Meeting the sexual and reproductive health and rights needs of every individual is essential in promoting healthy families, healthy communities, and a healthy planet. As the primary resource managers for households around the world, women are disproportionately affected by environmental degradation, water scarcity, and natural disasters—challenges that are compounded when women have larger families than desired. Ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health and rights leads to increased investments in education, economic and social gains, and improvements in health, helping women and their families become more resilient to climate disruption and get involved in environmental conservation and community resource management initiatives. Protecting the health and rights of individuals and protecting our planet go hand-in-hand.

Facts at a Glance

**The health of women and the environment go hand in hand.**
- Only 10% of foreign aid for forestry, fishing, and agriculture goes to women.¹
- Women are more responsive than men to changing their behaviors toward more environmentally friendly practices.
- Community water and sanitation projects designed and run with the full participation of women are more sustainable and effective than those that do not.²
- A study of 130 countries found that countries with higher female parliamentary representation are more prone to ratify international environmental treaties.³
- Access to SRHR fosters a woman’s ability to participate in these projects and processes by improving her health, freeing up time for education and income-generating activities, and empowering her to make decisions about her own future and that of her community.

**Connecting SRHR and women’s empowerment helps communities adapt to and mitigate climate disruption.**
- Women are 14 times more likely to die in natural disasters than their male counterparts.⁴ Women and girls also suffer more from shortages of food and economic resources in the aftermath of disasters.⁵
- Climate disruption is having a profound effect on water availability, access, and quality. Women and children bear the primary responsibility for water collection in 76% of households in the developing world.⁶ The ability to have one’s desired family size helps ease this burden.
- More than 40% of pregnancies worldwide are unintended.⁷ Lowering the rate of unintended pregnancy leads to slower population growth, which could provide 16-29% of the emissions reductions suggested as necessary by 2050 to avoid dangerous climate disruptions.⁸

**SRHR access contributes to improved food security.**
- Women produce 60-80% of the food in developing countries, while owning less than 2% of the land.⁹ The economic and educational gains associated with access to SRHR help equip women with the necessary knowledge and skills to own property and more effectively manage resources.
- If women had the same access to productive resources as men, they could increase yields on their farms by 20-30%. This could raise total agricultural output in developing countries by 2.5-4%, which could in turn reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 12-17%.¹⁰
- Investments in voluntary family planning and the resulting decreases in fertility—especially in countries with the highest per capita resource consumption—will help to slow the growth in greenhouse gas emissions and reduce pressure on already-scarce food and water resources.¹¹
Women who can plan their family size are more resilient to climate disruption, more likely to participate in local conservation efforts and better able to manage resources for their families.

Environmental toxins have detrimental consequences on women’s SRH.

- Industrial chemicals, air pollution, pesticides, and other toxins in the environment are linked to numerous health problems, including infertility, reproductive cancers, and birth defects.
- 41% of the world’s energy is generated from coal. Toxins associated with coal extraction, combustion, and disposal disproportionately affect women, and have been linked to fertility problems, fetal abnormalities, and asthma in children.¹³
- Female agricultural workers are at increased risk for sexual and reproductive health problems, especially while pregnant and breastfeeding.¹³


Briefing Cards: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and Sustainable Development

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