact that women ministers make up almost one third of the current cabinet demonstrates that the

¹⁰⁰ Ministry of Solidarity, Social Integration, and Family, "Report of the Kingdom of Morocco: 66th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women," March 2022, <https://social.gov.ma/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/CSW66-Report-of-the-Kingdom-of-Morocco-66th-session-of-the-Commission-on-the-Status-of-Women-1.pdf>.

Moroccan government is aware of the importance of women's participation in decision-making processes on climate action and is committed to achieving its goals in this regard.¹⁰¹

However, despite the national action plans and even the report's extensive mention of gender and climate-based political and economic reforms, the report fails to mention actions to be taken at the societal level. This ultimately suggests that Morocco lacks the capacity to comprehensively address sustainable development goals, including gender and displacement at a practical level. These are significant gaps between policy commitments and implementation efforts on the ground. The shortcomings highlight the challenges of integrating gender-sensitive climate adaptation strategies and the need for stronger implementation mechanisms to tackle the gendered impacts of environmental displacement.

This situation is also evidenced by the lack of implementation in the field and policy gaps regarding women's social life and public roles. Recent NGO statements- such as the Open Government Partnership (OGP) Action Plan Review 2021-2023¹⁰² and the Moroccan Association for Human Rights (AMDG) 2017 allegations that the Moroccan government is not committed to cooperation,¹⁰³ can prove that the implementation of policies disregards the specific vulnerabilities and needs of women, particularly in rural areas affected by climate-induced displacement. This situation raises questions about the feasibility of the policies mentioned in the reports at the grassroots level, given the absence of a comprehensive and clear regulatory framework on gender equality. The report shows that the Moroccan government is

¹⁰¹ For detail please see: "Composition of the Government," *Government of Morocco*, accessed April 24, 2025, <https://www.cg.gov.ma/en/composition-government>.

¹⁰² Open Government Partnership, *Morocco Action Plan Review 2021–2023*, 2022, <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/documents/morocco-action-plan-review-2021-2023/>.

¹⁰³ Human Rights Watch, "Morocco: Obstruction of Rights Group," February 20, 2017, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/02/20/morocco-obstruction-rights-group>.

ready to adopt gender-based climate policies at the state level but has not yet begun to develop practical plans on the ground.

Overall, Morocco can be considered one of the most progressive members of MENA to address climate change, environmental displacement and gender equality through its action plans and strategic goals. It has an important role to play in the MENA region in addressing climate change and environmental challenges and related long-term social, political and economic issues as topical issues, actively pursuing rather than ignoring them, developing sustainable policies, competing with neighboring countries in this regard, and participating in international and regional organizations. While the report points to the important gender dimensions of climate change and holds promise for policies it does not address gendered impacts and environmental displacement. Nevertheless, the goal of achieving green policies and increasing women's political participation in climate action seems promising and important in both the regional and global context.

To overcome implementation challenges, Moroccan NGOs conducting intersectional local work, such as Dar Si Hmad, High Atlas Foundation (HAF), and Association Démocratique des Femmes du Maroc (ADFM), can be included to establish international cooperation among countries and local organizations that have undergone similar development processes with Morocco and have been affected by environmental displacement and gender inequality. Countries and local organizations that have undergone similar development processes to Morocco and are affected by environmental displacement and gender inequality. This cooperation can support efforts to strengthen basic implementation and enforcement capacities.

Developing similar strategies can help countries facing similar challenges to align their efforts and achieve the goals that Morocco is trying to implement at the ground level. In this context, the

UN DESA SDG Good Practices 2020 report provides examples that Morocco can adopt, closely aligned with country examples, based on strategies for gender equality and political participation, community-based climate adaptation, social protection and economic empowerment, and disaster risk reduction and resilience.¹⁰⁴ While the results of these practices may vary depending on the social, economic, historical, environmental and political structures of the countries that have successfully implemented them, their applicability significantly supports international cooperation. In terms of gender representation and political participation, Rwanda, where women's political representation has increased; Costa Rica, which has integrated local knowledge and community leadership into community-driven approaches to environmental resilience and climate adaptation; and Bangladesh, which has implemented microfinance programs to provide access to credit to small businesses in rural areas and to economically empower women, are examples of good practices at the implementation level for disaster risk reduction and resilience. Colombia's efforts to integrate its displaced population into peacebuilding, economic life and governance processes through displacement programs are promising examples that can also be applied to addressing social problems arising from displacement in Morocco and more broadly MENA. Following good practices on the overlapping goals and challenges of the sustainable development goals can be useful to achieve more measurable and actionable results at local, national, regional and global levels.

¹⁰⁴ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), *SDG Good Practices: A Compilation of Success Stories and Lessons Learned in SDG Implementation* (New York: UN DESA, 2020), <https://sdgs.un.org/publications/sdg-good-practices-2020>.

Conclusion

Climate change is at the center of many environmental threats, causing rising temperatures, extreme weather events and an increase in the number of natural disasters worldwide. It has a multiplier effect in climate-affected regions, leading to a range of economic, social and political challenges, with displacement being one of the most significant consequences. In this regard, MENA—and in this thesis, North African nations, particularly Morocco—are among the most climate-affected regions because of their inability to deal with problems like temperature-related environmental anomalies, unstable economies centered on agriculture, and environmental displacement and its socioeconomic and cultural repercussions.

Due to the severe environmental situation the region is facing, international cooperation and knowledge are needed. The area is rapidly warming, which is causing drought, desertification, water scarcity, and rising temperatures. This poses a threat to agriculture and food security as water scarcity increases the use of groundwater. Globally, and particularly in the areas most impacted by climate change, environmental, economic, and social vulnerabilities are growing.

The MENA region, and North Africa in particular, is more vulnerable to climate change from an economic, political, and social perspective due to higher average employment rates in agriculture and temperature anomalies. Floods, sandstorms, and heat waves are examples of extreme weather phenomena that have an impact on livelihoods, harm infrastructure, and degrade the economy and quality of life.

Environmentally induced forced displacement is a secondary but significant security threat resulting from climate change and is an important issue that challenges both migrant and host communities and can create new security threats. Displacement is an indirect consequence of

environmental disasters and mobilized people, especially through mass mobilization, change the social, political, economic and demographic atmosphere of the new place they move to.

In the context of its threat multiplier nature, one of the social difficulties related to climate change and its attendant effects, such displacement, is that "the climate crisis is not gender neutral."

The sustainability of our planet is threatened by the devastating social, cultural, economic, health and human rights impacts of climate change, which disproportionately affect women and girls, especially the most marginalized populations. As climate change worsens already-existing gender disparities and presents particular risks to their livelihoods, health, and safety, women and girls are disproportionately affected. The cultural duties that are allocated to women and girls in the family, home, social, economic, and religious domains frequently add to the burden of women's lives and render them vulnerable to issues that should impact all people equally, regardless of gender.

People must migrate due to poor living conditions brought on by climate change, and women frequently face both the broader hazards of displacement and climate change at the same time. Women's well-being is also at risk due to displacement since it makes them more susceptible to sexual exploitation, trafficking, and substandard living conditions.

One of the areas with the greatest gender difficulties worldwide is MENA. Cultural paradigms are at the heart of the different reasons, functions, and dynamics that underlie gender discrimination in the region's social, economic, and political spheres. The issues brought on by climate change and displacement processes are exacerbated by the patriarchal character of MENA cultures and the general gender-related background mentioned above, which is mirrored in all other domains.

At every level of displacement, gendered vulnerability can appear. Genders are disproportionately affected by security threats during the displacement process because of patriarchal social norms, legal frameworks, and political and economic structures. Migration is gendered, in fact, and migration cycles are usually different for people of all genders. Gender differences also exist in risk perception, prioritizing, migration modalities, destination/route choices, employment alternatives, integration, and access to long-term solutions.

In this thesis, Morocco is examined as an example of success and its leading role among North African countries on a global level. The Arab Spring in particular was one of the most influential regional political upheavals that pushed the Moroccan government to undertake more equitable social, environmental, political and economic based reforms to prevent a regional spillover where neighboring governments and leaders were toppled one by one in the MENA region. The fast, effective and adoptable reform strategy makes Morocco and King Mohammed VI a relative success story of the Arab Spring compared to what happened to others. Even while unemployment and regional inequality are still issues in Morocco today, the country's infrastructure and economic growth have made it one of the fastest-growing economies in North Africa. In addition, they are actively supporting social justice and sustainable planning, and they are actively taking part in international forums to advance policy and collaboration in this area. Morocco's dedication to sustainable development goals and their innovative drive to guide North African nations ahead in all social, political, economic, and environmental spheres are reflected in this developmental expansion and their growing international engagement. The numerous national action plans created by the Moroccan government over the years for both the environment and gender equality are testament to this. Moreover, as a country globally recognized as a climate hotspot and experiencing high levels of environmental displacement,

efforts to tackle and avoid such challenges is one of the reasons why Morocco has become a good example in the regional components.

On the other hand, gender inequality in Morocco and the MENA area is founded on cultural paradigms, primarily Islamic law, and women's responsibilities are mostly determined by the family. The foundation of gendered, unchangeable family laws that impact women's social, economic, legal, and political standing in society is inherited old patriarchal standards. Notwithstanding recent advancements, issues including child marriage, gender-based violence, and complicated legal issues still exist and diminish the significance of decades of work.

Inheritance restrictions, sociocultural limitations, and the conventional patriarchal social structure all contribute to the poor and inadequate implementation of women's rights. Despite Morocco's advancements in women's rights, gender inequality still exists, especially in rural areas. Legal restrictions continue to restrict women's economic and social possibilities, and their labor market participation is still low. However, all these social, political, economic and environmental reforms and measures, regardless of their full-scale effectiveness, show that Morocco is highly motivated to take legislative actions encompassing comprehensive development goals and to participate in global actions towards gender equality and in all relevant areas where challenges are addressed.

The report prepared by the Republic of Morocco for the 66th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women in March 2022 highlights the link between gender equality and disaster risk reduction, climate change and sustainable development in Morocco. This comprehensive analysis describes states' recent approaches and progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), while advocating for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls within these frameworks. The document is divided into six chapters that cover a

variety of topics, including achieving the Sustainable Development Goals for gender equality, gender-based policies and programs on climate change, environment, and disaster risk reduction, empowering all women in the context of climate and environmental change, their impact on gender-based violence, migration, and displacement, women's participation in public life and environmental decision-making, and the risks, opportunities, and challenges of economic and development models, including the evolution of current policies and regulatory laws. Morocco's proactive attempts to address social issues related to climate change are also highlighted in the report. It clearly shows that the Moroccan government is actively working towards achieving Goal 5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, which includes achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. This has been achieved through the review of discriminatory laws, institutional and legal reforms, and the adoption of public policies to increase women's representation in humanitarian affairs.

In conclusion, Morocco can be considered one of the most effective MENA countries in addressing climate change, environmental displacement and gender equality through its action plans and strategic goals. However, it often fails to address the gendered impacts of environmental displacement at the policy level. This research highlights the urgent need for gender-sensitive policies to address climate-induced displacement in MENA. Without adequate legal protection and inclusive governance frameworks, women will continue to bear a disproportionate burden of environmental migration. By examining the case of Morocco as the most successful MENA country to be studied in this context, my thesis contributes to a broader discourse on climate justice, gender equality and migration policies and offers recommendations for more inclusive and effective responses to environmental migration.

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